

In The Matter Of:
ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

September 9, 2021

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ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

SEPTEMBER 9, 2021
10:00 A.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S

BOARD MEMBERS:

MS. OUIDA NEWTON, Chairman
DR. SARAH MOORE, Vice Chairman
DR. FITZGERALD HILL
MS. KATHY McFETRIDGE
MS. ADRIENNE WOODS
MR. STEVE SUTTON
DR. BETH ANNE RANKIN
MR. RANDY HENDERSON

NON-VOTING PARTICIPANTS:

MR. JOHNNY KEY, Secretary of Education
MS. SUSANNA POST, Arkansas Teacher of the Year

DESE LEGAL COUNSEL:

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| MS. LORI FRENO | General Counsel |
| MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT | Attorney |
| MS. WHITNEY JAMES | Attorney |

LOCATION:

ARKANSAS DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
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Little Rock, AR 72201

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 VI.1. CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF NOMINATED
3 MEMBERS FOR PLSB TO REPLACE MEMBERS WHOSE TERMS ARE VACANT OR
4 EXPIRING JUNE 30, 2022

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So our first item -- Ms.
6 Saracini, you should have just stayed up here. Our
7 first item is nominations for the PLSB board to
8 replace expiring terms.

9 MS. SARACINI: Uh-huh. Karli Saracini,
10 Assistant Commissioner.

11 Today I'm bringing before you a nominee from the
12 ArkASPA, which is part of AAEEA; it's your HR
13 directors. And Ms. -- Dr. Karen Lasker is taking --
14 finishing out someone's that's currently on there,
15 Ms. Griffin. She retired, so we have to fill that
16 position. And it will expire in 2022. Dr. Lasker is
17 currently the HR Director at Conway Public Schools
18 and she has been there since -- in that position
19 since 2017.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Is there
21 any discussion?

22 Okay. We need a motion then to approve this
23 nomination.

24 MS. McFETRIDGE: I'll make a motion to approve
25 the nomination.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Motion by Ms.
2 McFetridge.

3 DR. RANKIN: And I'll second.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Dr. Rankin.
5 All in favor?

6 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

8 Okay. Motion passes.

9 MS. SARACINI: Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you, Ms. Saracini.

11 VI.2. JASPER SCHOOL DISTRICT - ACT 1240 REQUEST

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We're going to
13 move on to our 1240 requests. Ms. Hyatt.

14 And before you begin, a little birdie told me
15 this morning that this will be our last meeting with
16 you, that you're going to move on to a new position.
17 So we want to take this opportunity to thank you for
18 your hard work and all that you've done for our
19 board. You have been a rock that we could depend on
20 and we are just so appreciative and we're going to
21 greatly miss you.

22 MS. HYATT: Thank you so much. I appreciate
23 that.

24 [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

25 MS. HYATT: Don't make me cry right before I

1 have to present. But, seriously, thank you. This
2 has been one of the best privileges of my life to get
3 to be the attorney for this board and get to know all
4 of you, and I appreciate you letting me stand before
5 you. And, Secretary Key, getting to work with you
6 has also been just absolutely an honor. So I will
7 miss you, but I'm not going far. I will be working
8 for a school district, so I'm sure you will still get
9 to see me sometimes. I'll beg to be the one that
10 gets to present in front of the board, so I hope that
11 we will see each other soon.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: We wish you all the best.

13 MS. HYATT: Thank you.

14 So the Jasper School District is the first 1240
15 on the agenda. I believe we have Kim Liggett, the
16 elementary principal; Dr. Candra Brasel, who is the
17 superintendent, and Brian Cossey on the Zoom. We
18 should have them on the Zoom.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good morning.

20 MR. COSSEY: Yes, ma'am.

21 MS. HYATT: There we go.

22 MR. COSSEY: Good morning.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good morning, Mr. Cossey.

24 Who else is with us, Mr. Cossey?

25 MR. COSSEY: Ms. Kim Liggett is with us. Dr.

1 Brasel is on standby; she has one of her children at
2 the dentist for a procedure, trying to wrap that up.
3 But --

4 MS. LIGGETT: Hi, I'm Kim. Hi. I'm the Jasper
5 elementary principal.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We're glad that y'all
7 are with us this morning.

8 MS. HYATT: The Jasper School District is
9 requesting a waiver of Class Size and Teaching Load
10 so that they can hire an apprentice teacher. They
11 will have 20 minutes to present to the Board and then
12 you can ask any questions. And, Ms. Newton, you'll
13 want to swear them in before that.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. I should've already had
15 this out. Would you raise your hand and repeat after
16 me please -- or go ahead. Do you swear or affirm
17 that the testimony you're about to give shall be the
18 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

19 MR. COSSEY: Yes, ma'am, I do.

20 MS. LIGGETT: Yes, ma'am.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Thank you. You may
22 begin.

23 MR. COSSEY: So after the pandemic our district
24 had lost over 100 students, and so we are -- we were
25 looking at attrition throughout that time. And then

1 this past summer, just a few months ago, we gained
2 the majority of those students back; 49 students,
3 June 2nd through the start of school enrolled at
4 Jasper Elementary, which is a school district of --
5 which is a campus of just over, normally, 200
6 students. So we were watching numbers. At the end
7 of last year, what was 4th grade had 26 students when
8 we ended the year; that number is 32 now, and we were
9 watching that grade and two other grades. And just
10 last month we had to add a teacher in 4th grade and
11 the grade below because the exact same thing
12 happened. So we took a class that was in the mid to
13 upper 20s throughout the summer, hit that number of
14 31, 32, we hired a teacher. Well, whenever we
15 advertised for that position we hired the only
16 qualified, quality candidate that we could find; so
17 at that point we knew that it was -- we were
18 struggling to find qualified, quality teachers. And
19 so it was literally the week before school started
20 and we -- and then this 5th grade class, the current
21 5th grade class, last year's 4th grade class, we
22 jumped up to 30, 31 students again, and so we were
23 trying to decide what to do. And we found this young
24 lady that was an intern at UALR, and we were
25 discussing with the college about the opportunity for

1 that to happen and at that point we thought that that
2 was a possibility without the waiver; we had not
3 realized the change from last year to this year. And
4 so after some further research we figured out that we
5 needed this waiver.

6 Some of the other reasons that we're looking at
7 this is with the pandemic, if we max a classroom out
8 we cannot socially distance, we just can't. And, you
9 know, stuffing 28, 29, 30 kids in an 800-square foot
10 classroom, you just can't do it. But when you look
11 at 15 -- you know, 14, 15, 16 per room, we can spread
12 them out.

13 We have just a lot of supports in place for this
14 young lady. UALR has really stepped up with some
15 guidance and oversight throughout her work. We have
16 some of the best -- I've been fortunate to work with
17 some great co-op literacy specialists. We've had
18 some great ones that are -- Ozarks Co-op in Harrison,
19 they're coming out on a regular basis. We have Ms.
20 Liggett, the principal, as well as lead teachers on
21 the campus are making multiple classroom visits with
22 her and stay in constant communication with her.

23 We're allowing para observations, both in her
24 classroom and her observing others. She's interning
25 under a very -- a very effective educator that is one

1 of our lead teachers on that campus. We have two
2 lead teachers on that campus, based on the numbers,
3 that lead the PLC process. We are fully implemented
4 in PLC -- in the PLC process with weekly PLC
5 meetings, which is -- as you know, is a great support
6 to a young teacher. We also have a systemic RTI
7 process in place and we have two fulltime
8 interventionists; one is paid by the district, the
9 other is paid by Save the Children. And so any kid
10 identified as one of the -- as the upper tier in RTI
11 we have that in place to support her as well. She
12 has common planning time with her teacher team and
13 she has additional time in her daily schedule for
14 extra coaching and support, and that -- we put that
15 in place with the duty schedule. So she may not have
16 as much duties or as often as the others so that she
17 can have additional time for coaching and support.
18 And we also continue to do in-house professional
19 development, Ms. Liggett does that on a very regular
20 basis -- and she attends all of those; one of the
21 first ones there and last ones to leave, taking lots
22 of notes and asking lots of questions.

23 And so what we would like to do with this waiver
24 is allow this young lady to do her student teaching
25 as she is a long-term sub in this classroom, to be

1 able to split these 32 students into 16 and work
2 under the guidance of a more tenured teacher. And
3 I'd be happy to answer any questions myself, or Ms.
4 Liggett.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you, Mr. Cossey. We'll
6 see if we have questions from the Board.

7 Ms. Post, we'll start with you this morning.

8 MS. POST: No questions, but I would just like
9 to commend you on the efforts that you have gone
10 through to support this teacher. And when I read
11 over the professional development specifically, I
12 just feel like you're firing on all cylinders with
13 what she will need to be successful. So great job.

14 MR. COSSEY: Thank you. Ms. Liggett does a
15 wonderful job, and Dr. Brasel as well, and I'm
16 blessed to work with them.

17 MS. LIGGETT: Thank you very much. We're really
18 trying to give her every bit of support she can
19 possibly get. She has so much potential and is just
20 stepping up to the plate.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Dr. Rankin?

22 DR. RANKIN: Yes, I just want to echo Ms. Post's
23 statements. And I also really appreciated that they
24 will be participating in the weekly PLC team time and
25 that common planning time and just having that

1 community and relationship building with that
2 professional learning community. I think it's really
3 spot-on, so I congratulate you for thinking through
4 that.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Mr. Sutton?

6 MR. SUTTON: I have no questions.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Dr. Moore?

8 DR. MOORE: Yes. I know there are other school
9 districts that have sought to do this partnering with
10 universities. Have you all been able to speak with
11 them about how they have supported that student --
12 the student teacher and teaching?

13 MR. COSSEY: So I haven't been as involved in
14 that process and the communications through UALR.
15 And UALR has -- in my current position and former
16 position with the district, we've had more
17 collaboration with Arkansas Tech in Russellville.

18 But, Ms. Liggett, would you like to talk about
19 the communication you've had with UALR?

20 MS. LIGGETT: I spoke quite a bit with the --
21 her advisor. But as far as communicating with other
22 districts, I have not yet. But that's a great idea
23 that I'd like to consider and work towards making
24 some contacts with that.

25 DR. MOORE: And as we know, it's challenging to

1 be a first-year teacher, much less if you haven't had
2 that time in the classroom before. Is there a number
3 of hours that this person has spent in a classroom
4 before now?

5 MS. LIGGETT: She and I have talked about that.
6 She hasn't given me specific hours. But when I was
7 talking to her about observing other teachers in our
8 own school and covering her, she did talk about
9 through her program that she had done a lot of
10 classroom visits and a lot of hours just kind of
11 observing; but was excited for the opportunity to go
12 peer-to-peer for observations here in our school.

13 DR. MOORE: Okay. As far as pay goes, it looks
14 like districts are doing this differently. How are
15 you all doing that?

16 MS. LIGGETT: She will be hired at this point as
17 an instructional paraprofessional, and so she'll be
18 paid as a para until she receives her final license.
19 And at that point we'll look at the numbers and
20 determine what happens next, but hopefully she'll be
21 signed on as a teacher after that.

22 DR. MOORE: Okay. And so this is a full
23 academic school year position?

24 MS. LIGGETT: Yes.

25 DR. MOORE: Okay.

1 MS. LIGGETT: Yes. She has two semesters of
2 intern.

3 DR. MOORE: Okay. Okay. Thank you.

4 MS. LIGGETT: Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. McFetridge?

6 MS. McFETRIDGE: No questions.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Mr. Henderson?

8 MR. HENDERSON: I have no questions.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Woods?

10 MS. WOODS: No, ma'am. Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I had one question. I think
12 it's probably for Ms. Hyatt.

13 Ms. Hyatt, in the past I know that we have had
14 teacher programs from the colleges come and ask for
15 this. Have we ever had a specific district come and
16 ask to have a student intern?

17 MS. HYATT: I think actually last month we had
18 at least one. I do think that -- this might be a
19 question for Karli more than me. But I do think that
20 this has gone on before, the apprenticeship program
21 has happened before in individual districts. I think
22 that we're trying to make sure that districts have
23 the appropriate waiver to be able to actually hire
24 that apprentice teacher so they can receive
25 compensation for the work that they're doing in the

1 district without violating any of the Arkansas
2 Quality Teaching standards --

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right.

4 MS. HYATT: -- and all of those kinds of pieces.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: It just seemed like before the
6 university had a set program that -- where they
7 selected particular candidates, and then those
8 candidates were recommended for the district. But
9 I'm not -- it might be it's coming from the other
10 direction this time, from the district.

11 MS. SARACINI: Well, because we have to follow
12 the class size and the class load, because it's not
13 just a licensure waiver because they do not have a
14 bachelor's degree yet.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right.

16 MS. SARACINI: And so that's where we relooked
17 at everything and said we can't just blanket the
18 university for all the districts, because not all
19 districts have the same waivers. And so that's why
20 we have kind of reversed it.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

22 MS. SARACINI: But the Higher Ed., the EPP
23 programs are still vetting and not -- they're not
24 letting everyone --

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

1 MS. SARACINI: -- become the interns.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. That was my question.

3 MS. SARACINI: Because some people aren't ready.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right.

5 MS. SARACINI: So we've had the conversations --
6 matter of fact, at the last Dean's meeting about
7 three weeks ago, two weeks ago -- that it's not for
8 everyone and teachers leave because they don't feel
9 supported or they're overwhelmed.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right.

11 MS. SARACINI: So we know that not every
12 candidate fits this mode, so we don't want to just
13 blanket it.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right.

15 MS. SARACINI: So we want to --

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So even though it's coming
17 from a district, the university has been involved on
18 the front-end making sure that these candidates are
19 ready to be in a classroom?

20 MS. SARACINI: Right.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

22 MS. SARACINI: Because we've had some
23 universities call and speak with Licensure and with
24 myself as well, and they just said, "We just don't
25 feel this candidate is ready," and we said, "That's

1 what we want you to say."

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes, absolutely. Okay. All
3 right, that makes me feel much better. Thank you.

4 All right. Are there any other questions from
5 the Board?

6 Okay. If not, then we are ready for a motion.
7 The motion would be to either grant or deny the 1240
8 waiver.

9 MR. SUTTON: Motion to approve the grant.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We have a motion
11 by Mr. Sutton to grant the waiver.

12 MR. SUTTON: Grant the waiver. I'm sorry.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah, I got it.

14 Do we have a second?

15 DR. RANKIN: I'll second that.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Dr. Rankin.

17 All in favor?

18 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

20 Congratulations. And please pass our best
21 wishes on to your intern that's in this classroom,
22 that we hope that she has a long and successful
23 career.

24 MS. LIGGETT: Thank you so much. I will. And
25 we're going to continue to give her that support so

1 she's not one of those teachers who do leave. We
2 want to keep her. She's excited and motivated, and
3 I'm in there every day watching her and just really
4 impressed already.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good. Great. That's what we
6 want to hear.

7 MR. COSSEY: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair,
8 Secretary Key, State Board. I know it's not easy
9 right now and I genuinely appreciate everything y'all
10 do.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you for joining us this
12 morning.

13 IV.3. VAN BUREN SCHOOL DISTRICT - ACT 1240 WAIVER REQUEST

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Ms. Hyatt, we're
15 going to move on to the Van Buren School District Act
16 1240 waiver request.

17 MS. HYATT: Yes, so same situation. They are
18 asking for a waiver for five years for Class Size and
19 Teaching Load so that they can partner with
20 University of Arkansas at Fort Smith to hire
21 apprentice teachers. On the Zoom we have Karen
22 Allen, the assistant superintendent, and Dr. Monica
23 Riley, who's the executive director of the school's
24 education faculty at UA-Fort Smith. Again, they'll
25 have 20 minutes to present and you'll want to swear

1 them in before they begin.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Who is
3 joining us this morning?

4 MS. HYATT: I see Dr. Riley but her camera is
5 not on, and I see Karen Allen and her camera is not
6 on.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Good morning.

8 DR. RILEY: Good morning.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

10 DR. RILEY: I'm not sure why -- I guess someone
11 has to give access for my camera to be on?

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Dan, does she have access for
13 her camera to be on?

14 DR. RILEY: Okay, I'm here.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: There you are. Good morning,
16 Dr. Riley.

17 And, Ms. Allen, are you with us this morning?

18 (BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

19 DR. RILEY: I know that she's on because I've
20 been communicating with her.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Dan, is Karen Allen -- is
22 there a --

23 MS. HYATT: I did just shoot her an email to see
24 if she was having issues, technology issues; so
25 hopefully she'll respond to me really quickly.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Dan is looking at it.

2 MS. ALLEN: Can you hear me now?

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes. Yes. Good morning.

4 MS. ALLEN: Okay.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

6 MS. ALLEN: There you go.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: There we go. There -- all
8 right. We've got both of you. If you --

9 MS. ALLEN: I'm sorry.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: That's no problem. We --
11 technology, we all get it.

12 If you would, raise your right hand. Do you
13 swear or affirm that the testimony you're about to
14 give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing
15 but the truth?

16 DR. RILEY: I do.

17 MS. ALLEN: I do.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Thank you. You
19 may go ahead with your presentation.

20 MS. ALLEN: Okay. Well, good morning. I am
21 Karen Allen; I'm Assistant Superintendent here in Van
22 Buren. It's very nice to be here today. I'm joined
23 with Dr. Riley, who is the Executive Director at the
24 School of Education at University of Arkansas Fort
25 Smith. And we're here today to request this waiver

1 so that we might participate in the teacher
2 apprenticeship program at University of Arkansas Fort
3 Smith. Specifically, we're requesting a waiver for
4 the ADE rules governing Class Size and Teaching Load
5 for Arkansas code 6-17-812, compensation for teaching
6 more than the maximum number of students permitted,
7 and the Arkansas Standards for Accreditation 1-A.5.

8 As I mentioned, we are requesting this waiver in
9 order to participate in the University of Arkansas
10 Fort Smith teacher apprenticeship program. Van Buren
11 has had a history of a very strong partnership with
12 University of Arkansas Fort Smith. We were aware
13 that they were developing this program in conjunction
14 with the Fort Smith Public School District, and when
15 it was implemented in 2019 we were very excited to
16 hear how successful it has been over the last couple
17 of years. We were eager to participate with them but
18 as you know, there were a lot of challenges with the
19 last school year, more specifically just making sure
20 that we were even going to remain in-person learning
21 for the school year. So we didn't really think that
22 last year would be our best year to implement this in
23 Van Buren. We are ready now to do that. We want to
24 do our part with this program because we believe it
25 is the right way to develop our interns in the best

1 way. We think that this will strengthen our pool of
2 very high quality teacher candidates ready to go for
3 that first year in the classroom. We think that this
4 enhanced internship experience provides that intern
5 with a more meaningful real world, hands-on -- all
6 those words -- internship experience. And we also
7 know that it's a win-win. Not only is it probably --
8 no, it is probably the best situation for any intern;
9 it's a good situation for us as a district because we
10 get those folks in, they become ours, they're like
11 our faculty right from the beginning, and then
12 hopefully what we're doing is we're recruiting and
13 retaining some very high quality educators for our
14 students.

