

**In The Matter Of:**  
*Arkansas Department of Education*  
*Charter Authorizing Panel*

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*April 19, 2022*

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ARKANSAS DIVISION OF  
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

APRIL 19, 2022  
9:00 a.m.

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

MS. DEBORAH COFFMAN	Chairperson/ADE Asst. Commissioner - Public School Accountability
DR. ERIC FLOWERS	ADE Asst. to Director
MS. KARLI SARACINI	ADE Asst. Commissioner - Educator Effectiveness & Licensure
DR. SONJA WRIGHT-McMURRAY	Division of CTE Associate Director
MR. KIM DAVIS	Former State Board of Education Member

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. WHITNEY JAMES      DESE Attorney

ALSO APPEARING:

DR. MATTHEW SUTHERLIN      ADE Coordinator, Special Programs

LOCATION:

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

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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Good morning. The April 19, 2022 meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is called to order. I'd like to welcome everyone to the Department of Education auditorium, and ask that you please silence all of your electronic devices.

Today, we will be facilitating a fair and responsible hearing. And I request that each of you speak carefully into the microphone; state your name and your title for the record. And I will ask that you continue to speak clearly into the microphone. It's easy to walk away from it. We're all educators; we like to move around the room. But if you'd please come back to the microphone for the live-stream audience; they can't hear if you get away from the microphone.

So this meeting is being live-streamed and it is being recorded. A transcript and a recording of the meeting will be posted on the DESE website. So you'll be on TV, remember that.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW PANEL MEMBER & DESE STAFF

CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: As we get started this morning, I've got a little business for us to take care of. And our first point of business is to introduce our new Charter Authorizing Panel member,

1 Mr. Kim Davis.

2 Welcome back to ADE.

3 Mr. Davis is a former State Board member. So  
4 we're very, very pleased to have him.

5 Do you want to say a few words?

6 MR. DAVIS: Yeah. No, really excited and happy  
7 to be back and, you know, do my best to add value to  
8 what's already an amazing panel. So, thanks for  
9 that.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

11 And, Dr. Sutherlin, would you mind coming up and  
12 introducing your new charter unit? We've had  
13 changes.

14 DR. SUTHERLIN: So, Matthew Sutherlin, Standards  
15 and Systems Support/Charter. We have our new Charter  
16 Director, Ms. Dorie Summons.

17 Do you want to stand for us?

18 And then we have our Charter Specialist, who is  
19 Mr. Tommy Coy.

20 So they're going to do a great job. They're  
21 very knowledgeable. They've been with the Department  
22 for many, many years. So we're really excited to  
23 have them.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yeah, they're going to bring  
25 some stability to our Charter Unit. We've had a lot

1 of turnover and we're super excited to have both of  
2 them onboard.

3 CONSENT AGENDA

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Well, good  
5 morning, everyone. And with that, let's look at our  
6 Consent Agenda. Get back to my meeting. And Dr.  
7 Sutherlin has brought our minutes from the February  
8 15, 2022 meeting for us to review.

9 Any questions, revisions?

10 If not, I'll accept a motion.

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Move approval.

12 MS. SARACINI: Second.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: A motion by Dr. Wright-  
14 McMurray, a second by Ms. Saracini to approve the  
15 minutes as submitted.

16 Any questions, conversation?

17 All those in favor?

18 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any opposed?

20 Minutes are approved.

21 ACTION AGENDA

22 1. FOUNDERS CLASSICAL ACADEMY CHARTER AMENDMENT

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Action Agenda  
24 Item 1. Dr. Sutherlin.

25 DR. SUTHERLIN: So, Matthew Sutherlin,

1 Coordinator for Standards and Systems Approach/  
2 Charter.

3 We have an amendment from Founders Classical  
4 Academy. And the charter is requesting to add a new  
5 virtual building with statewide enrollment and to  
6 increase the enrollment cap from 2500 to 3000.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Give me just a  
8 second. My sheet --

9 If you -- all those speaking on behalf of  
10 Founders Classical Academy charter, if you would  
11 please stand and raise your right hand. Do you swear  
12 or affirm that the testimony you're about to give  
13 shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but  
14 the truth?

15 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

17 Ms. James, do you want to come and give us the  
18 guidelines, rules, procedures, all of the above?

19 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am. My name is Whitney  
20 James with the Department.

21 And the Founders will have 20 minutes to present  
22 -- or actually for their presentation. There has  
23 been no opposition that I'm aware of to this  
24 amendment. And then, following that, we will go over  
25 the legal review.

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Thank you so  
2 much.

3 And who will be speaking on behalf of the  
4 charter?

5 MS. PROVENZA: I will.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. You will have --  
7 come up and you've got the little clicker there.  
8 Introduce yourself, and you have 20 minutes.

9 MS. PROVENZA: Wonderful. Thank you so much.  
10 My name is Susan Provenza and I am the State Director  
11 for Founders Classical Academies here in Arkansas.  
12 And I appreciate your time today for the ability to  
13 come and talk to you about our proposal.

14 So here is part of our team that we have with  
15 ResponsiveEd. We have James Taylor, who is here with  
16 us today; he is our CFO and CTO. Elaine Plybon, who  
17 is our National Director of Virtual Learning; Kacy  
18 Barton, who is our Virtual Learning Systems  
19 Administrator; Rhonda Bradford, our Arkansas  
20 Superintendent; myself, the State Director for  
21 Founders; Katie Stephens, our Executive Director of  
22 Finance; Curtis Shack, Executive Director of Data and  
23 Systems Management; Aaron Duvall, who is our CTE  
24 Director; and Marla Pearson, who is our Director of  
25 Special Programs.



1           And just a little bit about our history, for  
2 those of you that don't know our school or are  
3 unfamiliar. ResponsiveEd has been around since 1999,  
4 and operates more than 90 schools across the country,  
5 with six different school brands at 22,000 graduates,  
6 22,000-plus students, and over 3,000 employees.

7           What we are here today asking is for two things.  
8 The first one is an expansion ELA. We would like to  
9 add a virtual school to Founders Classical Academies  
10 of the Arkansas charter for 22-23. And then we would  
11 also like to increase our enrollment cap to  
12 accommodate 500 more students in that virtual LEA.

13           We have current locations in Bentonville -- that  
14 was our first Founders here in the state of Arkansas;  
15 and then we have our Rogers campus opening in the  
16 fall; and we have our West Little Rock campus as  
17 well.

18           At Founders Classical Academies, we seek to  
19 provide an excellent and distinctive classical  
20 education that does three main things: it pursues  
21 knowledge, it promotes virtue, and it prepares our  
22 students for prosperous lives in a free society.

23           In 2013, we opened our Bentonville campus and it  
24 was the first open enrollment tuition-free public  
25 classical school in the state of Arkansas. If you

1 know a little bit about classical education, it's one  
2 of those things that kind of was, historically, only  
3 for private schools. And so we love the opportunity  
4 to have this as a public option so that any student  
5 may attend. Since then, we've added our West Little  
6 Rock campus, and then we're opening our Rogers campus  
7 in August.

8 A little history and highlights about our school  
9 -- we originally opened as a K-8 and then expanded to  
10 K-12. We've had four graduating classes so far, with  
11 three National Merit semi-finalists who went on to be  
12 finalists. Very high academic standards and some  
13 amazing awards in the academic areas. But also some  
14 pretty fantastic awards when it comes to  
15 extracurriculars as well, with state championships in  
16 track and cross-country and also all-state choir  
17 members.

18 Our current enrollment -- Bentonville campus has  
19 about 956 students; our West Little Rock campus has  
20 135; and currently we have 94 students participating  
21 in our digital learning plan.

22 So what we're looking to do is add 500 students  
23 that would be solely in the virtual LEA.

24 I've done an enrollment cap breakdown for you,  
25 just to kind of show the areas. Because this would

1 be a statewide virtual school, I wanted to look at  
2 the regions and expectations for enrollment each  
3 school year. So we're not looking to add that 500  
4 all at once. You can see there we anticipate that  
5 primarily Northwest Arkansas and Central Arkansas are  
6 going to encompass the majority of the students, but  
7 we do want to be able to offer it statewide. So  
8 looking at maybe 250 students next year and then  
9 increasing each year after that.

10 Here is the district structure for us. We've  
11 got the Founders Classical Academies of Arkansas with  
12 our main district LEA there, and then the breakdown  
13 of the schools within the charter; so our Bentonville  
14 campus, our Rogers campus, West Little Rock, and then  
15 the virtual campus.

16 So the purpose of this is really we want to be  
17 able to provide students across the state of Arkansas  
18 with high quality, college preparatory virtual  
19 education. That includes best digital learning  
20 practices, adequate wraparound support, and really  
21 helps them on their journey to both graduation and  
22 then higher education and life after that. We want  
23 to be able to provide that flexibility to students  
24 and families in their pursuit of a college  
25 preparatory education. And we really want to

1 increase the impact of Founders Classical Academies  
2 across Arkansas through an innovative, high-quality  
3 virtual education experience.

4 So Founders offers unique opportunities for our  
5 students in -- both in the traditional classroom and  
6 then through our digital learning plan, focusing on a  
7 classical model of instruction. And so the goal of  
8 the virtual school would be to shift all of that and  
9 enable that program to expand its mission and impact  
10 across Arkansas. As it stands right now, unless you  
11 live in Central Arkansas or Northwest Arkansas you  
12 don't have access to a public classical school, and  
13 this would enable us to provide that access to  
14 students across the state.

15 Also, having a dedicated learning -- virtual  
16 learning building, it really enables us to be more  
17 intentional with both our teachers and students.  
18 It's not a shock to anybody here that teacher burnout  
19 is a thing, and we've heard about it a lot recently.  
20 And being able to dedicate teachers to just a virtual  
21 learning program and help them with both professional  
22 development and then the practice would be what we're  
23 after. We know that there's a high demand for  
24 virtual learning. Covid kind of brought it to the  
25 forefront, but it's not going away. It is something

1 that families want and desire. And we know that  
2 there are those students out there who thrive in this  
3 environment, and we want to be able to offer that to  
4 them.

5 So benefits to students -- first, a highly  
6 trained instructional team that's going to specialize  
7 in online teaching and learning. It's really  
8 important. You know, teaching is teaching, yes, but  
9 it's going to look a little bit different in a  
10 virtual school than it does in a classroom. And we  
11 want to really make sure that those teachers are  
12 experts at virtual learning and are able to reach  
13 those students and impact them;

14 Programs and engagement activities that are  
15 designed specifically for an online environment. It  
16 allows us, again, like I said, to be very intentional  
17 with what we're doing in having extracurricular  
18 activities that are suitable for an online  
19 environment.

20 And then providing options and locations that  
21 currently don't have classical schools, and having  
22 that intentional focused support from the  
23 instructional team as well to support our students.

24 There are also some great benefits to teachers.  
25 First of all, they're going to receive that fantastic

1 professional development so that they can be  
2 specialized in online instruction. We want to give  
3 them the ability to focus on one method of  
4 instruction and be experts in that area so that our  
5 teachers are no longer split between focusing on in-  
6 class, in-person, and online. And then also have  
7 virtual PLCs to assist with best practices.

8 And then benefits to the program administration  
9 -- this allows for some really wonderful tracking of  
10 data in terms of online students versus our in-person  
11 students when it comes to accountability. The way  
12 the digital learning plan is right now, they're all  
13 rolled into one school; so it's kind of -- you have  
14 to do a lot of digging to determine how you're doing.  
15 This makes it very streamlined. It also allows us to  
16 streamline personnel and resources to the LEA. We've  
17 got virtual teacher observations that are -- you  
18 know, we can really hone in on what it looks like to  
19 be a great virtual teacher and give good feedback.  
20 And then, the data analysis of student outcomes in  
21 terms of their attendance and state assessments,  
22 local assessments, all of that, it makes it very easy  
23 for us to see how we're doing.