15 As we implement, with your approval, this
16 apprenticeship model, we would like to continue
17 several of the components that were found to be very
18 successful over the last two years with the Fort
19 Smith School District. I just want to review a few
20 of those just to kind of let you know, and again
21 review that program and how that's gone in the past.
22 One of the biggest things is just the identification
23 of those very high-performing interns. We rely on
24 University of Arkansas Fort Smith to select those
25 candidates who are ready for this experience. As was

1 said in the previous presentation, I don't think it's
2 for every student who's going through that educator
3 prep program, but I do think there are some where
4 this is exactly where they need to be; they're ready
5 for that experience and they can probably step into a
6 classroom and be teachers right then.

7 We're going to utilize one of those high-
8 performing candidates to fill an open position;
9 that's how this program works is that the district
10 has a spot that they've been unable to fill or chose
11 not to fill so that they can participate in this
12 program.

13 We will be compensating these interns at one-
14 half of the beginning teacher salary. So for Van
15 Buren that's -- our step-one teacher salary is
16 \$42,318, so these teachers will earn .5 of that
17 beginning year contract.

18 We will also be identifying a very highly
19 effective classroom teacher as a mentor teacher to
20 serve these two interns. We -- I think you'd find
21 the perfect situation for this -- not only do you
22 find that you have a situation where you have an
23 opening, but you also want to identify the people who
24 will best serve as that mentor role. I think these
25 need to be highly qualified educators who also are

1 wanting and willing to do this type of work. I think
2 of it kind of as an instructional facilitator type
3 work or a mentor type work, and I believe we had a
4 lot -- we have a lot of teacher leaders who are kind
5 of wanting to dip their toe into that type of
6 different role in the building other than just the
7 classroom teacher role.

8 We will continue with layers of support and
9 feedback for those interns and the mentor. We will
10 work with University of Arkansas Fort Smith faculty,
11 building administration, district administration.
12 We'll have lots of layers of support in terms of
13 professional development, observation, feedback for
14 these interns. We also want to include the
15 evaluation piece which was a big part of Fort Smith's
16 program over the last two years. We'll be collecting
17 multiple forms of data. This will include
18 observational data; achievement data, whether it's
19 formative, summative achievement data. We'll also
20 survey; we'd like to know how our teachers continue
21 to feel about it in that building, how our parents
22 feel, how our kids feel. I think that's an important
23 piece to the evaluation process also.

24 So what would this look like in Van Buren, and
25 what do we have in mind for this year? Like I said,

1 we have kind of found ourselves in a great situation
2 to start this model in Van Buren. We have an opening
3 right now at one of our elementary schools; it's
4 Central Elementary in Van Buren. It's one of six
5 elementaries. We actually had a situation where we
6 have a classroom, a 4th grade classroom that we were
7 unable to fill with a quality teacher, and so we also
8 have two interns in that building. So we have kind
9 of the perfect scenario to jump out there and
10 implement this model this year. So how it would look
11 in our -- at Central is we have two interns placed in
12 these two 4th grade classrooms. We would pull a
13 mentor teacher who would have been in one -- the
14 other classroom. We've spoken to a teacher that we
15 believe would be an excellent candidate from a
16 mentor; she's very excited about that opportunity, if
17 it's approved. And then that mentor will work
18 directly with both of those interns. Their
19 classrooms are located just across the hall from each
20 other, so logistically it's an easy thing to happen
21 and we'll have that mentor be working with those
22 interns constantly throughout the school day; she'll
23 be providing observation and feedback; she'll be
24 modeling lessons, both whole group and small group,
25 and even intervention; and then just be available to

1 provide any feedback and work directly with our
2 University of Arkansas at Fort Smith personnel also.

3 When we were considering the implementation of
4 this, we wanted to make sure that our staff and our
5 teachers at Central Elementary were onboard. We
6 wanted to give them the information about the
7 program. I know most of them probably haven't heard
8 about it or know much about it, but we gave them some
9 background information; we showed them some data and
10 some information about what Fort Smith has done over
11 the last two years; and we wanted to seek their
12 input. So after one of our PD days at the beginning
13 of school, after we shared that information we
14 actually sent all the certified teachers out a Google
15 form to get their feedback and I included this in my
16 presentation today. They were just simply asked,
17 after hearing more about this model, you know, would
18 you support the implementation at Central Elementary.
19 We had 18 of the certified teachers respond with a
20 72% approval for the program. I included some
21 teacher feedback in my original waiver request packet
22 and in this presentation because I think maybe their
23 comments are the most powerful of the survey, and I
24 highlighted and bold-faced some of the words that I
25 think stand out to me because I think they're the

1 very foundation of the creation of this program and
2 why it's going to be successful and why it's so
3 important. Their feedback uses terms like "hands-on
4 practice" and "learns hands-on support," "realistic
5 sense of the teaching experience," "real world
6 experience," "more time to make the classroom her
7 own," "genuine hands-on learning experience," and
8 "more easily fill teaching positions." And I just
9 think that's interesting for a group of teachers who
10 didn't know much about it that they've giving us back
11 the very information that we know is important to the
12 success of this program. A lot of these teachers at
13 Central I know are within probably their five to ten
14 years of teaching, so I think that the internship
15 experience is very fresh and real to them. So I know
16 that they're excited to see that enhanced and a
17 deeper experience and more meaningful experience that
18 would make these candidates come out ready to step
19 into their classroom that first year.

20 So, in conclusion, I'd just kind of like to say
21 again thank you for your time and consideration of
22 this waiver. We really look forward to implementing
23 this program, not only at Central this year; we've
24 asked for the waiver for five years because we would
25 love to be a part of this over the next years,

1 growing it. Like I said, we have six elementaries --
2 moving this program throughout some of our other
3 elementaries, giving our teachers and our principals
4 the opportunity to participate. We would like to be
5 a part of this and continue to be a partner with the
6 University of Arkansas Fort Smith as they grow this
7 program and it evolves over time to meet the needs of
8 the teacher candidates.

9 So at this time if you have any questions Dr.
10 Riley and I are here to answer those for you.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Thank you.

12 Dr. Riley, did you have anything that you wanted
13 to add?

14 DR. RILEY: I would just add that I believe the
15 success of the program that we started with Fort
16 Smith Public Schools is in the idea that there is a
17 mentor dedicated to two apprentices. And this is a
18 little bit different than a long-term sub in that the
19 sole role of that mentor is to mentor these two
20 interns. We have found that that is very successful
21 in Fort Smith in allowing the apprentices to get
22 extensive support for a successful path to licensure.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Thank you.

24 We'll see if we have any questions from the
25 Board.

1 Dr. Moore?

2 DR. MOORE: Yes. Thank you all for your
3 thorough presentation here. I'm curious, so this
4 year it'll just be these two teachers. What do you
5 envision in future years, how many might participate
6 in this program?

7 MS. ALLEN: Well, every year in the spring we
8 have openings. I mean across six elementaries
9 there's generally a few, a handful of elementary
10 teacher openings. So we would like to, like I said,
11 kind of look for the perfect scenario, not only just
12 the opening in staff but we also want to make sure
13 that we have the right person to serve in that mentor
14 role. So if we have those kind of factors all lined
15 up and with the guidance of the University, of UA-
16 Fort Smith, and the amount of candidates that they
17 feel in that semester are ready for that experience,
18 I'm hoping that we will always have at least two
19 going each school year for the duration of this
20 waiver.

21 DR. MOORE: Will these interns teaching do this
22 for the remainder of the school year?

23 MS. ALLEN: In this scenario it's actually just
24 going to be for this semester. This was kind of a
25 late-in-the-game decision. Our opening came up very

1 late, like in early August. We weren't anticipating
2 -- we had a teacher leave to actually become an
3 assistant principal in our district. So this was
4 kind of a late-in-the-game decision and it will --
5 for this first implementation cycle it will just be
6 for the fall semester.

7 DR. MOORE: Well, what will happen in the spring
8 semester with those classes?

9 MS. ALLEN: In those classes we hope -- our goal
10 would be is that one of them would be filled by one
11 of these ladies, by one of these candidates. They're
12 both -- we're -- they're both highly qualified
13 candidates, and so we're hoping it will be filled by
14 one of them and then the mentor teacher will assume
15 her role in the other classroom.

16 DR. MOORE: So I have concern about switching
17 teachers mid-year, so that might ameliorate that
18 concern there.

19 And then, lastly, I was interested in your pay
20 structure and what this partnership looks like?

21 MS. ALLEN: So how it has looked in the past is
22 -- and how Fort Smith did it and has been very
23 successful, we want to continue that model -- is they
24 paid them half of the beginning teacher salary for
25 the school year.

1 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

2 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Board Member Dr. Hill
3 arrived at 10:53 a.m.)

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. McFetridge?

5 MS. MCFETRIDGE: How much -- yes. How much
6 training has the mentor teacher had? Do you feel
7 confident that they've got enough training as being a
8 mentor?

9 MS. ALLEN: We do feel pretty -- we do feel
10 confident in her ability. She is a veteran teacher.
11 She has been a teacher leader in her grade level.
12 Like I said earlier, this building just happens to be
13 one that's had quite a bit of turnover. There's a
14 lot of young staff. And she has spent a great deal
15 of time being a mentor to interns in the past and to
16 new teachers. So she has some experience with
17 working with new teachers.

18 DR. RILEY: Also I would add to that that the
19 mentor teacher in Fort Smith is also mentoring this
20 new mentor teacher. The one that's done it for
21 several years is also working with -- will work with
22 the teacher and help her as she fills this role.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Mr. Henderson?

24 MR. HENDERSON: Thank you, Ms. Allen, for that
25 presentation. Did I understand correctly that you

1 said that the average experienced teacher is five
2 years?

3 MS. ALLEN: I don't have that data specifically.
4 I'm just kind of going off of what I know. I also do
5 Human Resources in this -- in our district, and I
6 know that it's been -- the building has had a lot of
7 turnover and there's a considerable amount of young
8 teachers in that building. I would say the majority
9 of the staff are 10 years or less.

10 MR. HENDERSON: Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Mr. Sutton?

12 MR. SUTTON: No questions.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Dr. Rankin?

14 DR. RANKIN: Yes. I want to say thank you so
15 much for this presentation. And I did appreciate
16 that you included in the program feedback that you
17 did, the one-third of teachers who had some concerns
18 about this, and I appreciated that you actually
19 listed those concerns out on -- in one of the
20 elements of your preparation materials in here. And
21 I just was curious about how you're working to
22 address those concerns by the one-third of teachers
23 who do have some hesitancy about this. Ideally, we'd
24 love to see more universal support from your teacher
25 base itself, and I certainly echo Dr. Moore's

1 concerns about the midyear. I know ideally this
2 would be a year-long placement. But mainly looking
3 at the concerns of these teachers and what your
4 thought process on communicating with those teachers
5 about those?

6 MS. ALLEN: Well, I was really appreciative for
7 those comments from our teachers because I think that
8 it gives us some areas to -- maybe sometimes we
9 didn't think about it from necessarily their
10 perspective. And so I really appreciated those. I
11 think some of their concerns come from just not
12 knowing much about the program or seeing it
13 implemented yet. And so I think once -- with this --
14 hopefully this approval and we get it implemented
15 some of those concerns will lessen over time. I do
16 think the main concerns were about, as Dr. Moore
17 said, to make that transition at semester, and I
18 think we will work toward that. We've had parent-
19 teacher -- we'll have parent-teacher conferences
20 coming up, we've had open houses, and that teacher is
21 right along beside those interns in those classrooms.
22 And so parents are very aware that they have an
23 intern situation and that they're very supportive.
24 And, honestly, it becomes really like a co-teaching
25 model and it all -- traditionally it has been that

1 way within elementaries. I was an elementary
2 principal, and so we sort of brought those people
3 into our building and they became like second
4 teachers in those classrooms.

5 DR. RANKIN: Thank you. And one of my other
6 questions was -- I appreciated in your actual
7 application, what we were just talking about, the
8 detailed explanation of the monitoring and evaluation
9 efforts that you're going to go to. I liked seeing
10 where there was going to be survey data from
11 teachers, students, and parents. And I was just
12 curious if you could talk to how often that survey
13 outreach is going to take place and how quickly
14 you'll be able to implement and assess that data to
15 make continuous improvement.

16 MS. ALLEN: So our parents -- I'll speak for our
17 parents first of all; they're very used to using like
18 a Google form type survey. We use -- utilize that
19 within our district a lot. We also do paper in
20 elementary; paper tends to come back a lot. I would
21 like to -- and what I would foresee in working with
22 the principal of the building is to kind of do a
23 midyear checkpoint or mid-semester checkpoint, and
24 then also at the end. I think that will provide us
25 just really beneficial feedback moving forward of how

1 that might look for our staff. This could be
2 continual feedback, I believe, for them. Just like
3 something as simple as a Google survey, I think we
4 could do that very quickly. We're getting feedback
5 from the mentor teacher and how she's filling it in
6 with the two candidates constantly. And I think
7 that's what drives the program too, is like always
8 growing and learning from what they're telling us.
9 Because like I said, their boots are on the ground,
10 they're the ones in there doing it, and we're just
11 observing and sometimes we may miss some things that
12 we need to do additionally for them in terms of
13 support.

14 DR. RANKIN: Okay. Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Post?

16 MS. POST: First, I would just like to say
17 something I love about this program is that it
18 provides teachers who maybe are not interested in
19 administration an opportunity to still take a
20 leadership role within the classroom.

21 My concern is with that midyear transition. I
22 didn't -- I'm from Fort Smith Public Schools. But I
23 didn't hear anything about that. How did that go?
24 In our district, was it like that or was this like a
25 second semester program before?

1 DR. RILEY: In Fort Smith Public Schools we have
2 been full-year; we have not been half-year. This
3 will be specific to Van Buren. I -- if Ms. Allen
4 will allow me I'll talk to the transition just a
5 little bit.

6 MS. ALLEN: (Nodding head up and down)

7 DR. RILEY: What we know though is that that
8 mentor teacher is a part of the classroom every day.
9 She's not in a different classroom; she's co-teaching
10 -- she will co-teach with these two interns
11 throughout. The students will know her, the parents
12 will know her. And so when she assumes her role back
13 in one of those 4th grade classrooms, and hopefully
14 one of the interns takes that other classroom, there
15 shouldn't be the panic of transition that might ensue
16 if it was a completely new teacher because they will
17 both have been very present in that classroom. And
18 that's the way this is designed. In Fort Smith even
19 we talk about the classrooms having two teachers and
20 that those -- they work side-by-side to see growth in
21 the interns and for that mentor teacher to serve as a
22 co-teacher in this situation.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I know Ms. Woods was going to
24 be traveling this morning. So, Ms. Woods, are you
25 with us?

1 Okay. She may come back in a few minutes.

2 My question is also the half-year because I
3 really -- it's hard for me to understand the logic
4 because the district is not actually saving any money
5 by transitioning out of this at semester. And I can
6 see where it's going to put a lot of pressure on
7 those two interns thinking, well, one of us is going
8 to have a job at semester and then one of us is not.
9 You know, and so I just wonder about, you know, how
10 is that going to affect the dynamics of the
11 relationship, you know, of how they're going to work
12 together. And just the benefits of it being full-
13 year would be tremendous rather than being a
14 semester. So that was my question about this waiver
15 was why was it transitioning at semester; what was
16 the reasoning or purpose for doing that?

17 MS. ALLEN: So our plans moving forward would be
18 for it to be a full year, much like the program was
19 developed in Fort Smith. This was kind of an
20 emergency situation where we had a classroom that we
21 could not fill with a quality candidate. In fact, we
22 have two in Van Buren. Right here in the River
23 Valley next to a college who produces a lot of
24 quality candidates, we still had two positions that
25 we've been unable to fill with quality teachers. We

1 have a 6th grade position and a 4th grade. So we
2 feel like this scenario, even though there might be
3 just a little bit of work with the transition, is a
4 better scenario for the students in that classroom
5 than filling it with a long-term sub that may or may
6 not be certified in elementary education. This is a
7 stronger option for those students who have no
8 qualified teacher this year, no certified qualified
9 teacher. And so I reached out to Dr. Riley and just
10 said, you know, could this be a possibility for us
11 moving forward.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah, I'm completely onboard
13 with using the intern. It just -- the half-year I
14 guess is what's bothering me. Are you thinking that
15 -- do you have the -- does the 6th grade classroom
16 have a long-term sub now? Is that what you're doing
17 there?

18 MS. ALLEN: It does. Yes, ma'am.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So you're thinking that this
20 other person might move into the 6th grade position?
21 Is that your thoughts?

22 MS. ALLEN: Well, they would definitely have the
23 option for interviewing for that position.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. I got it
25 now. Okay. All right. Thank you.

1 I had one question for Ms. Hyatt.

2 Ms. Hyatt, this Class Size and Teaching Load
3 waiver, it can only be used to -- for this particular
4 purpose. Is that correct?

5 MS. HYATT: Yes, that's right.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Thank you.

7 DR. MOORE: Can I ask you another question, Ms.
8 Hyatt? Is five years what we approved Fort Smith, do
9 you know?

10 MS. HYATT: I can check.

11 DR. MOORE: Okay. And is there a cap on the --
12 I mean I'm sure, like they said, they're not going to
13 hire 20 of them. But --

14 MS. HYATT: So --

15 DR. MOORE: -- is there --

16 MS. HYATT: -- there's not unless you set one.

17 DR. MOORE: Okay.

18 MS. HYATT: And five years is the longest that
19 you can grant a 1240 waiver. Of course, you can
20 shorten it. I can run and just double-check on the
21 computer for Fort Smith really quickly and see what
22 the length was.

23 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: And, Dr. Hill, I didn't mean
25 to ignore you this morning. Did you have any

1 questions?

2 DR. HILL: No, ma'am. No questions. I trust
3 you.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

5 SECRETARY KEY: I would just point out that, you
6 know, if y'all -- this might sound familiar -- I hope
7 it does because this is the type of program that Ms.
8 Saracini described to you last week -- or last month
9 regarding -- and then the team did a great job
10 presenting at the Legislative Committee meeting on
11 Tuesday with the certified teaching assistant and the
12 pathway that they are working to create. So, you
13 know, this board has had a lot of conversation over
14 the years about 1240 waivers and, you know, the
15 intent of those waivers versus how we would like for
16 them to be used. And this is one of those cases
17 where they're actually using a 1240 waiver, the
18 district is, to find a way to get a qualified teacher
19 in a classroom versus the other way that 1240 waivers
20 are used sometimes, which is to have someone in there
21 that may or may not be on a path to become certified.
22 So we appreciate the district and UA-Fort Smith and
23 their willingness to kind of go outside the norms of
24 what we typically see.