24 So our intended outcomes -- students engaged in  
25 a high-quality virtual program and supported through

1 best learning practices that allow for active  
2 learning, effective offering of personalized lesson  
3 design methods; also, increase in student  
4 accessibility and engagement in the Founders  
5 Classical Academy in their -- in our academic model  
6 and allow that for remote learning in rural  
7 locations; increase the percentage of Arkansans that  
8 are prepared for higher education; flexibility in  
9 student learning to meet individual and family needs;  
10 and then, helping students prepare for a successful  
11 life beyond high school with accelerated learning,  
12 concurrent courses, workplace readiness -- all of  
13 those things that are going to help prepare them for  
14 their futures.

15 So, again, in summary, what we're looking for  
16 with our amendment request is an expansion LEA for  
17 Founders Classical Academy of Arkansas to have  
18 Founders online school. And then increase our  
19 enrollment cap to 3,000 students from 2,500 students  
20 to accommodate that statewide school.

21 In terms of our waivers, we're requesting to  
22 keep the waivers that we have currently for our  
23 district charter. Any of the new waivers that are  
24 outside of that are only tied to the fact that there  
25 will not be a physical building for this school, as

1 it is a virtual school.

2 So knowledge, virtue and liberty is something  
3 that we focus on in our Founders schools and what we  
4 would like to continue promoting across the state  
5 with the virtual program.

6 Thank you for your time.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you. Ms. James, if you  
8 will come up and review the legal review.

9 MS. JAMES: Hi.

10 MS. PROVENZA: Hi. Nice to meet you in person.

11 MS. JAMES: Please stay up here for the legal  
12 review.

13 MS. PROVENZA: Okay.

14 MS. JAMES: I see you're standing here; I just  
15 want to make sure. Okay.

16 MS. PROVENZA: I'll stay.

17 LEGAL REVIEW

18 MS. JAMES: Okay. So just to clarify -- again,  
19 I'm Whitney James with the Department.

20 Just to clarify, for the legal review if I say  
21 that I have no legal concerns that just means that  
22 they've got the correct statute cited and there's  
23 nothing wrong there. But, of course, the Panel may  
24 still have substantive questions, even if there are  
25 no legal concerns.



1           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Davis, we jump right in  
2 there with questions as we go through all of the  
3 waiver requests.

4           MS. JAMES: Okay. And on the legal review it's  
5 organized a little bit differently this time. I hope  
6 it makes sense. We have three groups of waivers.  
7 And I talked with Ms. Provenza before, and it's my  
8 understanding that if this is a fully virtual school  
9 they don't need a digital learning plan. However, in  
10 the application they did have some waivers associated  
11 with a digital learning plan. So just for  
12 clarification I've got those separated out here.

13           Is that correct about the digital learning plan?

14           MS. PROVENZA: That's correct. If this is  
15 approved, we would not need a digital learning plan  
16 for our buildings.

17                           WAIVERS GROUP #1

18           MS. JAMES: In the first set of waivers, number  
19 one is Attendance. I did not have any legal concerns  
20 regarding that waiver request.

21           The second is Six-Hour Instructional Day. No  
22 legal concerns.

23           The third is Recess. No legal concerns.

24           The fourth is Clock Hours. No legal concerns.

25           Are there any questions from the Panel regarding

1 that group?

2 NEW WAIVERS

3 MS. JAMES: Okay. And the new waivers that are  
4 just for this virtual school are the next set.

5 The first is School Safety Policies and  
6 Procedures. I did not have any legal concerns  
7 regarding that waiver request.

8 The second is Defibrillators Required and CPR.  
9 I did not have any legal concerns on that one.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So my question is do you plan  
11 to have a building with your staff located in that  
12 building or are you -- where will your staff be?

13 MS. PROVENZA: So the staff could potentially be  
14 in one of our buildings. If we were going to do  
15 that, we would have them probably at our Bentonville  
16 campus.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. And so that building  
18 is already --

19 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- outlined with all the  
21 safety guidelines?

22 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

24 MS. JAMES: The third waiver is Emergency Plans  
25 of Communication. I did not have any legal concerns

1 on that one.

2 The fourth, Eye and Vision Screening, did not  
3 have any legal concerns.

4 The fifth, Fire Hazard Inspections, no legal  
5 concerns.

6 The sixth, Food Services, no legal concerns.

7 The seventh --

8 I'm sorry.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So Food Services, no --  
10 students will be at home, so --

11 MS. PROVENZA: Correct.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- you'll not be providing  
13 any food services?

14 MS. PROVENZA: Correct.

15 MS. JAMES: The seventh is Health and Wellness  
16 Plan. No legal concerns.

17 The eighth, Health -- I'm sorry -- Health and  
18 Safety Services, no legal concerns.

19 The ninth is Student Discipline Procedures. No  
20 legal concerns.

21 The tenth, Tornado --

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Let's stop there.

23 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So talk to us a little bit  
25 about when you're running a totally virtual school --

1 MS. PROVENZA: Yes.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- and you're doing  
3 synchronized learning, so some -- there is a  
4 potential for issues to occur.

5 MS. PROVENZA: Sure. And so part of that would  
6 be part of our professional development, working with  
7 our teachers on how you continue to keep students  
8 engaged when they are virtual and they're not there  
9 in the classroom and you can't do some of those  
10 typical teacher things, like proximity and those  
11 things. But there are some things that I think  
12 through our professional development we could really  
13 help our teachers with. We wouldn't be doing things  
14 like out-of-school suspension, things like that, that  
15 would normally apply in a discipline plan or ISS.  
16 Those kinds of traditional forms of discipline  
17 wouldn't be appropriate in a virtual school. So it  
18 would primarily have to be about engagement with the  
19 students.

20 MR. DAVIS: And can you build on that a little  
21 bit for me?

22 MS. PROVENZA: Sure.

23 MR. DAVIS: Considering that in a model like  
24 this we all understand how important parents are, is  
25 there a plan to think about how do we engage parents

1 in regards to disciplinary -- or what does that look  
2 like --

3 MS. PROVENZA: Sure. Absolutely.

4 MR. DAVIS: -- moving forward if there are some  
5 disruptions?

6 MS. PROVENZA: Yeah. So something that's been  
7 really great about our current Founders campuses is  
8 that we really emphasize that anyway with our  
9 schools. We want our parents involved in what their  
10 students are learning in their education,  
11 participating. And so we're going to continue to  
12 have that full-blown expectation with our virtual  
13 parents as well and work with them on what does this  
14 look like when you have your kid at home and how they  
15 can best support both the teachers and their  
16 students.

17 MR. DAVIS: And another question, not  
18 necessarily as related to the legal review, and just  
19 for clarity's sake, what we're talking about when we  
20 talk about an expansion is we're talking about a  
21 fully online expansion, that the expansion would not  
22 have any sort of added value to any other campuses  
23 that you currently have in person?

24 MS. PROVENZA: Correct. It would be a separate  
25 virtual building, for lack of a better word. It's a

1 metal building. But it's a separate virtual school.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Ms. James.

3 MS. JAMES: Okay. We're to number 10, Tornado  
4 and Earthquake Safety Drills. Did not have any legal  
5 concerns regarding that waiver request.

6 Number 11, Facilities, Custodial Maintenance,  
7 Repair and Renovation -- no legal concerns.

8 Number 12, the Fire Marshall Program, no legal  
9 concerns.

10 Number 13, Report Cards, no legal concerns.

11 Number 14, Pledge of Allegiance, no legal  
12 concerns.

13 Number 15, Emergency First Aid Personnel, no  
14 legal concerns.

15 And that brings us to the end of the list of new  
16 waivers. Are there any questions at this time?

17 CURRENT WAIVERS

18 MS. JAMES: Next, we have the list of waivers  
19 that Founders currently has at their Bentonville  
20 campus. And what I've done here is I've updated the  
21 citations. If they had something that was repealed  
22 or outdated, we went ahead and updated on this sheet  
23 so that it is cleaned up.

24 The first is Acquisition of Commodities. Did  
25 not have any legal concerns with that waiver request.

1                   Number 2, Alternative Learning Environment. I  
2 did not have any legal concerns.

3                   Number 3, Library Media Services, no legal  
4 concerns.

5                   Number 4, Board of Directors, no legal concerns.

6                   Number 5, General Business Manager, no legal  
7 concerns.

8                   Number 6, Comprehensive School Counseling  
9 Program, did not have any legal concerns.

10                   Was there something you needed to add?

11                   MS. PROVENZA: No, I think we're good.

12                   MS. JAMES: Okay. Okay.

13                   Number 7, Superintendent, no legal concerns.

14                   Number 8, Principal, no legal concerns.

15                   Number 9, Teacher Licensure, no legal concerns.

16                   Number 10, Flag Display, no legal concerns.

17                   Number 11, Leased Academic Facilities, no legal  
18 concerns.

19                   Number 12, Gifted and Talented, no legal  
20 concerns.

21                   Number 13, Grading Scale, no legal concerns.

22                   Would y'all rather me just list 14 through 24  
23 and say no legal concerns, or would you prefer that I  
24 go through these one-by-one?

25                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I'm fine if you just want to

1 list them together.

2 MS. JAMES: Okay. We have a list here; 14  
3 through 24 is on the next page. I don't have any  
4 legal concerns regarding any of those waiver  
5 requests.

6 Does the Panel have any questions about that  
7 group?

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I'll have questions but --

9 MS. JAMES: Okay.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- keep going.

11 MS. JAMES: Okay.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mine is more of a holistic  
13 question.

14 MS. JAMES: Okay. And then on the next page, on  
15 25 through 28, I did not have any legal concerns.  
16 However, on number 29, School Calendar, School Start  
17 Date, I know that oftentimes the Panel asks for more  
18 information or rationale on that waiver request. So  
19 I'll ask Ms. Provenza for that.

20 MS. PROVENZA: Sure. Yes. So in the past,  
21 since our school opened we have had the School  
22 Calendar waiver in place for the school start date.  
23 And that was simply to provide us with some  
24 flexibility in terms of instruction, if we needed to  
25 -- God bless you -- stretch it out a little bit more



1 or start the school year a little bit earlier in  
2 order to accommodate semesters. And so that's what  
3 that was there for.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So what's your plan for this  
5 year?

6 MS. PROVENZA: Our plan for this year, this  
7 current year, right this second I think we -- I have  
8 us still starting on the 15th because they pushed  
9 back the start date ruling. The 15th works out  
10 really, really well in terms of balancing your  
11 semesters. It gets hard when the fall semester is so  
12 short and then you -- all of your things have to  
13 happen in the spring with all of the other things  
14 that go on in the spring. So it's nice to have those  
15 semesters a little bit more balanced.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Do you want to go ahead and  
17 finish the rest and then we'll start in on questions?

18 MS. JAMES: And the last three waivers on that  
19 list, 30 through 32, I do not have any legal  
20 concerns.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you. Stay close.

22 MS. JAMES: I will be right here.

23 PANEL QUESTIONS

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Let's start with  
25 questions.

1 Dr. Wright-McMurray, do you have any questions  
2 about the waivers or the application?

3 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you for your  
4 presentation and providing a little bit more detail  
5 on what you guys are planning to do. I don't have  
6 questions specifically about the waivers, but I did  
7 have some points of clarification that I wanted to  
8 kind of touch on.

9 MS. PROVENZA: Sure.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So as it being a  
11 completely virtual environment -- and I did  
12 appreciate how you kind of outlined your supports  
13 that you would have for students that have IEPs or  
14 504 plans. But if we get into a situation with a  
15 student that we feel like that the virtual  
16 environment is just not meeting their needs, are  
17 there opportunities for them to transition to a  
18 brick-and-mortar facility that would provide that for  
19 them?

20 MS. PROVENZA: Sure. So as of right now, our  
21 brick-and-mortar facilities are in Central Arkansas  
22 and Northwest Arkansas. And for students in those  
23 two areas of the state it would be a very easy  
24 transition for them to begin attending one of our  
25 brick-and-mortar schools if that were the case. If

1 that were not the case, we would work with them on  
2 additional supports if we felt like it was something  
3 that we could support them through, through the  
4 virtual program, or we would just talk to them about  
5 what's going to be best for the student. Because if  
6 they're -- if it's a situation where a virtual  
7 environment is truly not the best for them, we would  
8 need to talk with the parents and the students about  
9 that. Sure.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And then my second  
11 question, I see you have listed on your list of staff  
12 there's a CTE Director?

13 MS. PROVENZA: Uh-huh.

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And so just was curious on  
15 how that would be offered in your virtual  
16 environment, CTE options?

17 MS. PROVENZA: Sure. So he is kind of the guru  
18 of CTE things. I'm going to speak to it as best I  
19 can. But I do know that that's something that he's  
20 been working on this year with some of our other  
21 schools and with our like West Little Rock Founders,  
22 because he's here in Little Rock. So he's worked  
23 with them quite a bit. But our hope is to continue  
24 to offer those opportunities to students. We've  
25 partnered with Metro for some services for our

1 students and they're really enjoying it. So if we  
2 can open those opportunities to our virtual students  
3 as well, that would be fantastic. So --

4 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you. I just know  
5 that we've done quite a bit of work with Virtual  
6 Arkansas in building out some courses that CTE  
7 teachers can teach in the virtual environment. So  
8 that may be a resource you would want to look into.

9 MS. PROVENZA: Fantastic.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Davis?

11 MR. DAVIS: And my question follows up a little  
12 bit on the first question and I'm really interested  
13 in getting your thinking around -- particularly in  
14 Northwest Arkansas, clearly there is a demand, and  
15 some may say it's demonstrated by the wait-list that  
16 you have in Northwest Arkansas. How are you thinking  
17 about potentially families -- what happens with a  
18 family who is interested in being in the brick-and-  
19 mortar environment that may start off online? Are  
20 they given priority when it comes to a wait-list? Is  
21 -- how are you thinking about potentially a family  
22 that may be interested in brick-and-mortar, doesn't  
23 have the opportunity to do so because they're not  
24 selected through the lottery, decide to do the  
25 virtual, and then -- but are still interested in

1 being brought on campus? How does that happen or  
2 what's the thinking there? Or will priority be given  
3 to those that are on the wait-list, whether they are  
4 in the virtual environment or not?

5 MS. PROVENZA: So right now the way our priority  
6 is set-up is one of the priority levels is for  
7 students who are already enrolled in one of our  
8 schools. So, for example, if they wanted to transfer  
9 from the Bentonville campus to the Rogers campus,  
10 those students would have priority. It would work  
11 the same way with our virtual campus since it would  
12 be one of our schools; if they wanted to transfer to  
13 one of the brick-and-mortars, then they would have  
14 that opportunity to do that.

15 MR. DAVIS: Okay. Is that something that needs  
16 to be indicated in --

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Davis, check your  
18 microphone and see if it's on green.

19 MR. DAVIS: It is.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

21 MR. DAVIS: Is that something that needs to be  
22 -- from a legal standpoint, is that something that  
23 needs to be indicated in some portion of the  
24 application that students who are a part of the  
25 virtual are given priority in regards to enrollment

1 in brick-and-mortar campuses?

2 MS. JAMES: It's not currently in the  
3 application. If the school is stating it on the  
4 record at the meeting, that's an amendment to the  
5 application so-to-speak. It's one of the changes  
6 that I believe they can make on the record.

7 MR. DAVIS: Thanks. And then my other question  
8 has to do with the idea of maintaining culture.  
9 Obviously, what I know about the institution, the  
10 cultural aspects of what you do are critically  
11 important. I think it is something that is of high  
12 priority to the school and to those families that  
13 decide to engage around the type of education being  
14 provided. How do you think about transitioning that  
15 or pulling that culture into an online platform,  
16 particularly for students who may not be in  
17 relationship physically with the brick-and-mortar  
18 institutions?

19 MS. PROVENZA: Sure. So one of the ways we want  
20 to do that is through the synchronous instruction  
21 that will ultimately also take place. So, you know,  
22 you're going to have both types of instruction in  
23 terms of virtual learning. And to be able to pull  
24 some of that culture in when the students have more  
25 collaboration time, for lack of a better word, when

1 they are meeting together virtually. But then also  
2 our hope is that we can interest families across the  
3 state so that we create these little pockets of  
4 Founders that are all across the state where the  
5 students may be attending virtually, but then we  
6 create these opportunities if they're in close  
7 proximity to each other for them to come together and  
8 do some of those things that we're accustomed to  
9 doing in brick-and-mortar.

10 MR. DAVIS: Thank you. Nothing else from me.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini?

12 MS. SARACINI: I do not have any at this time.  
13 I just want to clarify only one thing.

14 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am.

15 MS. SARACINI: It's not a question -- that you  
16 did pull the waiver for Guidance Program?

17 MS. PROVENZA: Correct.

18 MS. SARACINI: Okay. Okay. That's more of a  
19 question.

20 MS. PROVENZA: No problem.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Flowers?

22 DR. FLOWERS: Yes. Thank you.

23 So I think that the opportunity to offer and  
24 reach students virtually across the state is  
25 wonderful. But I do feel as though there's certain

1 things that you may see, struggles in a brick-and-  
2 mortar that you may not see so quickly online. So  
3 can you speak to me about your wraparound services,  
4 the ones that you will offer?

5 MS. PROVENZA: Absolutely. So obviously we'll  
6 be doing things like small group instruction, things  
7 like that, where we can work with students through  
8 assessments, things like that. We're going to be  
9 able to identify. Also, through that professional  
10 development we're hoping to train our teachers how to  
11 look for those things online, because students are  
12 going to give you clues, and to teach them how to  
13 really -- how to really look for that so that they  
14 know how to offer proper support. Obviously, we're  
15 going to have, you know, interventions where  
16 necessary, all of those kinds of things to make sure  
17 that our students really have a great foundation, and  
18 then have anything extra that they might need to make  
19 them successful. Yeah, absolutely.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So the 956 students in  
21 Bentonville, and your cap there is --

22 MS. PROVENZA: Our total charter cap is -- oh,  
23 cap at each building -- oh, off the top of my head --  
24 let me look on that one.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.



1 MS. PROVENZA: I think it's -- oh, boy -- I want  
2 to say that one is about 1,000 students.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: We'll see if we can't pull  
4 that up.

5 MS. PROVENZA: Do you have the ability to pull  
6 that up --

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: That's what I want to look  
8 at.

9 MS. PROVENZA: -- per school cap?

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Because I think, coming back  
11 to Mr. Davis's question about if students need to  
12 transition from one LEA to another LEA, is what is  
13 that opportunity during the school year. And it  
14 depends on have you met your cap for that school.

15 MS. PROVENZA: Sure.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Right? And do you accept  
17 students after you've established your lottery?

18 MS. PROVENZA: Right.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: If that's in your plan. So  
20 that's one question to kind of see where you are in  
21 that.

22 The second question is then you're asking for an  
23 increase of 500. And the way I'm reading this  
24 application is that you're asking for that over a  
25 three-year period. So it doesn't lock you in to say

1 that only students from the northwest corner, that 75  
2 that you kind of had planned for -- but if you went  
3 over that and you were still under the total amount  
4 that you had planned for that year -- flip back to  
5 that page. So if you were under the 250 for next  
6 school year it wouldn't really matter where they are  
7 in the state; those are just kind of your  
8 projections. Correct?

9 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am. Those are just  
10 projections based on kind of what we've seen so far  
11 in terms of interest. We know we --

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And currently you have 94  
13 students online, and moving to 250 online you would  
14 have plenty of trained staff to be able to  
15 accommodate that?

16 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: K-12?

18 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And talk to me a little bit  
20 about -- the idea of moving statewide means that  
21 there could be a child anywhere that is  
22 participating. So you will provide all of the  
23 technology for those students?

24 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am. If they have a need  
25 for technology and they don't have their own, we're

1 prepared to provide that for them.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Including WiFi, whatever they  
3 need?

4 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And when I was reading  
6 through this, northwest, northeast, central --  
7 southern I'm just kind of thinking is the whole  
8 southern part. And then there was rural listed. And  
9 I really didn't know -- Arkansas is rural. So --

10 MS. PROVENZA: Great point.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- what section of the state  
12 is "rural?"

13 MS. PROVENZA: I was thinking more in terms of,  
14 you know, we have kind of our larger cities in those  
15 areas -- you know, we've got Jonesboro, we've got  
16 Little Rock, we've got the Bentonville area, we've  
17 got -- and so just any of those areas in between is  
18 really kind of what I was thinking.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And where would the southern  
20 be then if that were a city?

21 MS. PROVENZA: Oh, sure. Oh, gosh. El Dorado,  
22 Arkadelphia, the whole Texarkana -- the whole  
23 southern part.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I thought it was interesting.  
25 I'm all about organization, so it didn't make any

1 sense to me. Sorry.

2 So a student can be anywhere, and when it comes  
3 times to test tell me how you're going to insure that  
4 all -- that we're getting 95% or more tested --

5 MS. PROVENZA: Sure.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- in a secure testing site.  
7 So talk to us a little bit about how that's going to  
8 happen. I live in Bono, Arkansas.

9 MS. PROVENZA: Okay. So for the students that  
10 are close to a brick-and-mortar that would be a  
11 little bit easier; we can bring them in. For the  
12 students that are not near a brick-and-mortar we're  
13 going to go to them and we'll set up a remote testing  
14 location for them to come, and then we will -- we  
15 will test them in person.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So that might be you'll rent  
17 --

18 MS. PROVENZA: Sure. We might get a ballroom at  
19 a hotel or, you know, a facility in the area,  
20 something out of a church, whatever; partner with a  
21 local school, we can borrow one of their rooms.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Let me see if I can think of  
23 any other questions. A lot of flags I have to move  
24 through --

25 MS. PROVENZA: We saw that.

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- to make sure.

2 I think I'm still stuck on School Calendar.

3 MS. PROVENZA: Okay.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And our legislature has given  
5 us so many options for school calendars. And this  
6 approval today would fall under your Founders  
7 Classical Academies, which would give you all of  
8 these waivers through 2028. So I'm trying to wrap my  
9 mind around -- this year you could start July 1 or  
10 after by decision of our legislators. So I'm  
11 struggling with why we would continue to give School  
12 Calendar/School Start-Date waivers.

13 MS. PROVENZA: I mean, and like I said, it was  
14 really for that flexibility piece for us to determine  
15 those learning needs and how the things were going to  
16 fall. But if that's a sticking point waiver --

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I'm just trying to  
18 understand, because if you're going to provide 178  
19 days of instruction, you know, is there some  
20 rationale? I'm just trying to get to the rationale,  
21 what you're thinking.

22 MS. PROVENZA: Sure. Yeah. So part of that is  
23 -- I mean I'll just be, you know, really up-front. I  
24 kind of hinted at it earlier. But when you have  
25 those more balanced semesters you're able to get more

1 instruction in before students start being held  
2 accountable in terms of their statewide assessment.  
3 So, and where we've been in Arkansas, the snow always  
4 happens in January and February, and then, you know,  
5 you're having to make up a lot of lost learning kind  
6 of opportunities. So having those balanced semesters  
7 is a real help. But --

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So have you -- has your  
9 schools been starting early?

10 MS. PROVENZA: We typically start that -- what  
11 is that -- the second -- the second or third week of  
12 August, right in there.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Uh-huh. So maybe a week  
14 earlier?

15 MS. PROVENZA: Maybe a week earlier.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And then are your schools  
17 approved for AMI days?