25 I think one thing I'll point -- one other thing

1 I'll point out is that we're talking about
2 elementary. For years now, we know we've had trouble
3 with secondary --

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

5 SECRETARY KEY: -- filling positions in
6 secondary. We are starting to see that happen now in
7 elementary. You heard the testimony that, you know,
8 you have a district like Van Buren who's having
9 trouble finding a qualified teacher to be in those
10 roles, to fill those positions. So that is why Ms.
11 Saracini and her team are working so hard to
12 implement some of these pathways so that we can get
13 ahead of this instead of trying to play catch-up from
14 a point behind -- you know, like a 20-point deficit,
15 Fitz, versus maybe a -- you know, maybe we're tied
16 right now or, you know -- yeah.

17 So anyway, I just wanted to point that out that
18 this is the type of thing we encourage districts and
19 their local institutions of higher education to work
20 together on to solve these problems.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

22 Ms. Hyatt.

23 MS. HYATT: It was five years, in 2019. So Fort
24 Smith's expires in 2024.

25 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions from the
2 Board?

3 Thank you, Ms. Allen and Dr. Riley, for your
4 excellent presentation. And, most of all, thank you
5 for the support that you're going to give these two
6 teachers that I think that's going to get them off to
7 a great start. So we really appreciate the hard work
8 that you're doing in your area, in your community.

9 All right. So we are ready then for a motion to
10 either grant the waiver or deny the waiver.

11 DR. RANKIN: I will make that motion to grant
12 the waiver.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion by Dr.
14 Rankin to grant the waiver.

15 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Henderson.
17 All in favor?

18 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

20 Okay. Motion passes.

21 Congratulations. And again I wish you all the
22 best, but most of all we wish those two new teachers
23 the best. So give them all the support that you can.

24 MS. ALLEN: We will do it. Thank you so much.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you.

1 DR. RILEY: Thank you so much. And I would
2 invite any of you over to see what we're doing with
3 this apprenticeship. At any point you would like to
4 come we would invite you to come see what's happening
5 in our classrooms.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I would love to visit. I
7 would love to visit. Just send an invitation. All
8 right.

9 DR. RILEY: Thank you.

10 MS. ALLEN: Thank you.

11 VI.4. PINE BLUFF SCHOOL DISTRICT - ACT 1240 WAIVER REQUEST

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Our next item, Pine Bluff
13 waiver, you said had been removed.

14 VI.5. PROPOSAL TO REMOVE MARVELL SCHOOL DISTRICT FROM FISCAL
15 DISTRESS CLASSIFICATION

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So we're going to move on from
17 there to something that is exciting, that we're glad
18 to see on our agenda. Ms. Webb.

19 MS. WEBB: Tracy Webb, Fiscal Services and
20 Support.

21 On April 11, 2019, upon the recommendation of
22 the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education
23 the State Board of Education classified the Marvell-
24 Elaine School District as being in fiscal distress
25 status. The district petitions this board for

1 removal from fiscal distress status and the Division
2 recommends removal.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Who do you have
4 with us this morning?

5 MS. WEBB: We do have -- the Superintendent has
6 Covid at the moment and is -- was not able to be
7 here. So we have the district Treasurer/Bookkeeper
8 and two board members.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Welcome. Would y'all
10 like to come up for just a minute and join us or say
11 anything? We're so proud of y'all. We know it's
12 been a lot of hard work.

13 MS. GRANBERRY: Good morning, all. I am Ashley
14 Granberry; I am the district Finance Manager for the
15 Marvell-Elaine School District. I am elated to be
16 able to stand here in front of you all --

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

18 MS. GRANBERRY: -- to be able to petition you --
19 to petition you all to allow us to be released from
20 fiscal distress. It has been an uphill journey, and
21 we are definitely excited about it. On behalf of our
22 Superintendent in his absence, he has worked hard
23 countless hours, on and off the clock, to be able to
24 move our district in a direction to not only see
25 growth in our finances but as well with our students

1 and our community. Our board president and board
2 members are here today. And like I said -- I am
3 super-nervous also.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: That's fine.

5 MS. GRANBERRY: We are definitely, like I said,
6 elated to be able to stand here after a short period
7 of time with a first-time superintendent, as well as
8 first-time business manager, to be able to say that
9 we move the district from having \$250,000 in the
10 account to having over \$200,000,000 in -- I'm sorry
11 -- \$2,000,000 in the account. Sorry.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I was going to say wow. You
13 got Mr. Roberts' attention back there.

14 MS. GRANBERRY: No. Sorry. And so I'm sure if
15 he were here he would have a whole lot more stuff to
16 say; that's his area. He does -- I have the gift of
17 gab, but he has it more than I do. I just will say
18 that we continue to cut corners and -- to keep us in
19 the area that we are in of growth. We are both
20 frugal people, to say the least. We're extremely
21 cheap. And so we are continuing to do whatever we
22 need to do to not only move Marvell-Elaine School
23 District in a, like I say, great direction for money-
24 wise, but academic as well.

25 That's all I have.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Congratulations.

2 SECRETARY KEY: Madam Chair, I want to just say
3 a very positive word for the district. Certainly,
4 Mr. Anderson would have much, much more to say. If
5 you know Mr. Anderson, he would have much, much more
6 to say about this.

7 But while you're here, I just -- I want to thank
8 you for your support and the hard work that you've
9 done, for the work that our Fiscal Support team has
10 done with this district, and to the board. I met
11 with Mr. Anderson just a few weeks ago and just -- we
12 had a frank conversation and, you know, the message
13 that I took away from that was he could not have done
14 that without the close work and cooperation,
15 understanding, and partnership with his board. And I
16 just want to say how much I appreciate the work, that
17 they have had a lot of challenges there I mean from
18 -- I mean I won't -- a number of challenges outside
19 the district's control even, in some cases.

20 So that -- I think today is a great day for the
21 community of Marvell-Elaine School District and I
22 want to congratulate you.

23 MS. GRANBERRY: Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes. We echo --

25 SECRETARY KEY: And to you, Mr. Williams and the

1 board, everyone, we really appreciate the hard work.

2 (COURT REPORTERS NOTE: Both Marvell-Elaine
3 School District board members in attendance said
4 "thank you".)

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes, we do.

6 Any board members like to offer any comments
7 this morning?

8 Ms. Post, did you have -- oh, Mr. Sutton, go
9 ahead.

10 MR. SUTTON: Yes. I too want to congratulate
11 the district. Several of us came from small
12 districts. I know you guys have, what, less than 400
13 students in your district and we know the importance
14 of what local schools mean to the town, the
15 community, the people that live there. I was curious
16 in reading about the proposal to remove, which I'm
17 sure we will, but what were the primary adjustments
18 that were made that made such a big swing in the
19 finances? Did you do a reduction in force or --

20 MS. GRANBERRY: We did. The very -- we came in
21 2019. At the end of the 2019-20 school year we did
22 do a RIF, which was about a half-a-million dollars
23 for that. Also what we did was made sure that we
24 started utilizing more of our federal dollars so that
25 we could take a strain off of our operating funds.

1 Again, I go back to we're extremely frugal, so we
2 decided -- not decided -- well, we did -- made sure
3 that we made conscious decisions to utilize coupons,
4 my superintendent is an avid yard-saler, and so we
5 did some of those things as well. We made sure that
6 we utilized most of the things that we already had
7 in-house instead of having to make any large
8 purchases.

9 MR. SUTTON: I noticed that -- I think you guys
10 have, what, 33 mills?

11 MS. GRANBERRY: Yes, sir.

12 MR. SUTTON: Which is low.

13 MS. GRANBERRY: It is. We increased --

14 MR. SUTTON: Have you considered a millage
15 increase to --

16 MS. GRANBERRY: I think they -- before we got
17 there they may have tried to do a millage increase,
18 but I don't -- in our community it probably wouldn't
19 --

20 MR. SUTTON: It won't fly?

21 MS. GRANBERRY: No, sir. No, sir.

22 MR. SUTTON: Need to sell hard sometimes.

23 MS. GRANBERRY: It's hard enough getting them to
24 do certain things, so that definitely would probably
25 not be a good -- we're trying to stay on the good

1 side of the people. We definitely don't want to make
2 them angry.

3 MR. SUTTON: Yeah. I assume you have mostly
4 agricultural land --

5 MS. GRANBERRY: Absolutely. Yes, sir.

6 MR. SUTTON: -- and farmers, et cetera?

7 MS. GRANBERRY: Yes, sir.

8 MR. SUTTON: Yeah.

9 MS. GRANBERRY: We are in a very rural area.

10 MR. SUTTON: Right.

11 MS. GRANBERRY: And just as it was stated
12 earlier, if the school was to close then they would
13 --

14 MR. SUTTON: That's right.

15 MS. GRANBERRY: -- kind of nothing. I mean you
16 have to drive 20 minutes to get to Wal-Mart, so --

17 MR. SUTTON: They need to know that.

18 MS. GRANBERRY: Yes. So --

19 MR. SUTTON: Well, again, congratulations.

20 MS. GRANBERRY: Thank you.

21 MR. SUTTON: We're all pulling for you.

22 MS. GRANBERRY: Yes, sir. Thank you.

23 SECRETARY KEY: Mr. Sutton, just to help, you
24 know, at least let you know, let the Board know how
25 we support districts in that -- our team looks very

1 closely at collection rates in those counties,
2 especially -- you know, think about Phillips County,
3 and it's a sometimes -- I mean that county, it's not
4 just Marvell-Elaine, it's several of the districts in
5 that area; and so looking at those tax collection
6 rates, especially in the year of Covid where the
7 economics were challenging even more so. So that's
8 something that our team looks closely at and tries to
9 provide support when they can. And a mill just
10 doesn't bring a lot --

11 MR. SUTTON: I know.

12 SECRETARY KEY: -- too, so -- as you well know.
13 So we have worked very closely with them, prior to
14 Tracy being onboard; you know, the team that was
15 there then also worked closely with them.

16 And I will say that Mr. Anderson is definitely
17 frugal. And I remember when -- I think there was
18 some furniture that -- there was a district that was
19 liquidating some of their items that were very --
20 they were great items and Mr. Anderson made a point
21 to get what they needed from that. I mean he really
22 is doing the extra work that they have needed --

23 MS. GRANBERRY: Absolutely.

24 SECRETARY KEY: -- over the last couple of
25 years.

1 MS. GRANBERRY: Absolutely.

2 MR. SUTTON: Is he new, Mr. Anderson?

3 SECRETARY KEY: He is not -- well, he is -- he's
4 new, relatively new to the district. He was a
5 longtime principal/administrator in Little Rock,
6 North Little Rock. So he has -- but he has a lot of
7 experience in larger districts and now he's able to
8 help with that -- from that experience help --

9 MR. SUTTON: But he's new to Marvell?

10 SECRETARY KEY: He's two years, I think.

11 MS. GRANBERRY: And now we embark on our third
12 year this year.

13 SECRETARY KEY: Starting the third year.

14 MS. GRANBERRY: Yeah.

15 SECRETARY KEY: Yeah.

16 MR. SUTTON: Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other comments over here?

18 DR. RANKIN: Yes. I just want to say
19 congratulations. This is such an intentional and
20 significant effort and hard work. So just carry that
21 congratulations back to your team and let them know
22 that we really appreciate the work that's gone into
23 this appearance today and what this means for the
24 students of your district. It's significant.

25 MS. GRANBERRY: Thank you.

1 MS. POST: So to kind of piggyback off of that,
2 my math teacher brain right now -- I don't know if
3 Ms. Newton is tracking with me, but what a teachable
4 moment for the students in your district.

5 MS. GRANBERRY: Uh-huh.

6 MS. POST: I taught -- one of my favorite
7 classes was quantitative literacy, which was a lot of
8 budgeting and real-world math. And I would just love
9 to know that your students are going to get their
10 hands on this data and it will just connect them to
11 the community and the efforts. And then maybe even
12 kind of query your own kids to see where can we go
13 from here to keep that upswing and maybe turn that
14 \$2,000,000 into \$200,000,000.

15 MS. GRANBERRY: I know, right. I would love
16 that.

17 Before -- if I may say --

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Go ahead.

19 MS. GRANBERRY: You mentioned the previous
20 administra- -- I say administration. But Ms. Cindy,
21 she is no longer --

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

23 MS. GRANBERRY: -- with ADE, but she was very
24 instrumental and I dare not not mention her. Ms.
25 Tracy has come in and picked up the torch. But Ms.

1 Cindy was very instrumental in the countless hours
2 after hours in assisting us with -- even thereafter;
3 you know, if you have a question, anybody knows Ms.
4 Cindy; she's --

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Uh-huh.

6 MS. GRANBRERY: She has a wealth of knowledge as
7 well. And so I dare not leave here without giving
8 her her kudos, so --

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: She is excited. I got a very
10 sweet email from her --

11 MS. GRANBERRY: Yes.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: -- this morning saying how
13 proud she was of the hard work that your district had
14 put in.

15 MS. GRANBERRY: Yes.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: And just know Ms. Smith is
17 probably watching this morning --

18 MS. GRANBERRY: I know.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: -- and just beaming from ear
20 to ear about how proud she is. And we thank you,
21 your team, Mr. Rogers' team, Ms. Webb, all of you,
22 because we know it was not just one person; it was
23 everybody working together. And she would want me to
24 pass her congratulations on to you and your team.

25 MS. GRANBERRY: Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Anyone over here have
2 comments?

3 DR. MOORE: So I do want to ask, I know
4 financial challenges tie with enrollment. So I
5 wanted to know what your enrollment numbers were this
6 year and if y'all have seen any changes in the past
7 few years?

8 MS. GRANBERRY: At the moment, we have 319.
9 Well, we have been -- we've seen some changes in the
10 enrollment from the things that we have done,
11 implemented. We were trying to make our -- not
12 trying to -- it's making our district more appealingable
13 and implementing more things that some of the
14 surrounding districts have that we didn't offer in
15 the beginning. One of the things that we have done
16 -- I don't know if you guys -- if you have a chance
17 to, go and watch our Facebook page, and we have had
18 some of our teachers to go on video talking about how
19 and what we're doing in the district now and making
20 everybody -- asking them to -- ask the people to come
21 and join us. I mean when you get -- we see all of
22 these different ads and things that they have going
23 on, on TV; what are the districts around you doing to
24 make us more -- gosh -- I guess more appealingable to
25 wanting to come and be a part of our district. And

1 not only that, we've had teachers to -- now that we
2 have certain things that are there, we've had
3 teachers to move their children from where they are.

4 So I guess it's just becoming the fact of the
5 Delta is what we're trying to do.

6 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

7 MS. GRANBERRY: Uh-huh.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Anyone else?

9 Mr. Henderson?

10 MR. HENDERSON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

11 This is my first educational board meeting --

12 MS. GRANBERRY: Me too.

13 MR. HENDERSON: -- and I love success stories.
14 It's very intriguing to hear what you guys have done.
15 So I just want to congratulate you.

16 MS. GRANBERRY: Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Dr. Hill?

18 DR. HILL: Yes. I want to echo Mr. Henderson.
19 Team work makes the dream work. And I know when you
20 are having to make those cuts and make those
21 decisions and turn-around those are hard
22 conversations, necessary conversations. Leadership
23 is not comfortable, but you don't grow in comfort;
24 you grow in challenges. And you all have grown.
25 Kudos to you. God bless you. Keep serving the

1 community, because education is at the core of us
2 bringing our communities back to what they need to
3 be. So we're proud of you, and any way we can help
4 we're here to serve.

5 MS. GRANBERRY: Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Woods, did you have any
7 comments you wanted to add?

8 MS. WOODS: No, I'll just echo my colleagues and
9 say congratulations. This is a big deal and I hope
10 you guys just relish in the success.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes, that is so true. We are
12 so proud.

13 And so with all of that, I think we are ready to
14 hear a great motion this morning.

15 MR. SUTTON: I'll make the motion to approve.

16 DR. HILL: Second.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion to
18 remove Marvell School District from fiscal distress
19 from -- by Mr. Sutton and seconded by Dr. Hill.

20 All in favor?

21 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

23 Congratulations.

24 And, Board Members, we want to offer our
25 congratulations to you because we know that y'all

1 were a big part of this team. And we thank you for
2 being here this morning and congratulations.

3 BOARD MEMBER: Thank y'all.

4 MS. GRANBERRY: Thank you so much.

5 [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE}

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good job.

7 MS. GRANBERRY: Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. That was -- I
9 think it made a lot of people's morning. And so we
10 appreciate y'all driving and be safe going home.

11 MS. GRANBERRY: Thank you.

12 VI.6. EDUCATIONAL COOPERATIVE DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Ms. Smith, we're
14 going to do the Educational Cooperative Digital
15 Learning Report. I think this is something that
16 we've kind of all been wanting to hear.

17 MS. SMITH: That's right. So you asked for it,
18 you're going to get it.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

20 MS. SMITH: I think hearing the digital learning
21 applications that was one thing that was said several
22 times by various board members that we do want to
23 have quick updates, especially from our consortiums
24 or the co-ops. And I must say I know we've got
25 several of them here.

1 I'm going to ask them to go ahead and come in,
2 those that are here in person.

3 So we have Roy Hester who's the director of Guy
4 Fenter Co-op here; we have Brad Horn who's the
5 director of the Wilbur Mills Cooperative here; we
6 have Darin Beckwith who is on the Zoom, he's the
7 director of Dawson.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

9 MS. SMITH: Cathi Swan, the director of Arkansas
10 River, is also on Zoom.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

12 MS. SMITH: And we also have Kathy Bowlin who is
13 the principal of the Tri-Region Consortium that
14 includes Crowley's Ridge, Northeast, and North
15 Central.

16 And I will say when I called Mr. Hester and
17 said, "Hey, we want to do an update for the Board;
18 will you, you know, get together with the other co-
19 ops and kind of decide how you want to do it? You
20 can come yourself and talk about Guy Fenter or you
21 can" -- and, overwhelmingly, they all were saying
22 "we'll come and we'll answer some questions."

23 So, some of them provided one-pagers for you.
24 What I did do is I printed them off as hardcopies and
25 you have them at your fingertips for you today; as

1 they're up here presenting then you didn't have to go
2 back. Wilbur Mills is not on the agenda but we'll
3 get it loaded on the agenda. But you should have a
4 hardcopy, just kind of a coversheet for them. Did
5 everyone get one?

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Did everyone get your copy
7 this morning? Anyone not get one?

8 (WHEREUPON, VI.6. Exhibit One (1) was marked for
9 identification and appended.)

10 MS. SMITH: And today really they're here to
11 maybe give you a slight overview of what's going on
12 with their consortium and be able to answer questions
13 that you might have. Okay?

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

15 GUY FENTER COOPERATIVE

16 MS. SMITH: And so right now I'm going to -- Mr.
17 Hester is right here. I'm going to let -- turn it
18 over to him and let him visit with you.

19 MR. HESTER: Good morning.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good morning, Mr. Hester.
21 Thank you for joining us.

22 MR. HESTER: Thank you for having us down, I
23 appreciate it; appreciate the State Board and
24 Secretary Key.

25 Now I'm going to be honest -- I know that's what

1 you want me to do, but it was a challenge as we took
2 this on as a co-op because it's really not what we
3 do, educating kids. I mean we have specialists that
4 go out to our schools and help teachers and we go in
5 and do some teaching of students. But in taking on
6 this K-6 virtual -- again, co-ops, we're kind of like
7 schools, you know, we monitor and adjust. So we
8 monitored and adjusted and looked at a way that we
9 can help our schools. Because I know a lot of them
10 struggled last year with digital learning, with the
11 classroom teachers trying to do both face-to-face
12 learning and digital learning. So we as the co-op
13 directors kind of got together and said, "What can we
14 do to help our schools," and this kind of morphed out
15 of that.

16 And at Guy Fenter Co-op we have 22 school
17 districts -- actually, 21 public schools and one
18 charter school in Fort Smith -- and of those schools
19 we ended up having 14 that decided to be a part of
20 our virtual learning in some format. When I say
21 that, we started the process back early in the year
22 talking to them about what we were looking at doing,
23 giving them a digital option, and I set a deadline of
24 the spring break. I wanted to know who wanted to
25 participate because I wanted to have plenty of time

1 to start advertising, hiring teachers, getting
2 everything in place, getting the digital platform --
3 which we're using Red Comet which uses the Buzz
4 platform, which was what a lot of our schools was
5 familiar with. We wanted to keep that familiarity
6 with our students because they had used it in the
7 past. But anyway, we set a hard deadline. I
8 basically said, "How many seats do you want? How
9 many slots do you want?" And it varied from district
10 to district depending on the size and what their
11 parents were telling them. And, you know, a lot of
12 them said, "I really don't know;" it was really just
13 a guess at what they were going to need. But as it
14 went on we ended up having potential for 250
15 students, is what they -- I sold slots for so-to-
16 speak. That helped me decide how much I needed as
17 far as money to operate the program, purchase the
18 software, hire the teachers, those kind of things.
19 But -- and I know that was a big question I know back
20 in the spring, "Well, how many students are you going
21 to end up having?" Well, we didn't know. As of last
22 week we had 83, so the numbers were a lot lower than
23 we anticipated -- which is a good thing because I
24 really believe that face-to-face learning is the most
25 productive and best way for students to learn. Now

1 we do have, for whatever reason, students in our
2 digital learning that the parents want them there
3 because they don't, for whatever -- they don't feel
4 like their students are safe at school with the Covid
5 or whatever. But it does give those parents an
6 option for their kids.

7 Something that was surprising to me was that our
8 4-6 arena is we have more students in that age group
9 than we did the K-3 area. I guess I was thinking it
10 would probably be just the reverse for some reason,
11 thinking, you know, mommas -- or mommas are -- I say
12 mommas, daddies as well -- are nervous about sending
13 that kindergartner to school. But in a Covid year I
14 thought our kindergarten will be one of our largest
15 classes, but it ended up being one of our smallest.
16 So, kind of interesting information.

17 But anyway, we've -- we had a virtual open house
18 which was a little different. We had parents of
19 students, had great attendance in that. And I talked
20 to my Coordinator this morning and she said one of
21 the key things that she thinks is making this a
22 success -- and we feel like we've been very
23 successful -- students are -- we're having great
24 attendance. The students, we require them to attend
25 two sessions per day, one in the morning and one in

1 the afternoon, face-to-face sessions. So the teacher
2 is seeing them, working with them, talking to them.
3 But she says one of -- the key is communication. She
4 said she can't stress that enough. She's
5 communicating with the students, their parents,
6 following up.

7 She shared with me a -- I'd never heard of this
8 program but it's called Screencastify. Some of you
9 may be familiar with it. But she said it's been very
10 beneficial to her; that sometimes, you know, when the
11 teacher is giving the lesson and they're listening to
12 them they go into the Buzz platform. Sometimes maybe
13 the parent wasn't quite sure what they were supposed
14 to click on or how they were supposed to do it. So
15 she's made numerous of these Screencastifies which
16 basically is a video of herself demonstrating exactly
17 what to do, where to go, what to click on, how to
18 open it. And she said, "And that just solves so many
19 problems with, you know, that technology issue of
20 what do we do." And, you know, in many cases we have
21 not just parents that are raising these students,
22 it's grandparents. So, you know, you add that
23 generational difference and the technology, many
24 times grandparents are very afraid of technology.
25 But we think it's been very good.

1 As you can see on the handout that we gave you,
2 attendance, we've had 82% attendance on the first day
3 and that number continues to grow. We've had 100%
4 attendance in many of our sessions, again, if we stay
5 on them constantly, following up. We've had a lot of
6 feedback, positive feedback from our parents; they
7 feel like that it's working well for their kids.

8 I'm anxious to see -- as you all know, this is
9 fourth week of school, so progress reports will start
10 coming out next week. And we talked about that a
11 little today as well, that we're working on getting
12 those progress reports back to the schools. Now just
13 like anything, in school, yes, progress reports go
14 home at five weeks. But if we've seen any child that
15 is slacking, not doing their work or whatever, we've
16 been giving that feedback to the schools already. So
17 they already kind of know where those students are,
18 and we've given feedback to the parents as well. So,
19 and I don't know -- I can't sit here and say we've
20 got anybody failing; hopefully not. But again if
21 there is somebody on that fringe we've already been
22 keeping them informed; it's not going to be a
23 surprise when they get their midterm progress report.

24 So anyway, I don't know what else you guys would
25 like to hear. I'm open for questions --

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

2 MR. HESTER: -- and I'll answer anything to the
3 best of my ability.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We'll see if any
5 of the Board have questions for you this morning.

6 Ms. Post?

7 MS. POST: Give me just a minute.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Dr. Rankin?

9 DR. RANKIN: I want to thank you for this report
10 today. Very helpful to us as we're navigating these
11 unchartered waters. I was very encouraged when I saw
12 that there's consecutive perfect attendance in some
13 courses.

14 MR. HESTER: Yes.

15 DR. RANKIN: Do you have any idea what the
16 carrot is in these particular courses that is
17 prompting that enthusiasm from our students?

18 MR. HESTER: I don't know. I'll see if I can
19 find out and let you know. But I don't know what it
20 is. It seems like it's -- maybe it's something
21 different, what my thoughts is. It's something
22 different and it's -- you know, some days they're not
23 in their own school. I mean, like I said, we've got
24 14 different schools. Now a student may be in a Zoom
25 classroom with students at the school next door, and

1 maybe it could be a friend of theirs that lives in
2 the district which is totally different than what
3 kids normally experience. If they've got friends
4 that live in the next town, they don't go to school
5 with them; with this they get to go to school with
6 them and they get to see other faces. I don't know
7 if that's the answer, but --

8 DR. RANKIN: We always look for those bright
9 spots.

10 MR. HESTER: Right.

11 DR. RANKIN: I was just curious if that was a
12 certain age, if that was a certain subject, if that
13 was a certain teacher; you know, what was happening
14 there, because that's certainly something we want to
15 build on. So, congratulations for that.

16 MR. HESTER: Thank you. Appreciate that.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Mr. Sutton?

18 MR. SUTTON: No questions.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Dr. Moore?

20 DR. MOORE: Yes. I know in some of the virtual
21 models we've seen tutoring being offered. Do you all
22 offer tutoring or time during the day for a student
23 to have one-on-one --

24 MR. HESTER: Yes.

25 DR. MOORE: -- instruction and support?

1 MR. HESTER: I'm sorry. Yes, we do. We have a
2 paraprofessional that is available to work with them
3 one-on-one or small group. We're also -- and I think
4 we told you guys in our presen- -- initial
5 presentation that we're trying to work with
6 Americorps and trying to follow back up on that. And
7 they've got young people that are part of that
8 program that are available -- would be available for
9 tutors. We've also reached out to one of our
10 universities that does teacher training to see if
11 maybe some of their first, second, third year
12 teachers who were already going into the classroom
13 and getting that classroom experience -- get them in
14 that digital classroom experience, which would be so
15 valuable to them but also valuable to us in just
16 having, you know, the more folks you have to interact
17 with those students. But in most cases, it's kind of
18 like in a regular classroom you've got those students
19 that are doing well and don't need much of that one-
20 on-one, and then you've always got those that do, you
21 know. And the same goes with parents; you've got
22 some of those parents that would like for you to sit
23 and be online with them all day long and hold their
24 hands and their kids' hands, and then you've got
25 those that, "hey, we don't need that, we got it."

1 So I don't know if that answered your question
2 or not. But we are -- we do have one-on-one for
3 those students who are struggling.

4 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. McFetridge?

6 MS. MCFETRIDGE: I love to hear that as well. I
7 think the piece of this that I struggle with is a lot
8 of the consortiums and the class sizes -- some of
9 them go up to 50 students. So I was glad to hear you
10 can do a one-on-one. Talk about maybe how you break
11 into these small groups and what is your class size?
12 When you talk about having 50 students in a K-2
13 classroom -- and I don't know if it's your consortium
14 that does that -- how do you manage that and how do
15 we make sure that these students are getting the
16 Science of Reading education that they need?

17 MR. HESTER: Right. Well, every grade level has
18 a schedule of when -- say, first thing in the morning
19 from say 8:00 to 8:40 or whatever is kindergarten
20 literacy. So during that session, which the teacher
21 is teaching, she's just teaching kindergarten
22 students. Okay? So it is a small group. Now next
23 she may be -- later on in the morning she's teaching
24 1st graders, a small group of them. There's only --
25 and I don't know the exact numbers; I think we've got

1 -- we've got eight 1st graders. So she's working
2 with eight 1st graders one-on-one. Well, then we
3 also have follow-up in which if they're having
4 problems we have a time where we have an aid who can
5 get online with those students and work with them on
6 any problems they're having after that fact. But
7 when the actual face-to-face instruction is going on
8 there's -- it's small -- pretty much small group
9 every time because they've all got a schedule for
10 that lesson. And I didn't give you a copy of those,
11 but I can get you a copy of our schedules if you'd
12 like to see those as well.

13 MS. McFETRIDGE: I think that would be really
14 helpful.

15 MR. HESTER: Okay.

16 MS. McFETRIDGE: Okay. How would your team
17 recognize a student that's got maybe some dyslexic
18 issues that maybe haven't been recognized before when
19 they were in their normal school situation?

20 MR. HESTER: Right. Well, they are all -- all
21 of our teachers are trained in Science of Reading.

22 MS. McFETRIDGE: Okay.

23 MR. HESTER: So they know pretty much what to
24 look for as a classroom teacher.

25 MS. McFETRIDGE: Sure.

1 MR. HESTER: And we don't have -- well, I want
2 to say, we have veteran teachers; they're not first
3 or second year teachers. They've been teaching
4 several years. So they've got that teacher insight,
5 they know what to look for. And if they see that
6 struggling problem, then they would refer them to our
7 coordinator who would contact the school, people at
8 the school. We have a point of contact at every one
9 of our schools, whether it's a counselor or principal
10 or whoever, curriculum person. So they contact them
11 and interact and say, "Hey, little Suzy is having --
12 we're seeing something; we're not quite sure." At
13 that point their intervention team would contact the
14 parents and say, "Hey, we think there may be
15 potential for some dyslexia or learning disability,"
16 or whatever. That falls back on the local school
17 district to handle those situations. Now if it's
18 something that once they determine yes, there is
19 something, and we can do something to make
20 modifications for that child, then at that point we
21 can do that.

22 MS. McFETRIDGE: All right. Well, thank you.
23 This has been really helpful. And I know for myself,
24 knowing that the districts are in a consortium I feel
25 like there being that -- another set of eyes that is

1 in support that's helping that district. And I
2 really appreciate you stepping up and putting this
3 together.

4 MR. HESTER: Well, thank you. Appreciate that.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Mr. Henderson?

6 MR. HENDERSON: Thank you for presenting to us
7 today. When I think about virtual schools or virtual
8 training with regards to broadband and also IT
9 technical type issues, do you have anything to
10 measure what type of issues you've had or what's the
11 -- how do you measure and calibrate that stuff?

12 MR. HESTER: Right. Well, initially when we
13 talked to our schools about the program and their
14 students we kind of threw the ball in their court --
15 you know, if you're going to enroll a student or
16 allow a student to enroll in digital learning you're
17 going to have to make sure that they have the
18 broadband capability; you've got to provide them with
19 either a hotspot or something, some source which they
20 can have the connectivity and the broadband that they
21 need. I know at my house -- I live out in the
22 country and I would hate to think I had a child
23 trying to do virtual at my house because who knows,
24 sometimes I'm trying to watch something on Netflix
25 and it just sits there and spins. So I would hate

1 that to happen for our kids. So I think most of our
2 schools have taken that at heart because we are
3 rural; I mean we're rural Arkansas everywhere. And
4 that's one of the pre-reqs for being part of the
5 program that the schools set, that you've got to have
6 the broadband necessary for your child to be
7 successful.

8 MR. HENDERSON: Thank you.

9 MR. HESTER: You're welcome.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Dr. Hill?

11 DR. HILL: No questions.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Woods?

13 Ms. Post?

14 MS. POST: On the Dawson flyer specifically I
15 saw something that --

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. This is Guy Fenter.

17 MS. POST: Oh, okay.

18 MR. HESTER: That's not -- that's not --

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah. He's Guy Fenter, so --

20 MS. POST: Okay.

21 MR. HESTER: Mine is --

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

23 MS. POST: My apologies.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

25 MS. POST: I would still like to speak to --

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Sure.

2 MR. HESTER: Okay. Sure.

3 MS. POST: When you were discussing maybe what
4 is engaging students I saw in here show-and-tell and
5 Spy Kids games to see who's showing up on the
6 different Zoom sessions. I think that we are all
7 tired of Zoom. So I just love that teachers in
8 general are trying to come up with creative ways to
9 engage students in that virtual. So as you push
10 forward with that, just any kind of creative things
11 that can be brought to that virtual classroom I think
12 is going to continue just for us to be successful
13 with kids.

14 MR. HESTER: I agree. I agree. Because I have
15 -- I guess from two years ago I barely knew what Zoom
16 was and now I almost cringe when I hear the word, so
17 --

18 MS. POST: Yeah.

19 MR. HESTER: Yes.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you, Mr. Hester. This
21 has been very informative and it's been very
22 reassuring for us. Because just like you stepped out
23 in unknown waters last spring, we stepped out right
24 there with you. And so just to have this to knowing
25 your success and how well things are going for your

1 students and parents, we just appreciate so much that
2 -- your coming in today and presenting for us. Thank
3 you.

4 MR. HESTER: Thank you. And I appreciate you
5 guys. Like you said, you guys stepped out on a limb
6 to allow this to happen. And I know that you care
7 about the kids ultimately, you care about the schools
8 -- the struggles that our teachers were facing last
9 year and our school districts were facing. And we
10 kind of had a commonality there. That's what we were
11 -- what can we do to help them --

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

13 MR. HESTER: -- make it better for our kids. So
14 I especially appreciate you guys. Thank you very
15 much.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you. Thank you for all
17 your hard work and that your team has done also.

18 MR. HESTER: Thank you.

19 DAWSON EDUCATIONAL COOPERATIVE

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Smith.

21 MS. SMITH: So we have -- our second consortium
22 is Dawson Educational Cooperative and we have Darin
23 Beckwith on Zoom with us.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good morning, Mr. Beckwith.

25 MR. BECKWITH: Good morning. Thank y'all for

1 having us.

2 Just a couple of quick comments and then I'll do
3 like any great leader -- you know, you hire great
4 people, then you get the heck out of the way -- and
5 that's what we did when we were given the opportunity
6 to go digital. My Assistant Director, Candiss
7 Bennett, she came -- you know, came to me with some
8 great gains and she didn't fail me on that part.
9 We've got some great people. So I'm going to ask her
10 to come and present here in just a second, so --

11 But I will tell you this, I think to Roy's point
12 the thing about the digital learning is this, that
13 what -- one of the things that we have definitely
14 realized is that it's here to stay, I think, on lots
15 of levels and, you know, I think Covid has kind of
16 brought that to us. But at the end of the day I
17 don't think it's going to go away, and in my mind
18 that's necessarily -- not necessarily a bad thing.
19 Because, you know, I think as you hear Ms. Smith when
20 she comes to us here in just a second, she's going to
21 tell you some folks -- some of the kids they actually
22 learned a little bit better this way.

23 And you asked about the attendance. I think
24 that's a big piece of why you see more kids being --
25 the attendance being as good as it is, is because of

1 the digital format. But it's also -- when it comes
2 to the attendance I think they're more attentive
3 because it's more interactive. So that's my take on
4 it.

5 But like I said, the best part for me is we just
6 have an incredible staff running our program. The
7 promise we did make to you was if our numbers shot
8 up, which they did, we would bring in additional
9 staff. We stuck to that. I want you guys to know
10 that we honored our promise. We did bring in an
11 additional teacher to address those numbers.

12 So at this point I would want to introduce
13 Bethany Smith; she's our Coordinator over our K-6
14 digital learning.

15 So, Bethany, if you will, I'll have you jump in
16 right here.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Welcome, Ms. Smith.

18 MS. BETHANY SMITH: Hi, everyone. Can you hear
19 me?

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

21 MS. BETHANY SMITH: Excellent. So, first of
22 all, thank you so much for giving myself and my
23 teachers and our students the opportunity to have
24 this virtual option. It's put so many parents and
25 students at ease that they know they can still get a

1 quality education and keep their health and their
2 family's health where they feel most comfortable.
3 And we all know that if you feel safe and if you feel
4 comfortable, then learning can be achieved.

5 And so with that being said, I kind of heard
6 some of your questions and I kind of have some
7 responses to those questions too.

8 One of the biggest things I heard is what does a
9 daily class look like. Well, honestly, our classroom
10 looks just like a regular classroom. We have whole
11 group instruction and then small groups where we can
12 really tailor that, you know, education to where that
13 student really needs some additional help. And then
14 from that we even pull small -- you know, individual
15 one-on-ones. That way we can Zoom and then use our
16 teachers to work right along with the students on a
17 one-on-one basis, but even with their learning coach
18 which is any family member that is there with them
19 that day. So they can see right as -- what we're
20 doing with their student the entire time. And I
21 think that's been one of the biggest things that
22 parents have loved about this program is that, you
23 know, in a typical setting, like you said, there's
24 paper documents or there's, you know, Google forms
25 that are sent out that kind of update -- or a

1 newsletter that updates parents on what their
2 students are learning. Well, in this situation all
3 they have to do is watch; all they have to do is be
4 present and they can see exactly what their student
5 is working on all the time. They can hear where
6 their student needs help. They can see the small
7 groups and the one-on-one attention that the students
8 get. And their progress is updated daily, so they
9 know exactly where their student is working and how
10 on task they are and what their grades are looking
11 like that day. And I think parents really love that
12 ability to help. I think most parents or guardians
13 really look to be able to help their child the best
14 way they can, and this gives them excellent guidance
15 as to how to do that. And our program even offers
16 guardian accounts for those parents so they can go
17 and monitor just right alongside with their child,
18 and that's been just a beautiful component, is one of
19 the top things our parents have said.