18 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And what is your plan for a  
20 totally virtual school? They would not take AMI  
21 days.

22 MS. PROVENZA: Correct.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Correct?

24 MS. PROVENZA: Correct.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So would they go 10 days

1 longer than potentially the other schools?

2 MS. PROVENZA: No, not necessarily. I mean we  
3 could adjust that calendar, because we're still going  
4 to have them held to that same standard.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Of 178 days?

6 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So they might finish up to 10  
8 days earlier?

9 MS. PROVENZA: They might.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Anybody have --

11 MS. SARACINI: It's not a question; maybe more a  
12 suggestion. I do not know if you're aware of the  
13 online endorsement academies that are free to  
14 teachers across the state. But I know in your  
15 rationale you talk about how it's so important for  
16 virtual teachers to be equipped --

17 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am.

18 MS. SARACINI: -- on -- it's just a different  
19 teach; it's different strategies.

20 MS. PROVENZA: It is. Yes.

21 MS. SARACINI: So I just wanted to make sure  
22 that you were aware of those opportunities and if  
23 your staff could take advantage of that, because they  
24 could end up with a online teaching endorsement for  
25 free. It's through Higher Education. We have about

1 six universities that are participating. So I would  
2 love to speak to you about that at the end or give  
3 you information on that.

4 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am. Absolutely.

5 MS. SARACINI: Because I do not think that the  
6 word gets out. I know we put it out in  
7 Commissioner's Memos. But, you know, it's a win-win  
8 for teachers --

9 MS. PROVENZA: Absolutely.

10 MS. SARACINI: -- because they not only take  
11 advantage of the endorsement and all the instruction,  
12 but also moves them up on that pay scale. So I think  
13 sometimes we just do not realize opportunities that  
14 are out there.

15 MS. PROVENZA: Absolutely. Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Talk to us a little bit about  
17 Fridays.

18 MS. PROVENZA: Okay.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So in your plan it looks like  
20 students are doing asynchronous learning. If they  
21 need intervention the teacher is -- has identified  
22 that during the week. Fill in after that.

23 MS. PROVENZA: Absolutely. So that's going to  
24 be one of those great opportunities to, like I was  
25 talking about earlier, with supports for students to



1 really focus in on what they are needing in terms of  
2 their support if they're needing extra tutoring, if  
3 they're needing a re-teach of something, if they're  
4 struggling in an area. So those days are going to be  
5 very devoted to helping all of our students -- and  
6 not just the students that are struggling but those  
7 students who are also being pretty successful,  
8 because they need a push as well and they need some  
9 enrichment. So that opportunity to really help all  
10 of our students.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: If a student were close to  
12 one of your brick-and-mortar schools, could they come  
13 in for intervention on Friday if they need to?

14 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Panel Members, other  
16 questions, concerns, discussion?

17 MR. DAVIS: Help me -- obviously, you mentioned  
18 before that we can look at, you know, just enrollment  
19 data and get an understanding that there is some  
20 significant interests in the model that is being  
21 provided, particularly where there are brick-and-  
22 mortars. Help me understand the process that you  
23 went to -- went through, if any, to gain a better  
24 understanding that this is a model that parents  
25 outside of those brick-and-mortar geographies might

1 be interested in. Give me just a little bit of  
2 understanding why you think that there is some  
3 interest in rural, in --

4 MS. PROVENZA: Sure.

5 MR. DAVIS: -- you know, other parts of the  
6 state.

7 MS. PROVENZA: Absolutely. We've actually had  
8 families reach out to us with that and say, "We would  
9 love to have a classical school in our town." And  
10 that would be great if there were maybe more than  
11 five kids who wanted that in that area. And so what  
12 this does is that offers that opportunity to them.  
13 So we've had families reach out to us. We have -- a  
14 lot of it -- and a lot of our success has honestly  
15 been word of mouth. That's how our school got to  
16 where it was; the families talked amongst themselves,  
17 talked to their friends, and that's kind of how we  
18 got there. And we're just kind of seeing that same  
19 thing in other parts of the state where they're,  
20 "Hey, I've heard about you and we'd really like this  
21 opportunity." So we think it would be a great way to  
22 reach those families who want it but who don't have  
23 access to a brick-and-mortar.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So let me just see where I  
25 am.

1 MS. PROVENZA: Okay.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: It's just me; not everybody  
3 else, just me. It's because your waivers would  
4 expire in 2028.

5 MS. PROVENZA: Uh-huh.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Just know that depending on  
7 what happens with the legislature there may be  
8 changes to school calendar.

9 MS. PROVENZA: Sure.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So this year, I don't think  
11 there's any problem. But as adjustments come we may  
12 have to pull charters back in and have another  
13 conversation about calendars, only because I think  
14 the point is what's the innovation. And, you know,  
15 when we first started this we had schools that said,  
16 "I'm going to go longer, more days; I need to start  
17 early because I'm going to go more days," or "we're  
18 putting in a really innovative model for our parents  
19 to make learning more accessible to them, to the  
20 students, but also accommodate, you know, the  
21 parents." And so, it feels like over time we've slid  
22 back into following the traditional calendar. And if  
23 we're going to follow a traditional calendar, why  
24 don't we follow a traditional calendar.

25 MS. PROVENZA: Sure.

1           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: You know, if you're going to  
2 get all the advantages of AMI days and everything  
3 else, then why aren't we following the same timeline  
4 that everyone else is following. So that's just kind  
5 of where I'm stuck. I don't think we need to hold it  
6 up for that, but just know that you may get a phone  
7 call someday and says, "Hey" --

8           MS. PROVENZA: Absolutely.

9           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: "-- we're going to reconsider  
10 it --

11          MS. PROVENZA: Absolutely.

12          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: "-- with more information."  
13 Because I think it's going to be something that we're  
14 going to have to really think about, if that's a wise  
15 move. Your point about having semesters, balanced  
16 semesters is valid, and I think every school district  
17 in the state would say the same thing. So I think  
18 that's something that we're going to hopefully get  
19 worked out --

20          MS. PROVENZA: Sure.

21          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- in the winter and maybe  
22 have a better idea about.

23          Any other, Dr. Flowers?

24          DR. FLOWERS: (shaking head from side to side.)

25          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini, any other?

1 MS. SARACINI: (shaking head from side to side.)

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Davis?

3 MR. DAVIS: (shaking head from side to side.)

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Wright-McMurray? Go  
5 right ahead.

6 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I do have one other  
7 question and just wanted to possibly get an idea of  
8 your past experience with offering the online  
9 instruction --

10 MS. PROVENZA: Uh-huh.

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- and what has that  
12 looked like for students that have already been in  
13 that instruction?

14 MS. PROVENZA: Sure. Yeah. So our digital  
15 learning plans --

16 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Uh-huh.

17 MS. PROVENZA: -- and how that's gone? It's  
18 actually gone pretty well. Our students and families  
19 have really appreciated it and have appreciated the  
20 opportunity to remain in our model and in our school,  
21 but then have that choice for them. And like I said,  
22 it was a good Band-Aid during Covid when we needed  
23 it. And, you know, we're -- we want to be able to do  
24 that statewide. I think the things that -- we've had  
25 a lot of things that were really good about it, but

1           then, admittedly, there's some things that were hard  
2           about it. And by having it -- having the online  
3           virtual school I think we can solve some of those  
4           problems. When teachers are split between in-person  
5           and online that gets really hard for them and not  
6           having some of that professional development to make  
7           it really solid and what does online teaching look  
8           like. Right? So I think we can solve some of those  
9           tweaks and those little issues to make it even better  
10          with standalone.

11           DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. But overall, you  
12          feel like your students come out on the other side in  
13          a good position, they have --

14           MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am.

15           DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- a good experience?

16           MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am.

17           DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Any major challenges that  
18          you feel like that you experienced have been  
19          addressed in the way y'all wanted to?

20           MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am.

21           DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

22           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. I'm back to checking  
23          my points. And I'm seeing in my notes that you have  
24          a cap of 1200 at Bentonville?

25           MS. PROVENZA: That sounds right. That is the

1 right number.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And you're currently at 956.

3 So --

4 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- in your policy you do  
6 accept students up until you fill up your cap?

7 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am. Or fill up the  
8 physical space.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Right. At West Little Rock  
10 it shows that you have a cap of 300 and you have 135  
11 there now. In the new Rogers that will be opening  
12 this fall, you have a cap of 1,000 --

13 MS. PROVENZA: Uh-huh.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- for that facility. And  
15 then you're asking for an additional 500 for the  
16 online. And that additional 500 will increase over  
17 three years to the full 500?

18 MS. PROVENZA: Yes, ma'am.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. All right. Let me  
20 find my sheet.

21 If there is no other discussion, I'll accept a  
22 motion.

23 MS. SARACINI: I make a motion to approve the  
24 amendment to increase the enrollment cap and to add a  
25 new campus virtual building statewide.

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: This is through June 30th of  
2 2028. Correct?

3 MS. SARACINI: Yes.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Is there --

5 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Second.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Second. All right. I have a  
7 motion by Ms. Saracini and a second by Dr. Wright-  
8 McMurray to approve the amendment request as stated.

9 Any discussion?

10 All those in favor?

11 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any opposed?

13 Motion is approved.

14 If you'll give us just a moment, they're going  
15 to complete their voting sheets. And we'll let them  
16 read those and then we'll move on.

17 MS. PROVENZA: Terrific.

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Congratulations.

19 MS. PROVENZA: Thank you. Appreciate it.

20 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Flowers.

22 DR. FLOWERS: I vote to approve the amendment  
23 request and new virtual building with statewide  
24 enrollment for Founders Classical Academy. I look  
25 forward to hearing about your success as you provide



1 access to students across the state and produce  
2 college and career ready scholars.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Davis.

4 MR. DAVIS: I will vote to approve the new  
5 virtual building with statewide enrollment for  
6 Founders in order to provide access to the classical  
7 model to families throughout the state of Arkansas.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

9 Ms. Saracini.

10 MS. SARACINI: I support to approve the increase  
11 in the enrollment cap and to add a new virtual campus  
12 which will allow students across the state the  
13 opportunity to attend Founders Classical Academy and  
14 benefit from its model.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

16 Dr. Wright-McMurray.

17 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I support the amendment  
18 request. I believe the online model will provide  
19 opportunities for students to receive a high-quality  
20 education in underserved areas of the state.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

22 Congratulations.

23 MS. PROVENZA: Thank you, ma'am. Appreciate it.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: As you know, this will go  
25 before the State Board for review at the next monthly

1 meeting.

2 MS. PROVENZA: Yeah.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And good luck there.

4 MS. PROVENZA: Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

6 Panel Members, ready for the next item or a  
7 quick break?

8 All right. Next item it is.

9 2. PREMIER HIGH SCHOOLS OF ARKANSAS.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Sutherlin.

11 DR. SUTHERLIN: All right. Matthew Sutherlin,  
12 Standards and Systems Support/Charter.

13 The charter at Premier High Schools of Arkansas  
14 is requesting to add a new virtual building with  
15 statewide enrollment and to increase the enrollment  
16 cap from 600 to 875.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: That's new.

18 DR. SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: 600 to 875. All right.

20 If all those speaking on behalf of Premier High  
21 Schools of Arkansas would stand and raise your right  
22 hand. Do you swear or affirm that the testimony  
23 you're about to give shall be the truth, the whole  
24 truth, and nothing but the truth?

25 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. James.

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

4 Premier will have 20 minutes for its  
5 presentation. As far as I know, there's no  
6 opposition to the amendment. Then we will go over  
7 the legal review following the presentation.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Good morning.

9 MR. FELTON: Good morning. My name is Dennis  
10 Felton. I serve as the State Director of Premier  
11 High Schools of Arkansas. Thank y'all for having me  
12 this morning.