20 I also know that social-emotional part has been
21 a big concern as to how you make those relationships
22 whenever you're over a camera. Well, I don't know
23 about you, but for me whenever I watch American Idol
24 or reality TV shows I fall in love with the people
25 that I see on TV. And so those relationships we all

1 know can happen, and in this situation it's with the
2 students, it's with the teacher, and it's with the
3 entire class. We have one set of students that, you
4 know, they just reached out and said, "Like honestly,
5 we love our teacher and we love this group." And
6 it's excellent. When you're in a whole group setting
7 you can see kids talk about -- in our morning groups
8 we do Capturing Kids' Hearts, and in our morning
9 groups they kind of say their good things and a lot
10 of times that gives you their interests. So we like
11 to also pull small groups where it just really even
12 sums it down to the students' interests and those
13 students can kind of share the things that they like.
14 Because making those relationships and those bonds of
15 students, you know, that may be three hours away from
16 there is a really cool thing to do and really
17 encourages learning and attendance.

18 Which brings me to that concept. So you may
19 have noticed our Spy Kids attendance award. Spy Kids
20 is really cool. It's a program that one of our
21 teachers developed and it uses QR codes and they can
22 watch videos on it and they get their own school
23 (inaudible). So you get Spy Kids points whenever you
24 come. The attendance of our kids has been off the
25 charts because they want to know the next code and

1 they want to be a part of that cool learning aspect.

2 As far as RISE, we definitely -- and we use two
3 additional components to meet our RISE standards,
4 which is the Lexia Core 5 Power-Up for the 6th
5 graders and we also use Heggerty. And then we have
6 one -- because we're a co-op we have wonderful
7 literacy specialists that actually we meet with them
8 once a month to make sure that we are making all
9 those adjustments for our students and being able to
10 supply all the RISE components for that.

11 So I think the other thing you asked about was
12 class size. Class size, we do not have more than 20
13 kids in a whole group class, so it's always a smaller
14 number. And then our small groups are obviously six
15 or less, and then our one-on-ones are individualized.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Smith.
17 We'll see if any board members have questions about
18 Dawson.

19 Dr. Hill?

20 DR. HILL: No, ma'am.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Mr. Henderson?

22 MR. HENDERSON: No questions.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. McFetridge?

24 MS. McFETRIDGE: No.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Dr. Moore?

1 DR. MOORE: No.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Woods?

3 Mr. Sutton?

4 MR. SUTTON: No, ma'am.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Dr. Rankin?

6 DR. RANKIN: I just want to say thank you to Mr.
7 Beckwith and Ms. Smith for those testimonials today.
8 And, Bethany, I know you have a special passion for
9 social-emotional learning. And so I just wanted to
10 invite you to speak a moment if you have -- in your
11 perfect world, what supports statewide or from the
12 Department or from us do you think would be really
13 powerful to see happen in this K-6 virtual learning
14 environment?

15 MS. BETHANY SMITH: Well, you asked me a
16 wonderful question and I wish that I had the answer
17 ready for you. I think that, honestly, progress
18 monitoring through this and doing some Google forms
19 and trying to get the feedback from the parents and
20 the students, and kind of combining that to see, you
21 know, what areas that they feel were reached and what
22 areas that they feel could need, you know, a little
23 more support will be beneficial to us.

24 We are in that first month and I've seen
25 relationships go from where students were afraid to

1 talk or scared to share their picture to where now
2 students are in their rooms and we can see their
3 background and what kind of cool things that they're
4 interested in and start making those relationships
5 and those social-emotional bonds.

6 So -- but, Ms. Rankin, if I can get back with
7 you on that I would love to do so.

8 MR. BECKWITH: And I would just like to add on
9 that. You know, I know we've had some feedback via
10 text and other things so that the parents have -- you
11 know, the number one thing that they talk about is
12 just that human interaction with the teachers versus
13 -- you know, in the past I think digital learning
14 just dealt with, you know, we rolled out a product
15 and maybe the human connection wasn't there.
16 Everybody -- I mean digital learning is new for
17 everybody. So it was kind of disconnected from the
18 standpoint -- you know, they were a little bit
19 intimidated and they may make a phone call or shoot
20 out an email. But having that face-to-face realtime
21 interaction has been something that has been
22 extremely beneficial for both sides, I think.

23 DR. RANKIN: Yeah. Thank you both very much.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Post?

25 MS. BETHANY SMITH: Thank you.

1 MS. POST: Hi, Bethany. I just had a quick
2 question. On your student success plans, is that
3 purely academic or is some of the social-emotional
4 being pulled in for parents to see as well?

5 MS. BETHANY SMITH: As far as social-emotional
6 we do keep a running log. Well, so we do Fun Fridays
7 and so we share social-emotional situations in those
8 Fun Fridays and those activities. So parents do get
9 feedback if their student is being involved or if --
10 you know, kind of how much involvement they're really
11 having. Because that's not something that we're
12 concerned about, but we have parents that were
13 concerned that maybe that their child would be afraid
14 to share things in the Zoom world. And so, yes,
15 we're giving feedback, not just academically but in
16 that social-emotional realm.

17 MS. POST: So are the success plans though, like
18 is that represented there or is that purely academic?

19 MS. BETHANY SMITH: That's purely academic.

20 MS. POST: Okay.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Mr. Beckwith, in the beginning
22 you said that you had added a new teacher. So what
23 -- how many teachers and what are your grade bands
24 now?

25 MR. BECKWITH: Ms. Bethany, do you want to --

1 MS. BETHANY SMITH: Yes.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

3 MS. BETHANY SMITH: Sure. So we have four
4 teachers. We have a teacher that teaches
5 kindergarten and 3rd, a teacher that teaches 1st and
6 4th, a teacher that teaches 2nd and 5th, and I teach
7 6th grade. And nobody has more than 20 students in
8 their current class, and nobody has over 40 students
9 in their whole -- like as a total including both
10 grade levels.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So what are your total numbers
12 for K-6?

13 MS. BETHANY SMITH: I believe it's 144. We've
14 had a lot of ups and downs this first few weeks. So
15 I'm trying to figure out who it worked for and who it
16 didn't work for, because we want to make sure that
17 we're providing an education that's not only quality
18 for us but quality for them too.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. And, Mr. Beckwith, I
20 want to thank you for following through on what you
21 promised us, that if your numbers went up that you
22 would take -- make sure that you had the staff to
23 meet those needs. And so we are very appreciative of
24 that and all of the efforts that your team has put
25 into making this a successful program for students

1 and parents.

2 MR. BECKWITH: Well, again, you know, we
3 appreciate you guys for giving us the opportunity to
4 do that. Because we know without this digital piece,
5 you know, it would have left a lot of kids stranded
6 out there. So, you know, as I said, it takes a
7 village; it takes the entire state to get this thing
8 done. And without you guys being open-minded enough
9 to let us to go out and try this it wouldn't have
10 happened either. So I do appreciate you guys'
11 willingness to get back there and support us on it as
12 well.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Well, we know that
14 y'all put a lot of work into it. And we thank you
15 for being here today and giving us an update of
16 what's going on with your program. So, thank you
17 both.

18 MR. BECKWITH: Thank y'all.

19 MS. BETHANY SMITH: Thank you.

20 ARKANSAS RIVER CONSORTIUM

21 MS. SMITH: Okay. We have Cathi Swan who's the
22 director of Arkansas River on the Zoom as well.

23 So, Cathi.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good morning, Ms. Swan.

25 MS. SWAN: Good morning, everyone. Thank you

1 for having us. We appreciate the platform to be able
2 to share the good things that are going on in the
3 state and in the co-op world and in the public school
4 districts.

5 So when Ms. Newton opened the meeting with we
6 all know in the brick-and-mortar classroom that right
7 after Labor Day is when everything kind of settles
8 down and just kind of goes "ahhh, I think we're
9 getting it now," it's the same in the virtual world.
10 So I just kept telling my teachers and my principal,
11 "Let's just wait; you know, we're -- just do
12 everything you can do and we'll settle down. It'll
13 settle down after the holiday." And we have. It
14 has. We still have some issues that we're working
15 through.

16 But I echo everything that Mr. Hester and Mr.
17 Beckwith and their team shared in terms of services.
18 Many of those are the same with us. I will say that
19 one thing that we are different on in terms of Mr.
20 Beckwith and Mr. Hester is that I'm extremely
21 comfortable in this space because I've dedicated 20
22 years of my career to virtual learning and digital
23 learning. So I'm much more comfortable in the
24 virtual space, quite honestly, than I am in the face-
25 to-face world in some instances. So also we had

1 experience with starting Virtual Arkansas for 9th
2 through 12th graders many years ago. And I think
3 back on that time, in our first year of Virtual
4 Arkansas we accommodated 15,000 students, and the
5 second year of Virtual Arkansas we nearly doubled
6 that to about 28,000. So when I look at the scope of
7 our K-6 initiative I can rest fairly easily because
8 we have about 485 students, and so I have 110%
9 confidence that the co-ops are going to be able to do
10 this and do it well just because of the sheer scope
11 and the consortium idea of regions and keeping those
12 numbers smaller in terms of your whole scope. So
13 when we think about taking that 15 -- \$30,000 for 400
14 -- we have 485 students, by the way, in our Arkansas
15 River Consortium -- and that might sound like a lot
16 to you, but to me it looks like a dream because it's
17 not anywhere near 15,000.

18 So I will say that we have -- also have an
19 amazing staff. We were so fortunate to be able to
20 hire our K-6 virtual academy principal who was a
21 previous member of Team Digital and previous online
22 teacher for a virtual provider that was global, and
23 so bringing that experience to that seat was huge for
24 us. And I did worry about being able to find staff.
25 Like Mr. Hester said, we wanted to know early on, but

1 we just couldn't know until -- so we're still looking
2 right now. We will take applications. And I will
3 say that out to you: if you have any retired teacher
4 friends that want to serve as an interventionist or
5 paraprofessional for teachers, you can give us a
6 call. But we did hire additional staff as well.
7 When this is all said and done we should have six
8 teachers, three paraprofessionals, and we have
9 contracted with retired teachers to provide one-on-
10 one interventions if it gets to be too much for a
11 teacher in a small group and we see they really,
12 really need some intense one-on-one. We have been
13 able to find some master teachers.

14 And so I told y'all I was kind of worried about
15 not being able to find those teachers late in the
16 game, but, you know, the Lord blesses, the Lord
17 works, and they just came to us. And just because --
18 just as there are parents and teachers who were not
19 comfortable going back into the face-to-face
20 environment, there are many teachers out there as
21 well that were not comfortable and just simply didn't
22 sign their contracts to go back to the classroom yet,
23 and some early-retired; so they are really, really
24 excited to be able to work again in this space. So
25 we have some teachers that have 25, 28 years

1 experience in teaching, with technology, with library
2 media, that have reached out to us. And we have a
3 wonderful, wonderful staff.

4 One of the things I want to share that I don't
5 know that I touched on last time the question came up
6 is, you know, there is a concern about teacher load
7 and class size, and I totally understand that. That
8 has always been a concern for the past 20 years of my
9 experience in virtual learning. But what I've come
10 to realize is over time you begin to see that the
11 classroom does not necessarily equate to the online
12 digital flexible classroom. Many things we can do
13 the same, and many things are the same, but some of
14 our fixed numbers and fixed processes don't really
15 translate well for kids or teachers.

16 So, for example, here are some of the resources
17 that we have for digital teachers that maybe brick-
18 and-mortar teachers don't have with that fixed
19 number. The curriculum is developed. The teacher
20 supplements, provides interventions and enrichments
21 too, but the curriculum is developed based on
22 Arkansas state standards already packaged for them.
23 The curriculum also assesses and grades automatically
24 through those lower blends levels, the remembrance,
25 understanding, and sometimes even applying allows the

1 teaching team -- we have a team teaching approach to
2 really focus on those upper levels of learning,
3 because the system is designed to be adaptive. So if
4 each one of you is in one of our classrooms and
5 you're going through the same learning module, but
6 you respond to a quiz differently -- so I may have
7 not missed any and Ms. Newton may have missed one and
8 Secretary Key may have missed 10 or -- just playing
9 with you here, Secretary Key. But, you know, based
10 on what I put into the system -- each one puts into
11 the system, we are branched to another set of
12 learning modules to reinforce, to individualize and
13 personalize that. So those are some things that, you
14 know, we just don't have in that brick-and-mortar
15 space right now. We have people who are blending but
16 are just not there yet.

17 We also layer on the software I talked to you
18 about last time, and I know that many of the other
19 consortiums do the same. On top of that adaptive
20 curriculum that's branched is a source that tells you
21 at any given time as a teacher whether the student is
22 green, which means they're on pace and they are
23 progressing through the system with very little
24 trouble; and our yellow students that may be -- not
25 be on pace and maybe a little bit -- just a little

1 bit of "come on now, let's try this" or they're stuck
2 somewhere, they're stuck in that curriculum; and then
3 there are those red students that may not have shown
4 up for a couple of days of attendance or just are not
5 progressing. So every day we're going to look to see
6 where those students are and respond right then, call
7 an interventionist, call the school district, call
8 our team of teachers, put together a small group,
9 call the parent facilitator. And that parent
10 facilitator is key. I know we've heard that, but
11 that's something that I don't think we give them
12 enough credit in this environment. It is a very
13 difficult and rewarding task I can imagine to be a
14 parent facilitator, be at home with maybe one or
15 multiple children being their teaching assistant,
16 being their learning facilitator and coach. But that
17 is a great benefit to us with numbers because each
18 baby, each student has their own person that's right
19 there with them; they can reach out on their behalf
20 if they're not comfortable reaching out. So I want
21 us to make sure that we understand that the parents
22 have such a vital role in this whole number.

23 So I just wanted to make sure that you all have
24 a better understanding maybe of all these different
25 tools that are available to digital teachers that

1 make the fixed numbers not work so well in a flexible
2 space.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you, Ms. Swan. We'll
4 see if any board members have any questions.

5 Ms. Woods?

6 MS. WOODS: (shaking head from side to side)

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: No. Anyone over here? Dr.
8 Moore?

9 DR. MOORE: Yes. Do you all -- like I asked
10 previously, do y'all offer any tutoring? I know you
11 do the one-on-one, but any extra at the students'
12 request? If they need help with something they can
13 reach out and get that tutoring?

14 MS. SWAN: Yes, that's the interventionist.
15 They are available to teachers, students, parents.

16 Tammy, do you want to talk about the tutoring
17 piece?

18 DR. MOORE: Well, I was going to ask too, do you
19 have any mechanisms for your parent facilitator or
20 anyone else to meet in person with the students or
21 have in-person checks when and if attendance goes
22 down?

23 MS. SWAN: Ms. Manning. Yes.

24 MS. MANNING: So, yes. If parents reach out --
25 so I have had some parents to reach out and want that

1 tutoring. So I set them up with an interventionist,
2 that one-on-one tutoring, or small group -- and small
3 groups, we're keeping those to about four to five --
4 to come in for math and literacy. My vision is to
5 have a paraprofessional for every one of my teachers
6 so that she can also come in -- he or she can come in
7 and do more of that assisting. We do reach out. We
8 look at reports every day. I try to do that and keep
9 up with that over the last four weeks, touching every
10 student. I can almost call them by name. Even
11 though there's 485, I remember something about them;
12 I try to reach out to parents. I reach out to the
13 districts if they are not attending or they show lack
14 in work, and the parents are usually calling me back
15 or emailing me back to let me know what's going on or
16 they're going to get on it right away. So we are
17 trying to track that the best that we can. There may
18 be a few slipping through. I'm not going to say that
19 we're 100%, but I would like to say that we are. But
20 we will be there and pulling all those onboard and
21 making sure that they are making great progress and
22 attending the Zoom sessions, because I know how
23 important that is. We have had some kickback on some
24 of that a little bit, that, you know, the parents are
25 wanting the flexibility of not being required to

1 attend. And when I explain to them why and the
2 reasoning behind it, a lot of times they're very "I'm
3 okay, I understand." And, you know, I tell them
4 we'll work with them and try to shift those groups.
5 Because just like Bethany had spoke earlier, even
6 though our teacher load -- we may have 46 students
7 for one teacher, they're -- I'm having them to keep
8 their whole group Heggerty lessons, that phonological
9 awareness piece every morning to seven to eight
10 students. So they're doing sessions every morning
11 kind of back-to-back. They begin about 8:40; they
12 have their plan time at the very beginning of the
13 day, from 8:00 to 8:40 in the morning. And then they
14 begin their synchronous sessions from 8:40 until
15 noon. So they kind of have those sessions kind of
16 back-to-back. And then they also have -- after they
17 have lunch they have office hours. For one hour
18 they're required to have a Zoom link open and
19 students are admitted into that Zoom link, or parents
20 or learning coach, whoever it may be, and to be able
21 to ask questions of the teacher to help them. In
22 addition to those small groups that the
23 paraprofessionals are my math interventionist who is
24 a certified teacher, math teacher, retired, that is
25 coming in behind also doing those interventions and

1 that tutoring with the teacher.

2 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

3 MS. MANNING: Yes, ma'am.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Questions over here? No?

5 Dr. Rankin?

6 DR. RANKIN: I do. Thank you.

7 Cathi and Tammy, both, thank you for these
8 updates.

9 And, Cathi, your expertise in this area and your
10 institutional knowledge is just phenomenal. And I
11 was trying to think of how to ask this just out of an
12 abundance of feeling so responsible for these digital
13 learning plans that are coming through and this
14 virtual reality that we find ourselves in. What is
15 it -- based on your experience that you have in this
16 field, what you've seen, in preparation for trying to
17 look around the curve, trying to see around the
18 curve, what's next? What should be on our radar?
19 What keeps you up at night about these -- this
20 approach going forward? And what is it that you
21 would like for us to really bare in mind as we
22 continue to look at this and make decisions and be
23 intentional going forward? I just thought I'd pick
24 your brain on that for a minute.

25 MS. SWAN: I don't know how much time you have.

1 I love this question. Thank you so much for asking
2 it, Dr. Rankin.

3 But the first two things that come to my mind --
4 the first one is I would like to thank you and
5 encourage you. As a board, you have a legacy. Over
6 the past 20 years of when Mr. Boardman would come in
7 front of you and ask you something that may or may
8 not have sounded like it made any sense, but
9 (inaudible) wonderful, innovative project that he's
10 benefitted from, you all have approved and given
11 flexibility for innovation for I know at least 20
12 years. So thank you for that.

13 And I would continue -- hope that you would
14 continue -- encourage you to even if you have
15 concerns about it, if you feel really good about the
16 people who are presenting the information, the
17 experts, that this could be a good thing, to still
18 take those chances.

19 So that's the first thing.

20 And the second thing is broadband access for
21 Arkansas. We -- you know, I don't even know if we
22 have enough time to talk about that, but I know the
23 Department has made great gains over the past few
24 years working with Telco providers, the Governor's
25 office. I know it's on the forefront for Arkansas.