13 Just sharing again there is support of our  
14 national and our state support that we have here  
15 today. I'm not going to re-read the names, but we're  
16 excited to have the support we have nationally and  
17 locally. Once again, you guys know Premier High  
18 School is another brand of the educational models  
19 that Responsive Education Solutions offers across the  
20 nation.

21 What we're seeking here today is to add a  
22 virtual school through our Premier High Schools of  
23 Arkansas. We want the virtual school cap to be 250  
24 students, which will change our enrollment cap from  
25 675 -- no, to 875 -- I mean 625 to 875. We've been

1 blessed to serve Premier High Schools in locations  
2 across the state, including additional locations  
3 we'll be adding this fall. We're in Little Rock,  
4 North Little Rock, Springdale, Fort Smith, and  
5 Texarkana.

6 Just giving you a little bit of background, you  
7 know, when our campuses opened, some of the impact  
8 we've had, we have seen a trend of students not only  
9 being awarded high school diplomas but, you know,  
10 we've seen teen parents and students who had  
11 previously dropped out of high school, we've seen  
12 students have opportunities to earn college credit,  
13 and as well as getting those students engaged in  
14 post-secondary endeavors.

15 Some recognitions -- we've had campuses just  
16 recently as 2021 to be recognized for ELA growth at  
17 high school. That's our North Little Rock campus.  
18 We have campuses, like our Little Rock campus, that's  
19 engaged in our professional learning community  
20 project with the state of Arkansas to engage in that  
21 endeavor. And one of our schools has even been  
22 recognized by the Arkansas Department of Education  
23 Charter School Office for best practices in  
24 personalized learning.

25 And so one of the things we're trying to do is

1 add, once again, a virtual campus to our Premier High  
2 Schools of Arkansas charter. The new campus, Premier  
3 Online, will serve as a virtual campus for our  
4 Premier High School students across the state with a  
5 cap of 250 students.

6 Looking at the district structure, Premier High  
7 Schools of Arkansas with our brick-and-mortar  
8 locations, and then we'll be adding Premier High  
9 School online.

10 One of the things we plan to do is just provide  
11 this unique educational model to students across the  
12 state that's going to provide a high-quality  
13 personalized virtual education. Once again, Premier  
14 offers the personalized learning model that's very  
15 unique to any other school in the state, and we would  
16 like to continue to offer this model through our  
17 virtual classroom.

18 One of the things that we will ultimately plan  
19 to continue to do is this will work towards our  
20 mission. We want to continue to have innovative  
21 academic program access for our students. We want to  
22 continue to work towards decreasing the dropout rate  
23 across the state and get some of these marginalized  
24 disengaged youth back into the educational fold. We  
25 want to continue to be responsive to our students'

1 and our parents' interests. I think we've shared  
2 with you today in our presentation, as well as the  
3 data presented to you, as well as the letters from  
4 our parents and support, our parents and students  
5 talking about their experience with the virtual  
6 education. And then, ultimately, just replicating  
7 this best practices identified by the Arkansas  
8 Department of Education.

9 There goes that rule again, so you can blame me.

10 We do plan on having students across the state  
11 in various pockets. We see in the demand as we  
12 expand our brick-and-mortar locations that the  
13 communities have been responsive to this model and  
14 have shown an interest in this model.

15 There it gives you kind of a breakdown of the  
16 building caps for each location and you see we've  
17 added the Premier Online. It gives you the total  
18 enrollment. You also see our current enrollment in  
19 all our brick-and-mortar locations currently  
20 operating, as well as the interest in the virtual  
21 hybrid option for this school year.

22 One of the things we've seen is the demand in  
23 virtual learning. You know, the past three years  
24 across our brick-and-mortars we've seen an interest  
25 in virtual education. Currently, over 130 students

1 in our brick-and-mortar locations are currently  
2 participating in a virtual hybrid option. And we're  
3 seeking, instead of, if we get approved today, having  
4 five different learning plans to run it to one  
5 virtual campus.

6 We did research, and you can even see the  
7 demand. It's very strong here in Arkansas. I think  
8 the last data I looked at, Arkansas charters serve  
9 about 23,000 students. And out of those 23,000  
10 students 8,500 of them are interested in attending a  
11 virtual charter school.

12 I think one of the things that we can all say is  
13 that, you know, online learning is here to stay.  
14 It's one of the things, as Susan mentioned, that, you  
15 know, Covid has challenged us, and I think we've  
16 learned a lot from it. But one of the things that  
17 there will always be is a significant percentage of  
18 parents and students who are interested in a virtual  
19 option. And I think it's also indicated in the data  
20 that two of the larger state's charter systems are  
21 virtual education.

22 One of the things we've learned also through our  
23 digital learning plan, you know, students can learn  
24 through a myriad of instructional options. We've  
25 learned about -- Ms. Saracini has commented about the

1 specialization that's needed for these teachers that  
2 are engaging in a virtual platform. We've learning  
3 about what the instruction and support needs to look  
4 like, and professional development, as well as how do  
5 we increase that mutual accountability, increase it  
6 using effective communication, and then still having  
7 that flexibility. And then one of the things that we  
8 home in on and we focus on at Premier is  
9 personalized. And so we were still arguing that  
10 virtual education is still not a one-size-fits-all;  
11 it must be personalized. We've seen since we've had  
12 students involved in our digital learning program,  
13 due to the attendance policies it allows them to get  
14 credit for engaging in their coursework when it fits  
15 their schedule. We have students that are working  
16 from 8:00 to 4:00; we have students that work from  
17 4:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. And so depending on their  
18 schedule is when they can do their coursework. It's  
19 also increased the engagement and increased the  
20 flexibility for our schools that have responsibility  
21 outside of school and able to hit those priorities,  
22 as well as still fulfill their goal of graduating  
23 from high school. And then using the virtual  
24 platform allows us as administrators to access real-  
25 time data. We're able to look at data to look at



1 trends and be able to identify student performance  
2 training, as well as deficiencies on things that  
3 students need.

4 We want to continue through this model to spread  
5 our mission and vision. We'll continue to provide  
6 hope through a caring mastery-based learning  
7 environment, when we're still trying to see more  
8 academic excellence in our students.

9 Who will we serve? We'll continue to serve  
10 students that are looking for smaller personalized  
11 learning environments; students are disengaged;  
12 students who have left high school and just need a  
13 few credits to graduate; students who are not being  
14 successful in the traditional model. Maybe that  
15 student is a parent, maybe that student is a part-  
16 time employee or full-time employee.

17 So what are the benefits for our students? They  
18 will be exposed to staff members who are specialized  
19 in the training by national standards of online  
20 teaching. They'll still be able to participate in  
21 programs and engagement activities on our brick-and-  
22 mortar campus that is in close proximity and have the  
23 flexibility. And then, it also provides  
24 accessibility to students that are not in close  
25 proximity to a Premier High School.

1           One of the things that we will focus on is  
2           making sure that our staff continues to operate like  
3           a professional learning community, always having  
4           conversations around student data, always making  
5           data-driven decisions, are we providing adequate  
6           support and instructional resources for our staff.

7           The accountability -- being able to track  
8           student data that engage in this virtual setting,  
9           being able to pinpoint what's working and what's not  
10          working for each individual student, and being able  
11          to make the necessary adjustments that need it. Also  
12          providing that teacher feedback and support, to be  
13          able to support them and support our students. And  
14          then, to analyze data across the school to be able to  
15          make the best decisions for that school.

16          So looking at a day in the life of a student in  
17          our virtual program -- students still engaged in our  
18          current education program will still have the  
19          academic environment piece, as well as the college  
20          and career guidance piece. They have an opportunity  
21          to engage in small group one-on-one tutorial, as well  
22          as still trying to get students engaged in our  
23          programs, as well as the industry-based  
24          certifications in those communities and our online  
25          certifications.

1           We continue to provide support through our  
2 administrators, also our college and career advising,  
3 our learning mentor, our technology program, as well  
4 as our learning facilitator in our Student Success  
5 Center which is located on those brick-and-mortar  
6 campuses.

7           We're looking to partner. We know we won't do  
8 this alone. And so we're excited that we have people  
9 like the High School Virtual Academy with  
10 ResponsiveEd; it's been running over 10 years to be  
11 (inaudible) and uses stall partners. We have people,  
12 like Virtual Arkansas, we've been working for almost  
13 -- over 10 years and working to offer additional  
14 course offerings, and working with other charter  
15 online providers. I mean, you know, when we started  
16 with this, me and Susan probably a year-and-a-half  
17 ago we started with conversations with, you know,  
18 Arkansas Virtual Academy, Arkansas Connections  
19 Academy, about some of the things they learned and  
20 some of the best practices.

21           Very proud of the support that ResponsiveEd has  
22 provided, as well as the state support to carry out  
23 this endeavor. You see we have our national team  
24 members here to be able to support us in this  
25 endeavor, as well as being able to support us as we

1 continue to move forward.

2 Once again, you remember Premier High Schools  
3 started in 2013 with just 10 graduates. We're  
4 excited next month we're going to have over 60  
5 students receiving high school diplomas that  
6 otherwise would not have them and to date having more  
7 than 140 students with high school diplomas.

8 Once again, we're asking to add a virtual school  
9 for the 2022-23 school year and also to increase our  
10 enrollment cap by 250 students.

11 That's just a small disclaimer about our  
12 waivers, and I'm sure Ms. James will talk about that  
13 as well. We're always seeking the additional waivers  
14 we have in our other Premiers and then the new  
15 waivers we have are applicable to the virtual  
16 building.

17 At Premier High School we continue to want to  
18 keep the students at the front of our decisions and  
19 aiming to be responsive to the needs of the  
20 communities in Arkansas.

21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

23 Ms. James.

24 LEGAL REVIEW

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

1 Department.

2 And just to go over the legal review -- again,  
3 when I say I have no legal concerns that doesn't mean  
4 there won't be substantive issues or questions; I'm  
5 just confirming that the correct code sections,  
6 standards and rules are listed. Additionally, it's  
7 my understanding that Premier is not asking for a  
8 digital learning plan, rather a fully -- this will be  
9 a fully virtual school, so they won't need one for  
10 this school. Also -- and I forgot to mention this  
11 with Founders -- if there's not a waiver listed on  
12 the legal review, that means either it's been  
13 rescinded or -- I mean this should be a complete  
14 list; this is what I'm trying to say. And we'll  
15 confirm that at the end of the legal review.

16 DIGITAL LEARNING PLAN WAIVERS

17 MS. JAMES: The first set were the waivers that  
18 Premier had listed for the digital learning plan,  
19 even though they're not asking for that. I've just  
20 got it organized that way so that you can see from  
21 the application that that's what we're looking at.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a question.

23 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: On Class Size and Teaching  
25 Load, what's your anticipated class size and teaching

1 load for your virtual teachers?

2 MR. FELTON: I would anticipate a range of  
3 probably 40 to 50 students. You mean the entire  
4 load, right?

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. So you're saying like  
6 a high school teacher would have 40 to 50 students  
7 for the semester?

8 MR. FELTON: Right. For like English 1.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Per class or the total?

10 MR. FELTON: No, no. That would be total.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. All right.

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

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yeah.

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- about the digital part.

15 So I made a note -- and this may be a point of  
16 clarification for me -- I thought you said something  
17 about five digital learning plans in your comments.  
18 What was that in reference to?

19 MR. FELTON: This upcoming school year we will  
20 actually have five brick-and-mortar campuses.

21 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. In my notes I wrote  
22 that you said five digital learning plans, and so I  
23 thought that when --

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So, currently, each one of  
25 these campuses is operating under an approved digital

1 learning plan. But instead of having that at each  
2 campus, instead what they're asking for is a virtual  
3 school with its own LEA number. And those students  
4 that want to take a virtual option would go to this  
5 new school.

6 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And so, I'll help you.

8 MR. FELTON: Yeah.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: You fill in anywhere we go.  
10 But that's to prevent your teachers from having to do  
11 onsite instruction and virtual instruction at the  
12 same time.