1 But until we get over that hurdle I don't know that
2 we will ever get where we need to get with virtual
3 learning for students that live in rural areas. I am
4 a poultry farmer -- I'm not. I'm not, my husband is.
5 But we are a poultry farming family and so we always
6 live in a rural area and I have very limited access.
7 And so I'm -- what it keeps me up at night is
8 thinking of these 485 students, I wonder if they're
9 going to struggle if they live out where I live. And
10 so that's what keeps me up at night and so I'll do
11 anything I can to assist with that as a co-op
12 director. I know the co-op director network will
13 assist with anything that you all can do to make sure
14 that we keep pushing for broadband in Arkansas for
15 rural areas.

16 Thank you for asking that question, Dr. Rankin.

17 DR. RANKIN: Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions?

19 Thank you, Ms. Swan. You made us feel much
20 better. You know, from the beginning I think numbers
21 were a huge question for us. But the way your
22 background and the way you explained what the
23 teachers are doing and the supports they have I think
24 make us feel much better about the 485 students that
25 you are working with. So thank you for that.

1 Now I did have one quick question, and I know I
2 probably have it written down somewhere but I just
3 don't have it in front of me. What is the curriculum
4 that your program is using?

5 MS. SWAN: Ms. Manning.

6 MS. MANNING: Our curriculum is from -- we're
7 purchasing our content from Edgenuity, but then we
8 are also layering it with Heggerty, the phonological
9 awareness piece, for our synchronous sessions. And
10 then we also have Lexia for the other four components
11 of the RISE initiative.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. All right.
13 I knew I had it written down somewhere but I just
14 didn't have it in front of me right now.

15 So thank you, both, for joining us and thank you
16 for the hard work that you're doing for our students.

17 MS. MANNING: Thank you.

18 MS. SWAN: Thank you for the time and keep on
19 innovating Arkansas. Keep on.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Thank you.

21 WILBUR D. MILLS COOPERATIVE

22 MS. SMITH: We've got two more consortiums here.
23 The next one is Wilbur D. Mills and we've got Mr.
24 Brad Horn.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Welcome, Mr. Horn.

1 MR. HORN: Good morning.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Morning.

3 MR. HORN: Brad Horn, Wilbur D. Mills Co-op
4 Director. I want to thank you for letting me come
5 speak to you today.

6 Before I get started, I want to brag on some
7 people and I'm going to start with DESE and units
8 here. I'm pretty close to one individual that was
9 rating the applications that we would send in and
10 they put a great deal of time -- I don't know that
11 everybody realizes how much time they put in to help
12 us help our districts. And that's a tough process,
13 like Mr. Hester said; I agree. That first
14 application my team put together we got kicked back
15 within a couple of days and we had to have a -- kind
16 of a group hug because it was tough. We thought we'd
17 put together a good plan. But in hindsight, looking
18 back, as we've gone through this process that
19 situation helped us immensely in getting out
20 applications ready and helping our districts submit
21 their applications for what you needed. Okay. So a
22 lot of work has gone into it.

23 I want to brag on my team at the Co-op. Like
24 Mr. Beckwith said, a good leader gets out of the way.
25 And I wish I could put a picture of them up there to

1 show my leadership team that's worked on this for our
2 districts at the Co-op. In fact, I'll tell you my
3 arm is about to vibrate off because I've got one of
4 them that's texting me as you're asking questions,
5 and this is what we do. Okay. But that's what's so
6 great about them. I wish I could take credit for
7 putting them together, but I inherited it. But I've
8 got a great team there at the Co-op.

9 And then I'll go down to the district level. We
10 have had routine contact with our points of contact.
11 We have a POC at every district who's participating,
12 and the Technology Coordinator at that district is
13 involved in that process. We just had a Zoom this --
14 I lose track of days; I think it was -- may have been
15 the end of last week -- just to kind of touch base
16 and let us know how our provider is operating and how
17 things are going. And then, you know, as with any
18 new process there are bugs that -- bugs in the system
19 that we've had to work out. And our leadership team
20 has met with Pearson's leadership team and we've
21 knocked it out as quickly as we can to get rolling.

22 And then, like everybody has said, this isn't
23 that you made it difficult, and we appreciate the
24 fact that you've allowed us to take on this endeavor.

25 So I'll get started now.

1 We do have -- we've got a 17-member district
2 cooperative; 11 districts are participating in our
3 consortium; 67 -- I may go wrong a little bit on
4 numbers -- but 67 is where we're at right now. We
5 have added a district which you approved outside of
6 our cooperative, so that -- those numbers will go up
7 a little bit more there, just participating so we
8 could help them out with our provider.

9 I'll try to answer some of your questions that
10 you've asked as we go along.

11 First, our -- we are using Pearson, teacher and
12 content, so we went a little bit different route
13 there. As Director of the Cooperative, I was
14 hesitant to hire a teaching staff because, like Mr.
15 Hester and several have said, it was hard for them to
16 give us numbers so we could know what to do. I was
17 afraid of over-hiring or under-hiring. So we did go
18 with teacher and content, and that was a decision I
19 gave my board options and they chose Pearson with the
20 teacher provided with the content. Class size was a
21 concern for us. Like Ms. McFetridge asked, we are K-
22 3; I think we're 30 -- 50-to-1. And then 4-8 --
23 again, my numbers may be a little bit off there, but
24 we're 36 or 37-to-1. The one thing about that, and
25 one thing I've been overly impressed with with our

1 digital program is that these students in some ways
2 are monitoring more closely than students in brick-
3 and-mortar. Okay. And I'll explain that. I get
4 carbon copies whenever the Pearson rep sees that
5 there's a lag, if there's an issue, and then -- so
6 I'm involved in it even -- they send me a carbon-
7 copy. But there's a Pearson teacher that's watching
8 that and a Pearson representative that's watching it;
9 our teacher or our point of contact at the district
10 and the Technology Coordinator is involved in it, and
11 my leadership team is involved. So there are a lot
12 of safeguards to make sure that students aren't
13 falling through the cracks, because that was a
14 concern. Just like everybody, the class size was a
15 concern to us. So far, it's worked well -- we're
16 only four weeks in though, so we'll see where it
17 goes. But we are keeping a close watch on that.

18 Social-emotional learning is -- it was an issue
19 for us; that was a question we had. And that's
20 something that Pearson has embedded within that
21 curriculum. So there are social-emotional lessons
22 provided to students by the Pearson teacher, so we
23 feel good about that.

24 Daily synchronous -- and so our lessons are
25 provided to those students by teachers. We also have

1 check-ins from that point of contact for the district
2 with those students on a weekly basis; so daily
3 contact and weekly contact by the district.

4 As far as tutoring, I think someone asked about
5 tutoring -- we do -- Pearson offers that. They go
6 one-to-one; they offer a one-to-one situation. But
7 in addition -- this goes back to what I said about
8 the district -- or the safeguards that are in place,
9 the students can come to the district. All they have
10 to do is reach out to the point of contact and they
11 can receive face-to-face help in person from district
12 personnel. So Pearson covers that, as well as the
13 district.

14 We also have -- now I was a secondary teacher,
15 so I'm not as familiar with Carpet Time. But Pearson
16 does have a Carpet Time for K-3 or K-4. Right? And
17 then there's a homeroom class for 5-8 that's offered
18 and those students are in there on a daily basis.

19 I may have skipped some questions, so I'll
20 finish there and see if anybody has any questions.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right.

22 Any questions over here?

23 Anyone over here?

24 Ms. Woods?

25 MS. WOODS: (shaking head from side to side)

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. I think you've
2 done a great job of covering the information. If you
3 had it to do again, would you still use an outside
4 provider or would you go with a team at your co-op?

5 MR. HORN: To be honest, I think I would use an
6 outside provider with the teacher and the content.
7 There was one concern of mine; I'm a young -- not
8 young in age, but I'm young to a superintendency,
9 only two years, and then first year as a co-op
10 director. But one of my concerns was I knew
11 individuals, like Ms. Swan said, that would want the
12 co-op to teach virtually, and I don't want to do that
13 to my districts. That's one thing. I know -- I was
14 at a small school and it's hard to get a teacher, so
15 that's one reason we didn't do it.

16 But the other reason is because we just didn't
17 know numbers, you know.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right.

19 MR. HORN: And I'll tell you in the beginning I
20 had -- one district told me 300 kids; they've got one
21 kid. So if I --

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

23 MR. HORN: If I -- they have one kid virtual
24 right now.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right. Yeah.

1 MR. HORN: So if I'd have hired a staff I
2 could've been in a little bit of trouble there.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

4 MR. HORN: Of course, with the uptick in Covid
5 we've seen a little bit of an increase, so I might've
6 been okay. But that was a concern for me with hiring
7 staff.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. I think
9 that was my only question. So thank you so much for
10 being here today.

11 MR. HORN: Yes, ma'am.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: And thank you for what you're
13 doing for your students.

14 MR. HORN: Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

16 TRI-REGION CONSORTIUM

17 MS. SMITH: So our last consortium is our Tri-
18 Region Consortium. It's three co-ops. Again, it's
19 Crowley's Ridge, Northeast, and North Central.
20 Gerald Cooper may be on the Zoom. I know Pam Caster
21 --

22 We might have to let her in, Dan.

23 They're on the Zoom too. But I believe their --
24 I think their principal -- the main person here is
25 Kathy Bowlin to present today.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Welcome, Ms. Bowlin.

2 MS. BOWLIN: Thank you. Good morning -- or good
3 afternoon. It's about time for lunch, isn't it?

4 I'm Kathy Bowlin and I am the principal
5 coordinator of the Tri-Region virtual program that
6 consists of the three co-ops in the northeast/north
7 central part of the state.

8 To start with, kind of like Mr. Horn had said,
9 when we first started completing the plan it was kind
10 of like we were just answering essay questions; you
11 know, we were going through answering those
12 questions. But then when we got our plan back --
13 because we had worked really hard and thought it was
14 good. We had to dig deep and figure out how to --
15 how are we truly going to do these things and make
16 them happen for our students, and how are we going to
17 address that Science of Reading piece in there and
18 make sure those students were getting that phonemic
19 awareness and that -- how are the schools going to
20 support and how are we going to keep contact and
21 communication. So I know that was a lot of work and
22 it's been a long process for you and us, both, but I
23 feel like it helped us to develop a good program for
24 our students in our area of the state.

25 We support 21 school districts from that area.

1 We have around 200 students at this time. Right now,
2 as I think maybe Bethany said, our numbers go up and
3 down. Some students have decided it's better to go
4 back to school and then some decide, you know, if
5 they want to come. But we have around 200. We do
6 have the capacity to serve more, as needed. We --
7 like the other co-ops, we sold slots to figure out
8 our budget, to see how much, you know, we would need
9 for each student. So we had to get a number, and
10 that changed. We kind of had a hard deadline also in
11 the spring and then we kept moving that deadline as
12 Covid changed. So we try to accommodate as much as
13 we can.

14 Right now we have -- ours is a little bit
15 different. We've decided to develop our own
16 curriculum, so we're not using an outside source. We
17 have one teacher per grade level. So we have 10
18 teachers total hired right now and we did that -- we
19 didn't hire as many as what our numbers -- that we
20 had sold slots, but we knew we could add more if we
21 needed. But we have more than what we need. We have
22 nine in our classrooms -- one kindergarten class, one
23 first, and then two second, a third, fourth, two
24 fifths, and a sixth. And our numbers -- it's about
25 20-to-1 in kindergarten and then 25-to-1 -- I mean

1 kindergarten to 2nd, sorry, and then 25-to-1 3rd to
2 6th. We have that tenth teacher; she is helping
3 develop curriculum. She's -- she helps me in meeting
4 with teachers to help them with digital strategies.
5 We did a lot of that before school started, but then
6 now that's kind of what she's doing a lot of right
7 now.

8 We researched curriculum. Just the CKLA Amplify
9 is what we're using for our reading/literacy/writing
10 piece and it's on the recommended list by DESE. It's
11 a very good program. But then we're also
12 supplementing with Lexia Core 5 and that really
13 addresses those components that might have been
14 lacking, and then also Heggerty for that phonemic
15 awareness in K-1. For math we're using Illustrative
16 Mathematics. I was a math specialist prior to this
17 position, and so a lot of the professional
18 developments we did we based a lot of ours on lessons
19 out of Illustrative Mathematics because it's a great
20 support of -- it really works in those Arkansas
21 standards for math and it has a lot of that
22 discussion and things that we want our students doing
23 in a math classroom. So that's why we decided to
24 choose the Illustrative Mathematics; so the teachers
25 are using that to use for their math.

1 So we're developing the curriculum. And I do a
2 lot of -- I try to make time every day to get into at
3 least two or three of the classrooms just to see
4 what's going on. It's great to see -- I have a
5 secondary back, but I've really had to -- I mean it
6 is -- the first time I was in a 1st grade classroom
7 on there it was very interesting; had 22 little faces
8 on there and, you know, they're just being kids. But
9 we have a learning coach, a facilitator parent/
10 grandparent, whatever you want to call it, with every
11 student. And our teachers are doing a great job of
12 encouraging that and making sure, you know, "can you
13 get your parent to help you do this," or, you know,
14 "is mom there, is dad there." And if not, you know,
15 they set up a meeting and figure out, you know, "we
16 need you there with your child."

17 I have to brag on our teachers. We -- I didn't
18 realize there were that many good quality teachers
19 that wanted to do virtual. I figured they all wanted
20 to be in the classroom. But we have some great
21 teachers who are putting in day and night hours. And
22 I talk to them from 6:30 in the morning till 10:30 at
23 night sometimes, off and on, just about different
24 issues.

25 I figure -- I think our biggest piece that I've

1 been happy with is our school district support. We
2 talk to -- we have a point of contact, and that could
3 be a principal or a counselor, curriculum director.
4 But we have that point of contact. But we, you know,
5 gave that list to the teachers -- this is who we talk
6 to at the school, but it's been such a bigger group
7 of people that we've communicated with. We've had to
8 work with the principals if they're not -- we've had
9 to work with the counselors, the eSchool person
10 because of getting things -- you know, setting that
11 up with our teachers. The special education
12 teachers, that has been a lot more than I expected.
13 But they're very willing to work with us and help us
14 help their students. I feel like everybody from our
15 teachers, our specialist at the co-op, and then the
16 -- everybody at the school districts and the parents
17 and families have those students' best interests at
18 heart. So I feel like that's what I've been the most
19 pleased with with this is -- kind of like I think
20 Tammy said, we have 204 students right now and I
21 think I could tell you every one of them by name and
22 something about them and, you know, what's going on
23 with them, because it's a keep-up-with and keep up
24 with their grades. They communicate with the
25 parents, families at least once a week -- and most of

1 them, it's more than once a week because the families
2 are involved and they want to know what's going on.
3 So at least once a week. We have a -- we've had to
4 -- because we're using our own curriculum we're using
5 Google Classroom, so everything we've done we've had
6 to create spreadsheets and reports and, you know,
7 grades and make sure that confidentiality is there so
8 that only the people from this school district see
9 those students. So there's been -- every time we do
10 something it makes us realize there's 10 more things
11 to do to make that happen, so it's been a great
12 learning experience for me and for our technology
13 people at the co-ops.

14 But the -- that communication piece with
15 everybody I feel like has been our biggest -- our
16 best thing that's come out of this.

17 So do you have questions or --

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I bet we do.

19 We'll start over here. Anyone over here have
20 questions?

21 MS. POST: I am an Illustrative fan.

22 MS. BOWLIN: Great.

23 MS. POST: So I would just like to request data
24 as you implement that program. I'd love to know how
25 it goes over with the students.

1 MS. BOWLIN: Yes, I'm excited about the data
2 too. I'm wanting to see it.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Dr. Rankin?

4 DR. RANKIN: Thank you for that report and for
5 the hard work that's gone in and building a program
6 from the ground up. And I'm so impressed that you're
7 so connected individually with literally a couple of
8 hundred students. I mean that's pretty amazing. And
9 that you hop in and out of the sessions. I think
10 that value probably cannot be overstated how
11 important that is for relationship-building and just
12 support across the board. Teachers, students,
13 parents see that. I think that's amazing. And I
14 just want to -- a question that made me think -- do
15 you also see that popping in and out at the district
16 level? Like do you see that representation where
17 occasionally students can see their principal pop in
18 and out of a classroom or their superintendent pop in
19 and out? I was just curious about that.

20 MS. BOWLIN: In the Zooms or --

21 DR. RANKIN: Yes.

22 MS. BOWLIN: Yes, we have had some principals
23 from a couple of the districts -- and we shared all
24 of the Zoom links with them so that they -- you know,
25 so that they have that option. And we have had --

1 from two or three of our districts especially we've
2 had some. And I feel like that's something we talked
3 about we would -- we made that available to everyone,
4 but everyone hasn't taken advantage of it yet. But,
5 yes, we have had some.

6 DR. RANKIN: I love that idea just for keeping
7 those relationships strong, especially if students
8 end up going back to in-person --

9 MS. BOWLIN: Yes.

10 DR. RANKIN: -- instruction, you know, on campus
11 they haven't lost that relationship building.

12 MS. BOWLIN: Yes.

13 DR. RANKIN: But it's neat that -- I feel like
14 you all are filling in the gap with that and building
15 that sense of community in a new way.

16 MS. BOWLIN: Yes, exactly.

17 DR. RANKIN: So congratulations for that.

18 MS. BOWLIN: Thank you.

19 DR. RANKIN: Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Mr. Sutton?

21 MR. SUTTON: No, ma'am.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Over here, anyone?

23 Ms. Woods?

24 MS. WOODS: (shaking head from side to side)

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. And I'll

1 kind of ask the same question. You decided as a
2 group to develop your own curriculum. Would you make
3 that same choice again or would you go with a package
4 instead?

5 MS. BOWLIN: You know, when we first started,
6 like August, and it was, you know, in anticipation of
7 school starting, I was thinking, oh my gosh, what
8 have we done; you know, maybe we should -- but now
9 that we've gotten into it and I've seen how
10 passionate the teachers are about it and how it's
11 going, I think I would make the same choice again of
12 building the curriculum.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

14 MS. BOWLIN: We know the standards, and the
15 teachers know -- the kindergarten/1st grade teachers,
16 they know those standards like -- I mean they
17 probably eat, sleep and dream about them. But
18 they're doing a great job with making sure those
19 standards are being met, but also in fun and engaging
20 ways the students are engaged. So, yes, I think we
21 would -- I think I would make the same decision. I'm
22 not sure about --

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

24 MS. BOWLIN: -- the rest of the directors.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

1 MS. BOWLIN: But I think my --

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Well, I think it fits the
3 situation because you're keeping your class size
4 numbers small where the teacher can then develop the
5 curriculum. But in other cases where the class size
6 numbers may be larger, like Ms. Swan was talking
7 about, it fit better to have the developed curriculum
8 that monitors students. So, you know, I think that's
9 what we do all across the state; we make what we do
10 fit our individual needs.