13 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

14 MR. FELTON: What she said.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Correct?

16 MR. FELTON: What she said.

17 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

18 MS. JAMES: But they're not asking for a digital  
19 learning plan for this school because they don't need  
20 it.

21 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

22 MS. JAMES: I had to learn a lot too.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: May I come back to the Class  
24 Size and Teaching Load? So in this virtual  
25 instruction, the reason you're requesting a waiver is

1 because obviously 9th through 12th grade the teaching  
2 load is 150.

3 MR. FELTON: Uh-huh.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So I'm a little puzzled why  
5 you would ask for a Teaching Load waiver, number one.  
6 But maybe it's because right now in the law -- in the  
7 rules they haven't been separated; they will be when  
8 the new rules are approved. [clearing throat] Excuse  
9 me. Do you expect the class size might be larger  
10 than the allowed class size? Is that what you're  
11 thinking possibly?

12 MR. FELTON: Sometimes I know we experience,  
13 especially with our students that are behind, they're  
14 taking credit recovery and things like that -- so  
15 still to give us the flexibility.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So once those are separated,  
17 that's something, Ms. James, we'll need to make a  
18 note of to come back with him and look at that, see  
19 what -- see how it really works out.

20 MS. JAMES: Okay.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: For the first five waiver  
22 requests under Digital Learning Plan I did not have  
23 any legal concerns.

24 The next set of waivers or --

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Sorry. I want to ask one



1 more question. Recess does not apply to 9 through  
2 12.

3 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am. We can -- okay.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: If Mr. Felton is agreeable to  
5 that?

6 MR. FELTON: We can rescind that waiver, 6-16-  
7 102(a)(5).

8 NEW WAIVERS

9 MS. JAMES: The next set of waivers are the new  
10 ones for this virtual school.

11 On waivers number 1 through 5 I did not have any  
12 legal concerns.

13 When we get to waiver number 6 regarding Food  
14 Services, I did ask that Mr. Felton contact our Child  
15 Nutrition unit and make sure that the way they do  
16 plan to provide meals to their students when they are  
17 on campus receiving the additional support will not  
18 cause them any issues with child nutrition funding.  
19 And it's my understanding that Mr. Felton did reach  
20 out to the Child Nutrition unit about how they plan  
21 to serve meals. Right now, it's my understanding  
22 that there are some waivers in place from the USDA  
23 that will allow virtual students to pick up a meal  
24 and not eat the meal onsite. But I believe in June  
25 of this year those waivers are expiring. So I have

1 asked Mr. Felton to follow-up with the Child  
2 Nutrition unit and make sure that he is updated on  
3 the status of those waivers going forward.

4 Is that correct?

5 MR. FELTON: Yes. I will just confirm we'll be  
6 following up with the Child Nutrition unit after the  
7 waivers expire.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So talk a little bit more  
9 about that. So --

10 MR. FELTON: I have talked to them. Suzanne --

11 MS. JAMES: Suzanne Davidson.

12 MR. FELTON: -- Davidson communicated that since  
13 the waivers were expiring, since this building was  
14 100% virtual that I would not need -- wouldn't be  
15 expected to be serving meals. And all of our current  
16 brick-and-mortar campuses are serving meals, so --

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: (Gave a thumbs-up signal.)

18 MS. JAMES: The next group of waivers on this  
19 page are numbers 7 through 14. I did not have any  
20 legal concerns for that group.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: But we have questions.

22 So same question I asked the previous applicant  
23 is what's your plan for student discipline. I mean  
24 we've heard instances where students misbehaved  
25 online or I would think also that sometimes students

1 don't participate and engage like they should. They  
2 are kids. I'm glad I wasn't recorded when I was a  
3 student. But kind of talk to us about what your plan  
4 of action and what your training will be around that.

5 MR. FELTON: So I'm going to piggyback a little  
6 bit off some of what Susan said. We think it's  
7 really going to start with professional development  
8 with our administrators and teachers. And then  
9 that's going to be coupled with our orientation. We  
10 really believe that in this online environment is  
11 important to not only train our teachers but make  
12 sure we're communicating to parents and students our  
13 expectations, and then communicating the policies  
14 that follow. That way, they know whatever happens  
15 this is the next intervention. But really it's  
16 working with our staff and working with parents and  
17 students.

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And I think Mr. Davis asked  
19 the question last time, so we'll go ahead and get it  
20 out there. What if a student just is not in the  
21 right place, if online is not the right learning  
22 situation?

23 MR. FELTON: We will continue to work with  
24 families. We like to think of our-self as  
25 practitioners. And so if we're going to prescribe,

1           you know, certain educational practices for students  
2           then we want to make sure that we're giving parents  
3           the best information they need, and so, you know,  
4           whether that's one-on-one tutorials, it's small group  
5           instruction. I believe in the virtual setting what  
6           really stands out is the data. Okay. And so when  
7           we're making, you know, statements about a student is  
8           not struggling, what data are we using; what are the  
9           indicators, and then are we using those indicators to  
10          drive the support to change what we're seeing.

11                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Ms. James.

12                   MS. JAMES: I believe this takes us to the next  
13           page. The last two waivers in that second group are  
14           number 15 and 16. Did not have any legal concerns  
15           regarding those waivers.

16                   UPDATED LIST OF WAIVERS FOR PREMIER HIGH SCHOOL OF LR

17                   MS. JAMES: The next group of waivers is a  
18           cleaned up updated list of the waivers that Premier  
19           High School of Little Rock has. And again, like with  
20           Founders, we've updated code sections and taken off  
21           anything that's been repealed, updated rule names.

22                   On the first page, under that heading, I have  
23           waivers number 1 through 4. I did not have any legal  
24           concerns.

25                   On the next page we have waivers 5 through 9. I

1 don't have any legal concerns regarding those waiver  
2 requests.

3 On the next page, for waivers 10 through 16, I  
4 do not have any legal concerns.

5 On number 17, Personnel Policies, Daily Planning  
6 Period, I would like for Mr. Felton to please give  
7 some additional rationale to the Panel.

8 MR. FELTON: This is a waiver that we have in  
9 our brick-and-mortars as well. We just continue to  
10 seek the flexibility to be able to design the  
11 students' -- the teachers' schedule to support  
12 students. But this is not an attempt to burn  
13 teachers out or not give them adequate time to plan  
14 and prep.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So I think the question is do  
16 you provide adequate time for them to plan, prep --

17 MR. FELTON: We do.

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- and eat lunch?

19 MR. FELTON: We do. They're not teaching and  
20 eating lunch at the same time.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

22 MS. JAMES: I believe that covers number 18 as  
23 well.

24 On 19 and 20, no legal concerns.

25 On the next page, waivers 21 through 28, I don't

1 have any legal concerns.

2 On number 29, I've also asked Mr. Felton to  
3 provide some additional rationale for that request.

4 MR. FELTON: Once again, this is a waiver that's  
5 in existence in our brick-and-mortars as well.  
6 Typically at Premier High School we focus on making  
7 sure we offer the 22 units that are needed to meet  
8 graduation requirements. And then any -- then if we  
9 had a parent or student that's seeking an additional  
10 course outside of that, then we do offer that course  
11 through partners like Virtual Arkansas to provide  
12 that course.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Sorry, don't walk too far  
14 away.

15 So do you have student success plans on every  
16 student?

17 MR. FELTON: Yes.

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And so if a student wants to  
19 take additional classes in a particular area those  
20 are always provided?

21 MR. FELTON: It is.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

23 MS. JAMES: On that page for waivers 30 and 31,  
24 I do not have any legal concerns.

25 On number 32, School Calendar, School Start

1 Date, I'd like for Mr. Felton to provide some  
2 additional rationale for that waiver request.

3 MR. FELTON: I'm going to try to piggyback off  
4 some of Susan's. Seriously, in the past we have  
5 benefitted from having the flexibility in the student  
6 calendar because we do have a unique educational  
7 model. Sometimes we, you know, want to start early,  
8 even add days in, to be able to get students  
9 acclimated to the model as well. I'm sure I'll be  
10 working hand-in-hand with Susan and Mr. Taylor as we,  
11 you know, look at the legislation, the decisions that  
12 are made here in the future as far as what we need to  
13 do. And then we'll be visiting with you all about  
14 any necessary changes that need to be made.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: What date do you plan to  
16 start school this fall?

17 MR. FELTON: August 15th.

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: 178 days?

19 MR. FELTON: Yes.

20 MS. JAMES: And on the last four waiver  
21 requests, 33 through 36, I do not have any legal  
22 concerns.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Do you offer agriculture as a  
24 CTE class?

25 MR. FELTON: Our course offerings are through

1 Virtual Arkansas for Agriculture. But as we continue  
2 to -- you know, the state gets approved, you know,  
3 digital learning providers that, you know, continues  
4 to offer -- increase our offerings as well. And  
5 then, of course, with the partnerships with building  
6 brick-and-mortars as well.

7 MS. JAMES: The last thing I have, I'd just like  
8 for Mr. Felton to confirm that this legal review  
9 contains a complete list of the waivers they are  
10 requesting for this campus.

11 MR. FELTON: I confirm.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

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

15 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Just one remaining. And  
16 circling back around to your CTE offerings -- and so  
17 you say you partner right now with Virtual Arkansas  
18 to offer those courses. As a student matriculates  
19 through a program of study and gets into the upper  
20 level courses, how are you guys handling those  
21 offerings for a student? Because I know that there's  
22 some courses that are just not going to be available.

23 MR. FELTON: I'm going to speak to what we see  
24 historically. Historically, we've seen a trend with  
25 students that come in that are -- that have always



1           been engaged in a program and completed those  
2           requirements. That's why we do focus on the 22. And  
3           so what we've seen is a lot of students are more  
4           interested in our industry-based certifications. And  
5           so what you've seen in the state is a big push in  
6           this, because they're able to earn the certification  
7           within a year's time and then they know that  
8           automatically results in this type of pay or this  
9           type of employment. We've also seen -- I think  
10          you've seen this too -- with Covid a lot of  
11          industries have become innovative. And so when you  
12          look at your OSHA teams, our OSHA 30s, you know, the  
13          industrial technology, they're allowing students to  
14          engage in coursework virtually and earn those  
15          certifications. And so we see -- that seems to be  
16          the trend as well.

17                 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I guess just -- and I  
18                 appreciate that additional clarification. I guess  
19                 just my question, referencing back to the example of  
20                 Ag and so some of those hands-on pieces: what does  
21                 that look like for a student to have the opportunity  
22                 to engage in some of those hands-on components of the  
23                 courses?

24                 MR. FELTON: So we partner -- right now we have  
25                 partnerships with Little Rock Metro, partnerships

1 with NWETI; we're working on a partnership with  
2 University of Arkansas at Hope/Texarkana. And so you  
3 know they offer those hands-on partnerships as well.  
4 And so that's where we're really getting students  
5 engaged in the hands-on piece of it.

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

7 MR. FELTON: And then that leads to proficiency  
8 too. So students are able to earn those certificates  
9 of proficiency in those programs as well, not just  
10 taking a class.

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

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So just to clarify what your  
13 answer was, the students in the brick-and-mortar can  
14 go to other locations for onsite support?

15 MR. FELTON: Well, we have partnerships through  
16 our brick-and-mortar locations in those areas with  
17 career centers and higher institutions. And so the  
18 hands-on piece, that's where hands-on -- and the  
19 virtual piece, we still have virtual courses that  
20 students can take as well that lead to certification.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

22 MR. FELTON: But, you know, in the event -- I  
23 mean we would hope that -- you know, because we're  
24 blessed that we're in several parts of the state, and  
25 so that would be a student that would be in close

1           proximity to someone that was offering a brick-and-  
2           mortar, like a hands-on type deal.

3                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Davis?