11 MS. BOWLIN: Yeah.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: And so that sounds like what's
13 happening. So thank you so much for coming today and
14 presenting to us.

15 And I don't know if any of the ones that are
16 joining online have any comments that they wanted to
17 add from your member schools and districts?

18 I'm not hearing anyone speak up, so I guess not.

19 Okay. Well, thank y'all all for joining us this
20 morning from the Tri-Region.

21 I know we had one more co-op, Northwest, that
22 they're not on. And maybe they can just send us
23 something via email or a one-page something similar
24 to kind of let us know what's going on with them.

25 MS. SMITH: We can do that.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So thank all of you Directors
2 taking time out of your day to be with us today. We
3 really appreciate it. Whether you're here in person
4 or online with us, we appreciate your time. But more
5 than that, we appreciate the efforts that have gone
6 into this. I know it's not been easy. And sometimes
7 the things that we ask you to do, and go back and do,
8 and then go back and do made it difficult. But, you
9 know, we all wanted what was best for students and,
10 you know, we have that in common. And so we really
11 appreciate your work and all that you've done. So
12 thank you for being here this morning.

13 With that, I think since it is afternoon this
14 would be a good time to break for lunch.

15 Mr. Key.

16 SECRETARY KEY: Before we leave that item, I
17 think since it's on the action agenda we probably
18 just need a motion and a vote --

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

20 SECRETARY KEY: -- to accept the report.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So we need a motion to
22 accept that report then.

23 MS. McFETRIDGE: So moved.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. A motion by Ms.
25 McFetridge.

1 DR. MOORE: Second.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Dr. Moore.

3 All in favor?

4 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: And any opposed?

6 Okay. All right. So now I think we'll break
7 for lunch. It is 12:30, just hit there, so how about
8 1:45. Would that be enough time then?

9 No? One -- what did I say?

10 SECRETARY KEY: You said 1:45.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: No, not 1:45. 1:15. Thank
12 you. 1:15. All right, we'll see you back.

13 (LUNCH BREAK: 12:30 p.m. - 1:18 p.m.)

14 VII.1. ACT 1240 DIGITAL LEARNING APPLICATIONS AND WAIVERS

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We are going to
16 move on to our afternoon agenda, and the first thing
17 on our agenda for the afternoon are digital learning
18 applications and waivers. Ms. Harp.

19 MS. HARP: Hello. Good afternoon. I'm Tally
20 Harp. I'm a part of the -- of DESE's Public School
21 Accountability team. And so we're going to get right
22 into this. We have several applications for you guys
23 today.

24 a) KIRBY K-6 ADDENDUM (DAWSON)

25 b) LONOKE K-2 ADDENDUM (WILBUR MILLS)

1 MS. HARP: The first two are two districts who
2 already have an approved -- State Board approved plan
3 with you guys. They are just requesting additional
4 grade levels. That is Kirby and Lonoke. Are there
5 any questions for either of those districts?

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We'll check and see.
7 Any questions about Kirby or Lonoke to my left?
8 Over here?

9 Ms. Woods?

10 MS. WOODS: No, ma'am.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. No questions.

12 MS. HARP: Okay. Can we get a motion
13 for those two schools please?

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Do we have
15 a motion to approve the waivers --

16 MR. SUTTON: Motion to approve.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Mr. Sutton made a
18 motion to approve the waivers for Kirby and Lonoke.

19 DR. RANKIN: I'll second that.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Dr. Rankin.

21 All in favor?

22 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

24 Okay.

25 c) RIVERCREST K-8 ADDENDUM (TRI-REGION)

1 MS. HARP: Okay. The next item on the agenda,
2 item C, is Rivercrest. They already have an approved
3 high school charter digital learning application.
4 They do not -- so this is their K-8 district level
5 application. So are there any questions for
6 Rivercrest?

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So Rivercrest only,
8 questions?

9 Okay. If not, then we need a motion for
10 Rivercrest.

11 MR. SUTTON: Motion to approve.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Motion by Mr. Sutton.

13 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

14 MS. WOODS: I'll second.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Henderson.

16 All in favor?

17 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

19 Okay.

20 MS. HARP: Okay. Thank you.

21 d) CLARENDON K-6 ADDENDUM (ARKANSAS RIVER)

22 e) NETTLETON 7-12 ADDENDUM (VIRTUAL ARKANSAS)

23 f) CONCORD K-2 ADDENDUM

24 g) POYEN K-8 ADDENDUM

25 h) HUNTSVILLE K-2 ADDENDUM

1 MS. HARP: The next five school districts also
2 already have an approved digital learning
3 application. They have just submitted an addendum to
4 add additional grade levels. That is Clarendon,
5 Nettleton, Concord, and Poyen. Are there any
6 questions for any of these districts?

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So we're looking at
8 five districts: Clarendon, Nettleton, Concord, and
9 Poyen. Any questions on any of those five?

10 MR. SUTTON: That's only four.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: One, two --

12 MS. HARP: Oh, I'm sorry.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: You're right.

14 MS. HARP: Oh, and Huntsville -- I'm sorry --

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: And Huntsville. Okay.

16 MS. HARP: -- goes in that group.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. So we're going to
18 add Huntsville to the group. So we're looking at
19 Clarendon, Nettleton, Concord, Poyen, and Huntsville.
20 Any questions on those?

21 Not hearing any questions -- Dr. Moore?

22 DR. MOORE: No.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: No, okay. So we're ready for
24 a motion for these five.

25 DR. RANKIN: I'll move to approve.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Moved by Dr. Rankin.

2 MS. McFETRIDGE: Second.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Ms. McFetridge.

4 All in favor?

5 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

7 Okay.

8 i) HAMPTON (see also page 125)

9 j) LAKESIDE GARLAND COUNTY

10 k) PARIS SCHOOL DISTRICT

11 l) HOPE SCHOOL DISTRICT

12 m) EUREKA SPRING SCHOOL DISTRICT

13 n) MAYNARD

14 o) WEST FORK

15 p) POCAHONTAS

16 q) NASHVILLE SCHOOL DSITRICT

17 r) COTTER

18 MS. HARP: Okay. The next group we have 10
19 districts. These are brand-new applications and they
20 are not participating in a consortium, so they're
21 doing their own program. That is Hampton, Lakeside
22 Garland County, Paris, Hope, Eureka Springs, Maynard,
23 West Fork, Pocahontas, Nashville, and Cotter. So are
24 there any questions for any of these districts?

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. I think we'll slow down

1 a little bit. Since these are new and they are doing
2 their own we'll -- I want to ask questions one at a
3 time so we don't rush anyone.

4 Does anyone have a question on Hampton?

5 DR. MOORE: Yes, I have a general question.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

7 DR. MOORE: Are these ones that we approved last
8 month to have the initial waivers?

9 MS. HARP: Yes, ma'am. These are the ones that
10 you -- that they did the one-sheet addendum.

11 DR. MOORE: Okay. So they already have students
12 enrolled?

13 MS. HARP: They have the waivers. If they have
14 started students in a digital program, they had to
15 follow those guidelines.

16 DR. MOORE: Okay. Okay.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So, questions about
18 Hampton?

19 Lakeside Garland County --

20 MS. McFETRIDGE: Can we go back?

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Go back to Hampton, okay. We
22 do have a question on Hampton.

23 MS. McFETRIDGE: I'm sorry.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Can we just pull -- we'll just
25 pull it and we'll come back and ask questions in just

1 a minute?

2 MS. McFETRIDGE: Okay.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. So we're
4 going to pull Hampton for right now.

5 Lakeside Garland County?

6 Okay. Paris?

7 Ms. Woods, I hope you'll speak up when you -- if
8 you do have a question. Okay?

9 MS. WOODS: I will. Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Hope?

11 Eureka Springs?

12 Maynard?

13 West Fork?

14 Pocahontas?

15 Nashville?

16 Cotter?

17 Okay. Let's go ahead and approve those nine and
18 then we'll come back to Hampton in just a second.

19 Okay? I'm assuming we'll approve those, let me say
20 it that way.

21 Do we have a motion to approve those waivers for
22 those nine districts?

23 And do you need me to list them again or is that

24 --

25 SECRETARY KEY: No.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Do I have a motion?

2 MR. SUTTON: Motion to approve.

3 MS. WOODS: I move to approve.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Mr. Sutton made the
5 motion and seconded by Ms. Woods.

6 All in favor?

7 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

9 i) HAMPTON

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Let's look at Hampton.

11 MS. HARP: And I believe that Superintendent
12 Worley was on earlier.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Mr. Worley, thank you
14 for joining us.

15 We can't hear you. I think you're --

16 SUPT. WORLEY: Good afternoon, everybody.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: There we go. Yeah.

18 SUPT. WORLEY: Good afternoon.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good afternoon. Thank you for
20 being here.

21 Ms. McFetridge?

22 SUPT. WORLEY: I've got my high school principal
23 and elementary principal in the room with me, so --

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right.

25 MS. MCFETRIDGE: Yes, ma'am.

1 My question is, you did not have a figure in the
2 class size waiver that you're asking for. You do not
3 expect the virtual remote students to exceed the
4 rules, but you're also asking for flexibility. And
5 to me that -- we're leaving it pretty wide open and
6 I'm not always comfortable with that. Can you talk
7 to us about that?

8 SUPT. WORLEY: Yes, ma'am. Of course, we're a
9 very small school district and we've got about 515
10 students K-12. This year -- last year, we ran about
11 15% who were being remote students; this year, we're
12 about 8% who've elected to go remote. So with our
13 percentages that low of remote students I don't
14 anticipate us having to pay our class size --
15 student-to-teacher ratio without remote learning; it
16 is relatively low. And there's no teachers even
17 close to the 150 number or the maximum classroom at
18 the elementary student level. So we don't see --
19 unless we get an influx of kids -- which if that
20 happens I'll be doing -- I'll be jumping up and down.
21 But unless we get an influx of kids, you know, we're
22 not going to get close to needing that waiver. But
23 one never knows what happens in the school year.

24 MS. McFETRIDGE: Okay. Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Any other

1 questions about Hampton?

2 Okay. We need a motion then for Hampton.

3 MS. McFETRIDGE: I'll make the motion to approve

4 --

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have --

6 MS. McFETRIDGE: -- Hampton.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. McFetridge has made a
8 motion to approve the waiver for Hampton.

9 Do we have a second?

10 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Henderson.

12 All in favor?

13 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

15 All right. Thank you, Mr. Worley.

16 s) TWO RIVERS (ARKANSAS RIVER CONSORTIUM)

17 t) NEMO VISTA (ARKANSAS RIVER CONSORTIUM)

18 u) PERRYVILLE (ARKANSAS RIVER CONSORTIUM)

19 v) QUITMAN (ARKANSAS RIVER CONSORTIUM)

20 w) LAFAYETTE COUNTY (ARKANSAS RIVER CONSORTIUM)

21 w1) POTTSVILLE (ARKANSAS RIVER CONSORTIUM)

22 x) CADDO HILLS (ARKANSAS RIVER CONSORTIUM)

23 y) ATKINS (ARKANSAS RIVER CONSORTIUM)

24 z) WONDERVIEW (ARKANSAS RIVER CONSORTIUM)

25 aa) MT. VERNON-ENOLA (ARKANSAS RIVER CONSORTIUM)

1 MS. HARP: Okay. Our next 10 applications are
2 all part -- are all new applications; they are all
3 part of the Arkansas River Consortium. That is Two
4 Rivers, Nemo Vista, Perryville, Quitman, Lafayette
5 County, Pottsville, Caddo Hills, Atkins, Wonderview,
6 and Mount Vernon-Enola. Are there any questions for
7 any of those districts?

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So we are looking at
9 these 10 and they are all choosing to join Arkansas
10 River. And I think if they had high school they were
11 doing Virtual Arkansas.

12 Any questions about any of those specifically?
13 Do I need to list each one of them?

14 SECRETARY KEY: No.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any questions?

16 Okay. Then we are ready for a motion for these
17 10.

18 DR. RANKIN: So moved.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I have a motion for -- from
20 Dr. Rankin to approve the waivers for these 10 school
21 districts.

22 MR. SUTTON: I'll second.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Sutton.

24 All in favor?

25 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

2 Okay.

3 ab) HOT SPRINGS (DAWSON)

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: We are down to Hot Springs.

5 MS. HARP: Yes, ma'am.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

7 MS. HARP: So the next application is a new
8 application from Hot Springs School District, and
9 their application is with the Dawson Consortium. So
10 are there questions for Hot Springs?

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any questions over here for
12 Hot Springs?

13 Anyone over here on my right have a question for
14 Hot Springs?

15 Ms. Woods?

16 MS. WOODS: (shaking head from side to side)

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: No. Okay. Then we are ready
18 for a motion.

19 MS. McFETRIDGE: I make the motion to approve
20 Hot Springs' digital plan.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion by Ms.
22 McFetridge to approve Hot Springs' digital learning
23 plan.

24 Is there a second?

25 MR. SUTTON: Second.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Sutton.

2 All in favor?

3 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

5 All right.

6 ac) LAVACA (GUY FENTER CONSORTIUM)

7 MS. HARP: Okay. Our next application is also a
8 new application, part of the Guy Fenter Consortium,
9 and that is Lavaca School District.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Any questions on
11 Lavaca?

12 I don't see any. Then we are ready for a
13 motion.

14 (MOMENT OF SILENCE)

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Is anybody awake?

16 DR. RANKIN: I'll make that motion --

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

18 DR. RANKIN: -- to approve.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Moved by Dr. Rankin to approve
20 the digital learning plan for Lavaca.

21 Seconded by --

22 MR. SUTTON: I'll second.

23 MS. McFETRIDGE: Second.

24 MR. SUTTON: Whatever.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Y'all are awake. Okay. Ms.

1 McFetridge.

2 All in favor?

3 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

5 All right. Ms. Smith, we expedited.

6 MS. SMITH: Absolutely.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We finally got it
8 down. All right.

9 Thank you. Thank -- I didn't -- thank you for
10 the Department. We went through that quickly, but I
11 don't want to fail to recognize the hard work that
12 went into making sure all those plans and all those
13 questions that we had all those different sessions
14 ago were answered. So thank y'all so much for doing
15 that because expedited wasn't easy, but we got there.

16 VII.2. CONSIDERATION OF OPEN-ENROLLMENT CHARTER APPLICATIONS

17 a) IDEA PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARKANSAS

18 b) PREMIER HIGH SCHOOL OF FORT SMITH

19 c) ARKANSAS MILITARY AND FIRST RESPONDERS ACADEMY

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. So we're going on
21 to charter applications. Mr. Johnston.

22 MR. JOHNSTON: Good afternoon. Tim Johnston,
23 DESE Charter Unit.

24 As a reminder, the State Board is deciding
25 whether to review or not review the Charter

1 Authorizing Panel's decisions.

2 On August 17th and 18th, 2021, the Charter
3 Authorizing Panel approved the open-enrollment
4 charter school application for IDEA Public Schools
5 Arkansas to open two campuses for the 2023-2024
6 school year or academic year; Premier High School of
7 Fort Smith to open one campus for the 22-23 academic
8 year; and Arkansas Military and First Responders
9 Academy to open one campus as well for the 22-23
10 academic year.

11 The Board may approve these as a group. If the
12 Board has any specific questions related to
13 individual applications, we can pull that one and
14 approve the others. And we do have school
15 representatives available either in Zoom or in
16 person.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. We'll see
18 if we have any questions.

19 Does anyone have a question about IDEA?

20 Dr. Moore, are you going to have questions on
21 that one?

22 DR. MOORE: No.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: No. No questions.

24 Over here?

25 Ms. Woods?

1 MS. WOODS: No.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: No. Okay.

3 Then, questions on Premier High School?

4 Ms. Woods?

5 MS. WOODS: (shaking head from side to side)

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: No. Okay.

7 Have any questions on Arkansas Military and

8 First Responders Academy?

9 DR. MOORE: I do.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have questions on
11 that one.

12 Okay. So let's approve or see if you want to
13 approve the first two, the IDEA Public Schools and
14 Premier High School. Remember our motion is to
15 review or not review.

16 DR. MOORE: I'll do the motion to not review.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion to not
18 review IDEA and Premier High School.

19 DR. HILL: Second.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Dr. Hill.

21 All in favor?

22 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

24 Okay. So now we have questions on Arkansas
25 Military and First Responders Academy.

1 MR. JOHNSTON: Yes. And Don Hall is available
2 on Zoom.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Mr. Hall.

4 MR. HALL: Good afternoon.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good afternoon. And thank you
6 for being here with us.

7 MR. HALL: Honored to be.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

9 DR. MOORE: Yes. I know this is not a hearing.
10 I did listen to y'all's hearing with the Charter
11 Panel. But I did -- I was curious -- I know you
12 having a track record in other states with this
13 school model, I'm interested in female enrollment in
14 your schools and that outreach. Because
15 traditionally, as I look at it and as I read the
16 name, I know that probably more males would be
17 attracted to it. And so I didn't hear that talked
18 about before, so I wanted to hear a little bit about
19 that, if you don't mind?

20 MR. HALL: Great question. What we have found
21 historically is that because of the design of the
22 program being project-based, being first responder
23 oriented, military oriented, for JROTC, really you'll
24 find the demographics are representative of the
25 student population as a whole with regard to gender,

1 ethnicity, and the other categories that are
2 variables that we group students in. And so you will
3 see that it's about a 50/50 mix, 60/40 at most
4 disparity. If you look at most of your ROTC programs
5 in your high schools today, you'll see it is pretty
6 well balanced as well, and that has become more and
7 more of the norm. The program also is designed to
8 have a very heavy college prep emphasis. And we've
9 been doing a lot of work with public education in the
10 past decade to increase female representation in the
11 sciences, in mathematics areas. So that would be a
12 focus for us as well is to insure that every student
13 is given appropriate access and encouragement to
14 apply and to be included in the opportunities. So
15 for us, it's about all students should have that
16 opportunity if they choose to do this.

17 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you for being here, Mr.
19 Hall. And we're excited about the future of what
20 this is going to do in our area. So thank you.

21 So I think we're ready for a motion to review or
22 not review this Arkansas Military and First
23 Responders Academy.

24 MS. McFETRIDGE: Motion not to review.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion not to

1 review by Ms. McFetridge.

2 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Henderson.

4 All in favor?

5 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

7 Thank you, Mr. Hall.

8 MR. HALL: You're very welcome. We look forward
9 to being a part of the community. Thank you.

10 VII.3. CONSIDERATION OF ONE-YEAR STANDARDS WAIVER

11 a) BRYANT SCHOOL DISTRICT

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. So we are to one-
13 year standards waiver. Ms. Coffman.

14 MS. COFFMAN: Ms. Newton and Board Members, I am
15 happy to introduce to you one of our new members of
16 the Public School Accountability team, Dr. Matthew
17 Sutherland. He is the coordinator of Standards and
18 Systems Support and over charter schools. So he
19 comes to us highly recommended and he has not
20 disappointed us.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good.