4                   MR. DAVIS: Yeah. First of all, thank you so  
5           much for servicing the students that you serve.  
6           Considering that, I think most information would tell  
7           us the idea of wraparound services and being truly  
8           engaged with those students and those families are  
9           critically important. Give me an understanding on  
10          considering that if students will be virtual how you  
11          plan to provide those additional support services,  
12          particularly to students that are -- are having --  
13          that may be having some challenges in a traditional  
14          environment when it comes to education?

15                  MR. FELTON: I'm very excited. You know, one of  
16          the things that we do in this Premier deal, we use  
17          this word "personalized" a lot. And, you know,  
18          whether we're talking about a student that's coming  
19          to a building every day or a student that's logging  
20          in virtually every day, in our mind they still have  
21          to have adequate levels of support. And so one of  
22          the things that we like is we have these positions  
23          called -- we call them Student Engagement Special  
24          Learning Facilitators. And this is a person that has  
25          day-to-day contact with this student, interaction

1 with family about student progress, student outcomes,  
2 as well as those post-secondary goals. And then we  
3 have our Managing Instructor, our teachers that are  
4 working with the curriculum, as well as making sure  
5 it's aligned and making sure the pedagogy is there.  
6 And then we have college and career coaches, you  
7 know, that are making sure that, you know, not only,  
8 yeah, we're working on a high school diploma but, you  
9 know, we have kids coming up who have one or two  
10 credits to graduate. I mean we've got to get them  
11 thinking about what they're supposed to be doing  
12 after high school. And so anyway, we provide that as  
13 well as, you know, admin support. And so we're  
14 always thinking relationships. I'll be real honest  
15 with you. You know, our schools are designed small  
16 for a reason; it was intentional because we want very  
17 healthy relationships between all of our  
18 stakeholders. And so with that being said, you know,  
19 you guys have seen some of the letters of support  
20 from our parents. We really think it's because we're  
21 responsive; you know, that we're a small setting.  
22 They know who the administrator is; if they have an  
23 issue, they know who to contact. And so we think it  
24 gives them that small community feeling. And so, to  
25 me it's all about interaction and engagement and

1 making sure that not only are we checking on those  
2 students but, you know, we're making sure that we're  
3 working with the families and the different things  
4 they're faced with as well.

5 MR. DAVIS: Talk to me a little bit -- because  
6 -- and I want to get really kind of technical and  
7 tangible around this issue. You know, support  
8 services are one thing when there are students inside  
9 the building on your campus, being able to provide  
10 all those things you just talked about. Talk to me  
11 about how those things are provided when a student is  
12 not on campus. How have you thought about -- what  
13 does that look like? Does that look like home  
14 visits? Does that look like daily calls? Help me  
15 understand a little bit of what that looks like for  
16 students who may be taking virtual classes.

17 MR. FELTON: Daily interaction, I would say, you  
18 know, whether that's, you know, via phone call, via  
19 Google Meet. We have a lot of our college and career  
20 coaches, as well as our learning facilitators that  
21 are, you know, having video calls with our families.  
22 I would probably argue that we've learned through  
23 virtual -- I mean we've learned through Covid that a  
24 lot of things we thought we couldn't do virtual and  
25 we thought couldn't happen virtual, it can happen

1 virtual. And so I think about that principal, that  
2 counselor that's pulling a kid out of the classroom.  
3 Right? Taking them over to the office. And whereas  
4 that is an intimate in-person conversation, I don't  
5 think it takes away the value of that happening  
6 virtually. And I think that, you know, it's evident  
7 because a lot of us today we're meeting on a lot of  
8 things virtually, we're handling a lot of business  
9 virtual. I don't know if you guys have got involved  
10 with tele-medicine these days, but I mean it's become  
11 a new norm. And so I think we'll continue to grow  
12 and we'll continue to learn, as well as just keep  
13 that engagement in action there because that's what's  
14 important. Once that line of communication is  
15 broken, then to me it's, like you said, we'll have to  
16 go to those other interventions, whether it's a home  
17 visit or something like that, to kind of see what's  
18 going on. Because kids' welfare is important as  
19 well. If a kid just comes up missing or we hadn't  
20 heard anything, then we've got to continue working  
21 with other agencies to find out why -- which is -- we  
22 see that in traditional schools as well with our  
23 population; they come up missing.

24 MR. DAVIS: Just one more and that's it for me.  
25 Obviously there are a lot of learnings that happened

1 during the last couple of years in Covid that has  
2 enhanced a school's ability to sort of connect and do  
3 this work with families and students. Right? And we  
4 hear from institutions, like yours and others, that  
5 are saying, you know, we've learned a lot; we want to  
6 offer these services and expand it right, based upon  
7 those learnings, to families and students. That's  
8 the institution saying we've learned some things we'd  
9 like to bring our model to families and students.  
10 Have you heard from families and students, saying,  
11 "We'd love to have this model?" And if so, tell me  
12 why.

13 MR. FELTON: I have. I'm one of, you know, few  
14 individuals that's blessed to spend a lot of time  
15 traveling this state. I probably touch every corner  
16 of this state, you know, usually every other week and  
17 be able to engage -- as well as new communities and  
18 current existing communities. I've seen a trend of  
19 parents and students that are interested in the  
20 flexibility. It's -- we have parents and students  
21 who have other responsibilities outside of school.  
22 And typically what we've seen is those students have  
23 actually become disengaged and dropped out of high  
24 school because of the red tape and because of the  
25 lack of flexibility in the schools. And so they're

1 excited about having the flexibility; they're excited  
2 about having this unique model in their communities.  
3 One of the things we've seen through the digital  
4 learning plan is having access to a personalized  
5 learning model that they may not have access to in  
6 their traditional district. And so as I travel the  
7 state and engage in conversations, yes, I've seen  
8 support from our families and students, as well as I  
9 even had some families and students write me and  
10 email me as they heard about us coming to you guys  
11 with this offering.

12 MR. DAVIS: Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Flowers?

14 DR. FLOWERS: I don't have any questions.  
15 They've been answered. Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini?

17 MS. SARACINI: Yet, you're asking for an  
18 increase in enrollment cap with the teacher shortages  
19 like it is across the state, and you're asking for  
20 quite a bit of an enrollment increase. What is your  
21 plan and -- for recruiting new staff or what's your  
22 anticipation? Do you have a plan?

23 MR. FELTON: We do. We do recognize the need in  
24 the field. Me and Susan have been engaged in several  
25 career fairs across the state, with the University of



1 Arkansas last week and week-before-last. Also, you  
2 know, working hand-in-hand with those educator and  
3 preparatory programs we've realized that you kind of  
4 go to those programs, talk to them about your needs.  
5 A lot of times they are on the frontlines and they  
6 know the students that are entering the pipeline or  
7 they can connect you with those other organizations  
8 that have teacher preparatory programs as well.

9 MS. SARACINI: Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I've got some clean-up  
11 questions.

12 MR. FELTON: Okay.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So you're going to need your  
14 application.

15 MR. FELTON: Say that one more time?

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: You're going to need your  
17 application. On page 8 -- and thank you for putting  
18 page numbers; it's the little things that make life  
19 easier. It's the enrollment cap breakdown. And I  
20 stress this for every charter because it's so  
21 important that we get this cap right, because if  
22 you're not prepared for a bunch of people, then you  
23 want to phase your cap in over time. So your request  
24 is for 250 seats at Premier online, but this document  
25 shows 245 in the third year. So is that a typo?

1           Should that be 250? Are you planning to go 195, 220,  
2           250?

3           MR. FELTON: That should be 250.

4           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. And you're planning to  
5           phase in at this rate. Is that --

6           MR. FELTON: Yes.

7           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. That's the first  
8           question.

9           On page 13, in the paragraph under where it says  
10          "describe the technology access," the third sentence  
11          says, "A check-out system is in place for students to  
12          access coursework and digital content." I need you  
13          to explain that one.

14          MR. FELTON: Typo. That should be Chromebooks  
15          or like digital hotspots. I don't know where -- that  
16          has to be a typo.

17          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So --

18          MR. FELTON: The check-out system is for  
19          devices.

20          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So if the students need  
21          anything to be able to do the full virtual  
22          experience, that's what you're providing?

23          MR. FELTON: That is correct.

24          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: You can only imagine when I  
25          saw the word "coursework."

1 MR. FELTON: Yeah. I'm sitting there looking  
2 like --

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

4 MR. FELTON: It would be tough to have to check  
5 that out.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Page 16, please. So I'm  
7 looking at the sample student schedule and 10:00 to  
8 11:00 is not accounted for.

9 MR. FELTON: That's a typo.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: What's going to happen from  
11 10:00 to 11:00?

12 MR. FELTON: It will continue to provide  
13 students either a time for independent academic work  
14 or small group instruction or one-on-one tutorial.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So I was a little -- and then  
16 so I was a little confused. So everybody checks in  
17 in the morning with their mentor. Is that Monday  
18 through Friday?

19 MR. FELTON: Yes.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And then they may be in small  
21 groups with different teachers, depending on what  
22 they're working on. And is that kind of how it's  
23 going to flow?

24 MR. FELTON: Yeah. But I don't want to be  
25 misleading at all. This is a sample. Remember,

1 everything we're going to be doing is personalized.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yeah.

3 MR. FELTON: And so it will be good to visualize  
4 for the student need. I may have one student that  
5 needs one credit, and you can imagine what this will  
6 look like for a kid that needs one or two credits.  
7 We may have a student that needs eight credits  
8 because they're behind a year, which means have them  
9 spending more time with intervention and more time  
10 direct instruction. So I just -- I don't want to be  
11 misleading. This is not what's for everybody; it's  
12 just a sample to give you an idea of what it may look  
13 like.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And then I was excited about  
15 the afterhours 5:00 to 8:00 because I think you  
16 alluded to, you know, some of our students may be  
17 working and helping the family, and they may need to  
18 access their classes afterhours or maybe they're  
19 midnight people like I am and they like to do their  
20 best work around midnight. So kind of talk us  
21 through your flexibility for your staff members. How  
22 will they accommodate the needs of these students?

23 MR. FELTON: And so one of the things, of  
24 course, is, you know, that engagement piece, you  
25 know, looking at students. Of course, if we have a

1 student that's working full-time there will kind of  
2 be a different expectation of their engagement, when  
3 they're logged in and things of that nature. At the  
4 same time, you know, as Mr. Davis, you know, related,  
5 make sure they're watching their data too, because,  
6 you know, we're not just having staff members just  
7 kind of -- didn't log in today. I mean are you  
8 engaging in the coursework; how much time they spend,  
9 you know, working the course; what are the concepts  
10 they're struggling within that course and does that  
11 need to warrant a small group or one-on-one tutorial.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So I think the two final  
13 things become attendance. We saw a lot of  
14 interesting things across the state with attendance  
15 collection this year and last year. So kind of -- I  
16 know you have requested a waiver for attendance. But  
17 kind of talk us through a little bit about how you'll  
18 determine a student is present or absent during that  
19 week. And how are you going to insure that you test  
20 95% or more?

21 MR. FELTON: On the attendance piece, it's  
22 really making sure that, you know, our teachers are,  
23 you know, making sure the students has met that  
24 threshold as far as the time spent. Like you said,  
25 we've learned a lot through Covid and got some

1 students that kind of got creative on how to be  
2 logged in for a long time without doing a whole lot.  
3 So it could be, you know, just how much time spent in  
4 a system, what have they actually completed, which  
5 helps us with the reports waiver to access in our  
6 system. As far as the 90% threshold, as Ms. Provenza  
7 stated, we would set up remote testing sites for  
8 students that are in the areas that are not in close  
9 proximity to our school. And I'll be honest with  
10 you, you know, we're working on culture. It's a  
11 culture deal. You know, how do we have the  
12 conversation with parents and students about why are  
13 we taking this assessment and what does this  
14 assessment lead to, and then putting some incentives  
15 together. You know, we're high school but still put  
16 an incentive program together; that way, the kids  
17 have a carrot to be able to take the test -- and then  
18 not just take the test, put their best foot forward.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: What grade levels are most of  
20 your students now? Are they -- do you have 9th,  
21 10th, 11th and 12th?