22 MS. COFFMAN: So we are super happy to have him
23 and he'll introduce our next action item.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Welcome, Mr.
25 Sutherland. We're glad that you're joining our team.

1 MR. SUTHERLAND: Thank you very much.

2 So what I have here is Bryant School District
3 has submitted a request for waiver for Standard 4-F.
4 This is a one-year waiver and it's for a Library
5 Media Specialist in the event of an enrollment
6 increase. So they're looking to do this just for the
7 junior high for next year.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. It's for the current
9 year, school year --

10 MR. SUTHERLAND: Yes.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: -- that we're in?

12 MR. SUTHERLAND: Yes, for this --

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

14 MR. SUTHERLAND: -- this school year.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. We'll see
16 if we have any questions for Bryant.

17 On my left, anyone have a question?

18 Over here, on my right?

19 Ms. Woods?

20 MS. WOODS: (shaking head from side to side)

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: No questions. Then we are
22 needing a motion to either approve or deny the one-
23 year standards waiver for Bryant Junior High.

24 DR. MOORE: I'll move to approve.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion by Dr.

1 Moore.

2 DR. RANKIN: And I'll second.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Dr. Rankin.

4 All in favor?

5 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

7 Okay.

8 MR. SUTHERLAND: Thank you.

9 VII.4. FOR PUBLIC COMMENT RELEASE: DESE RULES GOVERNING
10 ANNEXATION AND CONSOLIDATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS, SECTIONS
11 2.00, 13.00, AND TABLE OF CONTENTS ONLY

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: We are ready now for --

13 MS. FRENO: Rules.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes. Ms. Freno.

15 MS. FRENO: Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Newton.

16 Lori Freno.

17 The Division is requesting that the Board
18 release for public comment the DESE rules governing
19 Annexation and Consolidation of School Districts.
20 You'll notice there are only certain sections of the
21 rules we're putting out for public comment. Reason
22 being is this is a big, huge bunch of rules but
23 really we only needed to change one section to
24 incorporate provisions of legislation --

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

1 MS. FRENO: -- that was passed in the 2021
2 session.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: And --

4 MS. FRENO: And this would be pending Governor's
5 office approval.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: That's what --

7 MS. FRENO: Yes.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: -- our motion needs to say,
9 release for public comment pending Governor's office
10 approval?

11 MS. FRENO: Yes. So that when -- if you all
12 approve this today, we will then immediately send it
13 to the Governor's office. Once it comes out of the
14 Governor's office and has approved it -- if they
15 approve it, then we will put it out for a 30-day
16 public comment period.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. So we need
18 a motion to approve or not approve the Division of
19 Elementary and Secondary Education rules governing
20 Annex- -- no, I'm on the wrong one -- no, that's
21 right -- Annexation and Consolidation of School
22 Districts.

23 DR. RANKIN: I'll make that motion to approve.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Motion to approve by
25 Dr. Rankin.

1 DR. MOORE: Second.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Dr. Moore.

3 All in favor?

4 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

6 MS. FRENO: Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you.

8 VII.5. FOR PUBLIC COMMENT RELEASE: DESE RULES GOVERNING THE
9 ARKANSAS TUTORING CORPS

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Now we're looking at the rules
11 on the Arkansas Tutoring Corps. Ms. James.

12 MS. JAMES: Good afternoon.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good afternoon.

14 MS. JAMES: Whitney James with the Department.
15 I've met some of you, but not all of you.

16 Today the Division is requesting the release for
17 public comment of the Division of Elementary and
18 Secondary Education rules governing the Arkansas
19 Tutoring Corps pending Governor's office approval.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

21 MS. JAMES: And I'm happy to answer any
22 questions. And I have Dr. Missy Wally with me too,
23 as well.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Any questions?

25 DR. MOORE: I do have a question, and it

1 might've been -- I know we had a presentation on it
2 last month, but in the rules it said only math and
3 reading tutors. Is it going to be limited specific
4 to math and reading or can there be other subjects as
5 well?

6 MS. JAMES: That is actually in the legislation;
7 that is in the act.

8 DR. MOORE: Okay.

9 MS. JAMES: So that's why it's in the rules.

10 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions?

12 Okay. We're ready for a motion.

13 DR. MOORE: I'll move to approve pending
14 Governor's office approval.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: We have a motion by Dr. Moore.

16 MS. McFETRIDGE: Second.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Ms. McFetridge.

18 All in favor?

19 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

21 Thank you, Ms. James.

22 MS. JAMES: Thank you so much.

23 VII.6. FOR PUBLIC COMMENT RELEASE: DESE RULES GOVERNING

24 ELIGIBILITY AND FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR ARKANSAS LEADERSHIP

25 ACADEMY MASTER PRINCIPAL

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Saracini, rules governing
2 Eligibility and Financial Incentives for Arkansas
3 Leadership Academy.

4 MS. SARACINI: Karli Saracini, A.C.

5 I'm before you -- I'm here before you today.
6 DESE is asking for release for public comments these
7 rules pending Governor approval. And I have several
8 on here.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

10 MS. SARACINI: These are the first.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Any questions on
12 my left?

13 DR. MOORE: I did. These rules, were they being
14 changed because of a law change or because of just --

15 MS. SARACINI: They haven't been changed in
16 quite sometime.

17 DR. MOORE: Okay.

18 MS. SARACINI: We were updating them and making
19 sure that -- the old rules really were catered toward
20 the other vendor, and so we just made them to where
21 -- these were our rules that we wanted to just make
22 sure that they follow and align our initiatives.

23 DR. MOORE: Okay. That makes sense. But I
24 know, having been a part of -- and I know that's not
25 you, but I feel like that should have been done

1 before the RFP was put out, just having been a part
2 of that RFP process. So I don't know if we're
3 thinking about rule changes in the future --

4 MS. SARACINI: All right.

5 DR. MOORE: But I think there are some things
6 that I think as a part of the RFP -- what were we --
7 committee we would've liked to have that discussion.
8 It is what it is there.

9 As far as -- are there any major changes to --

10 MS. SARACINI: There's not --

11 DR. MOORE: Okay.

12 MS. SARACINI: -- many major changes. We have
13 just kind of cleaned it up and that -- we are making
14 sure that the rules meet, again, the new RFP and
15 everything that's in it. The one thing that is
16 changing, it's not a major change, it was one year;
17 you have to be a principal or an administrator for
18 one year. And preference will be given to the three-
19 year and -- but it will be a case-by-case basis and
20 that will not be us; it will be the vendor.

21 DR. MOORE: Okay.

22 MS. SARACINI: Uh-huh, it will be APSRC. And we
23 just made it more clear. I think sometimes the
24 clarity -- and we just tried to clean it up to make
25 it more clear so that when you start getting the

1 bonuses that it's step-by-step, and we've tried to
2 make that very clear. Because sometimes I think the
3 confusion about high-needs school is not just a high-
4 needs school, but we wanted to make sure -- you go
5 back to the law and it also says academics. And so
6 we just made sure we clarified it and that we matched
7 what was in ESSER. We worked with Deb Coffman's
8 group.

9 DR. MOORE: How many years do they get that
10 bonus?

11 MS. SARACINI: The bonus, well, it depends.

12 DR. MOORE: Okay.

13 MS. SARACINI: And that's why we wanted to make
14 it very clear if you're not working in a high-needs,
15 high-academic needs -- not just poverty, the
16 academics -- then it's \$9,000 a year up to where you
17 can have \$45,000 which is five years. Okay. And
18 that's after designation. And so the process -- and
19 we tried to make that clear in these new rules -- is
20 you go through Phase 1, it's Master Principal Phase
21 1; and then you apply, if you want to go on, to Phase
22 2; then you apply to Phase 3. And then once you
23 complete Phase 3 you have the option to designate.
24 And the designation is when the bonuses come in.

25 DR. MOORE: Okay. And that's done -- so if

1 you're in a high-needs you could get up to \$25,000 a
2 year?

3 MS. SARACINI: Yes, ma'am. Uh-huh. And that's
4 why we wanted very -- clarity.

5 DR. MOORE: Certainly.

6 MS. SARACINI: Uh-huh.

7 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

8 SECRETARY KEY: Well, Karli did touch on it, but
9 I was going to point out we continue to find rules
10 that have references to No Child Left Behind --

11 DR. MOORE: Yes.

12 SECRETARY KEY: -- this many years after the new
13 ESSA plan has been adopted. So -- and, again, this
14 was one of those where we found references. And
15 consider too my recollection is the Master Principal
16 program was another response under No Child Left
17 Behind for school improvement and encouraging school
18 leaders to go into those hard to -- develop school
19 leaders in those hard to -- harder to reach areas.
20 This really just modernizes a lot of that effort as
21 well.

22 MS. SARACINI: They haven't been changed since
23 2014, so it's a long period of time.

24 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions?

1 MR. SUTTON: I have a question. In talking
2 about the bonus, when it's paid out, it makes
3 reference to "provided funds are available" or
4 something like that. So the question is if someone
5 is in the program I assume funds are set aside for
6 those that are in, in anticipation that they'll
7 complete the program? In other words, they didn't do
8 all this for naught?

9 SECRETARY KEY: Subject to appropriation of the
10 Legislature. That's what that phrase is -- yeah, so
11 if Legislature didn't fund that line, then there
12 wouldn't be any funding available. So that's a
13 common phrase in a number of programs that -- it
14 helps hedge our bets in case there's something that
15 happens in the Legislature that just zeroes the line
16 item out, there's -- then there's no obligation or
17 there's no commitment to continue paying that,
18 because there's no funding and appropriation for it.
19 So I don't know if it's ever happened, but I will say
20 that it is -- it's one of those things that protects
21 the Department and it lets the participants know that
22 there is a legislative action that has to take place.

23 MR. SUTTON: Okay.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Dr. Rankin, did you have a
25 question?

1 DR. RANKIN: No questions.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Any other questions?

3 All right. So we need a motion to approve
4 releasing for public comment pending Governor's
5 office approval.

6 DR. RANKIN: I make that motion.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Motion by Dr. Rankin.

8 MR. SUTTON: I'll second.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Sutton.

10 All in favor?

11 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

13 Okay.

14 VII.7. FOR PUBLIC COMMENT RELEASE: DESE RULES GOVERNING
15 ELIGIBILITY AND FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR NATIONAL BOARD FOR
16 PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Saracini, you're still
18 going.

19 MS. SARACINI: Yes, I am. Next up is the
20 background checks. And this one --

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Well, I think -- did we skip
22 one, National Board?

23 MS. SARACINI: Oh, National Board. Yes.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

25 MS. SARACINI: I was going to try to skip that

1 one.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We'd have a lot of
3 unhappy people if you skip that one.

4 MS. SARACINI: I know. National Board, again it
5 was just cleaning up, you know, the change from like
6 Division to DESE, those type kind of clean-ups; not
7 very much at all.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Any questions about the
9 National Board rules?

10 DR. MOORE: I just want to double-check. So
11 it's changing a little bit of the processes, but it's
12 not changing the amounts?

13 MS. SARACINI: No.

14 DR. MOORE: Okay.

15 MS. SARACINI: No. No. There were dates that
16 had already gone by, because when -- the change was
17 back in 2017. And so we just struck those dates out
18 because it's already -- it's just clean-up.

19 DR. MOORE: Okay.

20 MS. SARACINI: Uh-huh.

21 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any others?

23 Okay. Then we need a motion to approve pending
24 Governor's office approval.

25 DR. MOORE: I move to approve pending Governor's

1 office approval.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Motion by Dr. Moore.

3 MS. McFETRIDGE: Second.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Second by Ms. McFetridge.

5 All in favor?

6 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

8 Okay.

9 VII.8. FOR PUBLIC COMMENT RELEASE: DESE RULES GOVERNING
10 BACKGROUND CHECKS

11 MS. SARACINI: Okay.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Now, background checks.

13 MS. SARACINI: Yes. Now, background checks.

14 This was not something that came about with us,
15 but the State Police, as of July 27th, is no longer
16 accepting paper cards; it all has to be electronic.
17 So we had to kind of just change our rules --

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right.

19 MS. SARACINI: -- to match that new law. They
20 will -- now they will accept reciprocity, which is
21 out-of-state.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

23 MS. SARACINI: And that's the only exception.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So this is just for the
25 digital fingerprinting now?

1 MS. SARACINI: Uh-huh.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

3 MS. SARACINI: You know, many years ago, we
4 asked for it but we didn't mandate it. Well, now the
5 State Police -- and they will not accept it from
6 anyone --

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

8 MS. SARACINI: -- not just us.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Do we have
10 a motion to release these pending Governor's office
11 approval?

12 MS. McFETRIDGE: So moved.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Motion by Ms.
14 McFetridge.

15 DR. RANKIN: I'll second.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Dr. Rankin.
17 All in favor?

18 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

20 Do we wait on our Secretary here?

21 Okay. We're going to wait just a minute.

22 MS. SARACINI: Okay.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: How about let's take a 10-
24 minute break. Would that break your heart, Ms.
25 Saracini?

1 MS. SARACINI: No.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Let's take a 10-minute
3 break, until 2:00.

4 (BREAK: 1:50 P.M. - 2:03 P.M.)

5 VII.9. FOR PUBLIC COMMENT RELEASE: DESE RULES GOVERNING THE
6 CODE OF ETHICS FOR ARKANSAS EDUCATORS

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So, on our agenda we're to
8 Number 9 of Part 7, rules governing the Code of
9 Ethics for Arkansas Educators. Ms. Saracini.

10 MS. SARACINI: Karli Saracini, A.C.

11 Again, we did some clean-up. The only major
12 thing is we changed some time limits because, if you
13 remember correctly, last year we were having the time
14 issue.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

16 MS. SARACINI: And I can now say that it's down
17 to way less than 100 days.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

19 MS. SARACINI: I mean, and it's awesome.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good.

21 MS. SARACINI: And so this really limits it so
22 that we never get into that place again.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good. Good.

24 All right. So we need a motion to approve for
25 public comment pending Governor's office approval.

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(MOMENT OF SILENCE)

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Do we have a motion?

DR. RANKIN: So moved.

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Motion by Dr. Rankin.

MR. SUTTON: Second.

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Sutton.

All in favor?

(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

Okay.

VII.10. FOR PUBLIC COMMENT RELEASE: DESE RULES GOVERNING
EDUCATOR LICENSURE

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Educator Licensure.

MS. SARACINI: Again, we're asking for release for public comment. We have had some changes. There are not a lot, but you might -- you may remember, due to legislation, we had to put in here a highly qualified professor pathway due to law. And so that is kind of based off the PPTL; it's just not going to be provisional, it just goes straight to a standard.

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

MS. SARACINI: With three years of experience, it's labeled in there. And it's kind of on your -- what we talked about, the little summaries, if you kind of look through there, and it tells you exactly

1 what section so that you can go and look for the
2 details.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

4 MS. SARACINI: Okay. Another one that we're
5 looking at -- you know, you're always asking us for
6 data. And currently we get our data from our EPPs,
7 Higher Ed., from Title 2. And that is a year to two
8 year old. They're putting in now last year's. So
9 it's always two years behind. So we are --

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Saracini, EPP -- make sure
11 everybody knows what we're talking about.

12 MS. SARACINI: Educator Preparation Programs.
13 These are your traditional at our IEGs, our Higher
14 Eds. And then we also have some nontraditional, like
15 APPLE, that we have; we have our MATs, we have
16 several other routes that are out there. And so we
17 are wanting to do -- in these rules we talk about a
18 state review. In the past we haven't had a state
19 review, and so we want to start having a state review
20 and we talk about that. Other states are going to
21 that --

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

23 MS. SARACINI: -- because it used to just be
24 NCATE, then it was TEAC, and now it's CAEP. And so
25 we're going to do a state review. This is what is

1 happening across, where we go in and do a quality
2 check of the educator prep programs, whether they're
3 traditional or nontraditional.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Would that start this school
5 year?

6 MS. SARACINI: This year we are going to pull
7 our stakeholders together and we're going to be able
8 to design it --

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

10 MS. SARACINI: -- and develop it.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So develop this year, then
12 implement next year?

13 MS. SARACINI: Yes. We hope to pilot next year.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

15 MS. SARACINI: And so that's probably one of the
16 majors, besides the high qualified professor route.
17 That's really -- and then we just had some clean-ups
18 along the way. We -- and that's really -- and we
19 added the early childhood pre-K first time licensure
20 area. And we did that in response to several years
21 ago we went from K4 -- P4 to K6, and that was so that
22 we could have 5th and 6th grade teachers. And then,
23 now, we don't have a lot of pre-K teachers and we did
24 not have this first-time license. And so the need is
25 there and that's what we're doing.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

2 MS. SARACINI: And so those are the -- again,
3 it's more clean-up. Those are the major changes.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Even though these rules
5 technically are not into effect, the highly qualified
6 professor route is already available?

7 MS. SARACINI: Yes.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

9 MS. SARACINI: Because it was within law,
10 legislation.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Any questions
12 about licensure?

13 Okay. Then we are ready for a motion.

14 DR. MOORE: So moved to approve pending
15 Governor's office approval.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Have a motion by Dr.
17 Moore.

18 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Henderson.
20 All in favor?

21 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

23 MS. SARACINI: Thank you.

24 VII.11. RELEASE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT: STANDARDS FOR
25 ACCREDITATION OF ARKANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Ms. Hyatt. A good
2 thing to end our day on.

3 MS. HYATT: The rules governing the Standards
4 for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and
5 School Districts are ready to be released for public
6 comment pending Governor's office approval. And just
7 a reminder, these will also go through a stakeholder
8 group and they'll go to Joint Ed., the Senate and
9 Hour Committee on Education before there's a final
10 version; so there's additional steps for review. And
11 I'm happy to answer any questions.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Major changes?

13 MS. HYATT: Most of the changes -- well, some of
14 the changes are in response to legislation, Act 688
15 which was the school start date. We included that in
16 the piece about instructional days to allow for the
17 new alternative calendar. And then also the Computer
18 Science legislation which was Act 414 about must have
19 a computer science credit for graduation and must
20 have a computer science teacher at each high school;
21 those components have been added. The rest of them
22 are really clean-up. We separated Class Size and
23 Teaching Load into two separate standards as opposed
24 to one, so it's easier to monitor if someone just has
25 a waiver of one piece. And then a couple of making

1 sure we had the correct -- whether it was citation or
2 probationary district versus a school, if there was a
3 violation.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Any
5 questions over here for Ms. Hyatt?

6 Over here?

7 Ms. Woods?

8 MS. WOODS: (shaking head from side to side)

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: No. Okay.

10 Then we are ready for a motion.

11 DR. RANKIN: I will move to approve.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Move to approve by Dr.
13 Rankin.

14 MS. McFETRIDGE: Second.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Second by Ms. McFetridge.

16 All in favor?

17 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

19 (NO ONE INDICATED OPPOSITION)

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22 (The Action Agenda was concluded at 2:09 p.m.)

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A-6: EDUCATIONAL COOPERATIVE DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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