22 MR. FELTON: We're 9 through 12.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Right.

24 MR. FELTON: Typically, because of the model  
25 sometimes you get on the higher end of 11th and 12th

1 graders. Because we're, you know, all those kids who  
2 have either dropped out of school the previous year  
3 or supposed to graduate last year.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Panel Members, other  
5 questions?

6 MR. DAVIS: The idea of -- two things. One,  
7 talk to me a little bit about -- and I think you've  
8 done a great job of talking about data collection.  
9 Talk to me about how that's used on a daily basis.  
10 And then, I do want to dig a little deeper in regards  
11 to the identification and development of teachers in  
12 regards to this model.

13 MR. FELTON: Okay.

14 MR. DAVIS: So, you know, is -- some places have  
15 a sort of traditional pipeline to their teachers in  
16 the classroom; some have, you know, nontraditional  
17 programming that they really connect with and draw  
18 from. Where are you getting your teachers from?  
19 What does their development look like? And how is  
20 data used to inform their work?

21 MR. FELTON: And so one of the things that we do  
22 -- I talked about kind of the recruitment. And, of  
23 course, there's some processes in place, what we're  
24 looking for as far as the credentials that teachers  
25 should have. We're blessed; ResponsiveEd, you know,

1 has a robust team as well to support us with this  
2 training. And so because the model is different we  
3 do get our teachers engaged in a very intensive kind  
4 of in-service training. It lasts almost two weeks of  
5 them learning the expectations and the processes of  
6 the model -- but at the same time, these support  
7 systems that they have as well. And so that's done  
8 internally. We get out and recruit traditional  
9 teachers, as well as nontraditional teachers. But  
10 one of the things that we try to do is make sure that  
11 training is uniform and then it's continued training.  
12 And so the beauty of being in a state like Arkansas,  
13 you know, almost 10 years is that Premier High School  
14 is not a thing that started yesterday. And in the  
15 state of Texas, you know, it's been over 20 years.  
16 And so when you look at the bigger picture of a  
17 professional learning community, which I've been  
18 appreciative to have as I'm able to connect, you  
19 know, my novice teachers with some of my veteran  
20 teachers to give them that additional support as  
21 well.

22 When we're looking at the data, which goes hand-  
23 in-hand with all of this, is we are seeking to  
24 operate like a professional learning community. And  
25 when you operate as a professional learning community



1           there has to be ongoing conversations every week  
2           that's around the data that's involved in the school.  
3           And so whether that data looks like attendance,  
4           whether it looks like a local assessment, whether it  
5           looks like discipline, we're using that data to have  
6           the academic conversations. And then there are times  
7           where you're just looking at things like literacy and  
8           math and having conversations about, okay, we see  
9           these trends and what do we need to do to address  
10          some of these deficiencies or, you know, what's  
11          working well, because it seems like, you know, we're  
12          seeing an increase in this area.

13                   MR. DAVIS: Okay. Ten years in Arkansas.  
14                   Right? I think you mentioned 60 graduates. Is that  
15                   correct?

16                   MR. FELTON: 140 graduates. We have 60 --

17                   MR. DAVIS: 140 graduates.

18                   MR. FELTON: -- that are going to come out next  
19                   month.

20                   MR. DAVIS: A hundred -- okay.

21                   MR. FELTON: So, hopefully 200 this summer  
22                   overall.

23                   MR. DAVIS: Yeah. And thank you so much for  
24                   that.

25                   Obviously, every school and every school

1 district there are students who, you know, can't  
2 always get across the finish line. I think that  
3 there's some interesting learnings that can come from  
4 that. For the kids who don't get across -- the young  
5 folks who don't get across the finish line in your  
6 model, what are some of the things you're hearing on  
7 why that is the case?

8 MR. FELTON: It's typically -- it seems like  
9 it's the responsibilities outside of school and not  
10 being able to balance those, and then there's that  
11 flexibility they're seeking. So we have students  
12 that are going -- you know, you can look at some of  
13 the communities we're in -- I mean you've got schools  
14 that are as big as 1,000, 2,000 students. And not  
15 bashing those schools at all, but, you know, often  
16 you'll have these, you know, small groups of students  
17 that are kind of falling through the crack, they  
18 become disengaged. Now, remember, this is not the  
19 kids that's coming to school, standing on top of the  
20 desk every day. This is not the school who's getting  
21 -- this is not the kid who's getting everybody's  
22 attention; they're just becoming slowly disengaged.  
23 And then it looks like them working 15 hours at Wal-  
24 Mart, then it becomes 25 hours at Wal-Mart, then it  
25 becomes 40 hours at Wal-Mart; they say, "Oh, well,

1           you know, I'm making \$16.00 an hour, so I guess that  
2           one or two credits I needed, you know, it's okay."  
3           Also, you know, looking at the students who have --  
4           you know, they're parents; you know, they've, you  
5           know, been told that maybe they need to focus on  
6           being a parent, you know, or -- we have students  
7           that, you know, they have to help financially at  
8           home. And so those students, you know, when they've  
9           kind of missed that threshold -- I know society; I  
10          mean, you hadn't graduated when you're supposed to  
11          graduate, you know, then you're out working in the  
12          field, you're helping provide for family -- who are  
13          still in your ear about getting that high school  
14          diploma. And so we've seen that students have  
15          appreciated the support, because we're a small school  
16          and a small staff. And really if I had two of my  
17          staff members here -- I mean, they're like parents  
18          for some of these kids, you know. Because they not  
19          only have their educational interest at heart, but I  
20          mean they care about them as people and that makes a  
21          difference for these kids.

22                 MR. DAVIS: Yeah. And my final question -- I  
23                 hesitate to say that, but it is my final question.  
24                 How are you identifying these kids? And talk to me a  
25                 little bit about where there are brick-and-mortars,

1 relationships and partnerships with local school  
2 districts, you know, be they public charters or  
3 traditional school districts?

4 MR. FELTON: It's very interesting, the  
5 identification part, because when you get yourself I  
6 guess involved in this type of work in education and  
7 then you get yourself involved with this type of  
8 population that you're serving, you're not alone in  
9 the fight. I mean there are a lot of community  
10 agencies that are working with these individuals,  
11 whether it's the, you know, nonprofit organizations,  
12 whether it's state ran organizations. And so once  
13 you become to educate people about what you are  
14 offering, it's so -- it's fruitful to be able to have  
15 them communicate them wanting what you have and it's  
16 kind of -- we couple together to guide that -- you  
17 know, this school for students.

18 As far as the partnerships go, you know, we talk  
19 about our partnership with Little Rock School  
20 District and often the Little Rock Metro program and  
21 CTE programs as well. We plan to -- as we go in  
22 communities, one of the first things I do is I do  
23 reach out to superintendents. It's a very generic  
24 email that talks about my educational model, talks  
25 about my interest in partnering with that school and

1 -- because it goes back to that identification piece.  
2 A lot of times, as we work with these counselors and  
3 administrators, they know it well before the kids are  
4 just walking the streets, well before the kids become  
5 disengaged. And so what we think is, as we continue  
6 to develop healthy relationships with districts we'll  
7 be able to save more kids. Because at the end of the  
8 day, we all want what's best for kids, no matter  
9 where they're graduating from.

10 MR. DAVIS: See, I knew I shouldn't have said  
11 that was my last question.

12 MR. FELTON: So you said you only had one more.

13 MR. DAVIS: I know. I know.

14 Your relationship in regards to development of  
15 teachers with local co-ops, are local co-ops a part  
16 of your plan in regards to teacher development?

17 MR. FELTON: So us being a charter, typically  
18 we've partnered with people like APSRC that -- we've  
19 participated in their -- not only their beginning  
20 administrator program, as well as their novice  
21 teacher program. And we actually have a couple of  
22 deals going right now where they're providing, you  
23 know, additional instructional support for our  
24 teachers -- you know, we were talking about that  
25 data. And so we have, you know, a coach coming in

1 that's working with our teachers on how do you  
2 analyze that data, how do you use the data -- and as  
3 well as a leadership coach from that same co-op  
4 that's allowing us to work with our leaders. And  
5 sometimes -- I mean, we're in the same fight  
6 sometimes with leaders -- you know, developing  
7 leaders. We constantly want to grow and develop our  
8 leaders to become better leaders.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So under the rules for the  
10 school rating system, an open-enrollment public  
11 charter whose mission and enrollment are primarily  
12 focused on students who have dropped out of high  
13 school or identified as at risk of dropping out has  
14 allowed the Premier Schools to be exempt from a  
15 letter grade. And I'm assuming that you would  
16 request that Premier online be included in that list?

17 MR. FELTON: That is correct.

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

20 All right. When you're ready, I'll accept a  
21 motion.

22 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I move the approval of the  
23 application.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion from Dr.  
25 Wright-McMurray to -- and I had a little trouble

1 hearing you -- to --

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

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: To accept the amendment as  
5 requested?

6 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yes.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. And it is set to  
8 expire in 2023, June 2023.

9 Do I have a second?

10 DR. FLOWERS: Second.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: We have a motion from Dr.  
12 Wright-McMurray to approve the amendment with the  
13 enrollment increase from -- did we settle on 625 to  
14 875? So that would be 250 students at Premier  
15 online, over the three-year period that we outlined,  
16 with the expiration being June of 2023.

17 Any discussion?

18 All those in favor?

19 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any opposed?

21 Motion is approved.

22 If you'll wait just a moment, we'll hear from  
23 our panel members.

24 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Wright-McMurray.

1 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I support the amendment.  
2 Premier High Schools of Arkansas has implemented an  
3 effective model that provides opportunities for at-  
4 risk students to earn a high school diploma. I look  
5 forward to seeing the results of them replicating  
6 this flexible academic model in a virtual  
7 environment.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini.

9 MS. SARACINI: I support the amendment for  
10 Premier High Schools of Arkansas to add a new virtual  
11 campus, as well as increase the enrollment cap to  
12 850. I am looking forward to seeing the impact of  
13 this model across the state on students as well as  
14 the dropout rate. This virtual hybrid model can meet  
15 the needs of students across the state through  
16 anywhere, any time and on any device flexibility.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

18 Dr. Flowers.

19 DR. FLOWERS: I support the amendment for a new  
20 virtual building with statewide enrollment and to  
21 increase the enrollment cap for Premier High Schools  
22 of Arkansas. I look forward to hearing about how  
23 your personalized learning model and supports will  
24 continue to engage those potentially hard-to-reach  
25 students by providing the necessary resources to



1 insure they are college and career ready.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And Mr. Davis.

3 MR. DAVIS: In order to serve a population of  
4 students that need added flexibility in addition to  
5 personalized support, I vote to approve the increase  
6 in the enrollment cap and the new virtual building.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Congratulations.

8 MR. FELTON: Thank y'all.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Panel Members, any other  
10 business before us today?

11 ADJOURNMENT

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I'll accept a motion to  
13 adjourn.

14 MS. SARACINI: Motion to adjourn.

15 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Second.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: A motion by Ms. Saracini, a  
17 second by Dr. Wright-McMurray.

18 All those in favor?

19 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you, Panel Members.  
21 Meeting is adjourned.

22

23

24 (The meeting was concluded at 10:56 a.m.)

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS )  
 ) ss.  
COUNTY OF SALINE )

I, SHARON K. HILL, CCR, a Certified Stenomask Reporter and Notary Public before whom the foregoing proceedings was taken, do hereby certify that the same is a true and correct transcription before the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Charter Authorizing Panel, in Little Rock, Arkansas, on April 19, 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: April 30, 2022.

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

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