

In The Matter Of:
ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

April 13, 2023

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ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

APRIL 13, 2023
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
MR. RANDY HENDERSON
MR. JEFF WOOD

NON-VOTING PARTICIPANTS:

MR. JACOB OLIVA, Secretary of Education
MS. JESSICA SAUM, Arkansas Teacher of the Year

DESE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. LORI FRENO, General Counsel

LOCATION:

MARVELL-ELAINE SCHOOL DISTRICT
High School Gymnasium
1018 Highway 49, Building A
Marvell, AR 72366

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MARVELL-ELAINE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: We're going to begin our agenda now. First, are there any changes to the agenda? Okay. I'm not seeing any changes.

We'll start our action agenda.

1: CONSIDERATION OF THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE MARVELL-ELAINE SCHOOL DISTRICT WITH ONE OR MORE DISTRICTS

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: The first item on our action agenda is the consideration of the Marvell-Elaine School District. And Ms. Stacy Smith.

(A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE TO WORK ON MICROPHONES)

MS. SMITH: All right. Good morning. We're going to start with kind of doing an overview on some of the things that we're going to talk about today with Marvell-Elaine. We are not going to rehash the --

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Stop for just a second, Ms. Smith. I don't think they can hear you in the back. So we may need to adjust the microphones for a minute. Let's give -- you may have to end up holding it. I'm not sure.

IT TECH: Hello, 1-2-3.

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. You're going to have to get close. You may have to end up holding it. I know that's going to be awkward, but

1 try --

2 MS. SMITH: Can you hear me? Hello?

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: In the back, tell me if you
4 can hear. Yes. Okay. All right. We're good now.

5 MS. SMITH: Okay. Yeah. Can you hear?

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

7 MS. SMITH: All right. So we're not going to go
8 over the data elements as far as their letter grade,
9 their test scores, the number of teachers that are
10 not certified. We've done that presentation and that
11 decision was already made. So what we're here to
12 talk about today are the next steps.

13 Okay. So talking about the timeline for Marvell-
14 Elaine, I kind of gave you just a flash real quick of
15 the past five years. All right.

16 So 2018-19, the District was classified in
17 fiscal distress; that was in April of 2019.

18 In 2019-20, worked very closely with Fiscal
19 Services trying to get them out of fiscal distress.
20 That was at the end of the year, when Covid hit.
21 There was no assessment.

22 20-21, the District was released from fiscal
23 distress and that was based on very in-depth
24 conversations with the current superintendent, the
25 progress we were making; it was also right in the

1 middle of Covid. If they were still on the fiscal
2 distress list, there would have been implications
3 then for the 350 and the fiscal distress. So we
4 removed them because legislation allows us to still
5 work with them in a very -- and review their request
6 for spending for an additional two years. So they
7 were released in 2021 from fiscal distress. However,
8 the OCSS Office continued to work with -- and the
9 Fiscal Office at the Department continued to work
10 with them.

11 During 21-22, they had a full year interim
12 superintendent. Again, OCSS was in the schools,
13 working with the schools. After testing that year,
14 all the schools were rated as an F. They were
15 actually scored the lowest performing schools in the
16 state, the elementary and the high school. The
17 District did receive the waiver for 350.

18 In 22-23, this school year, they've been
19 identified as more rigorous intervention needed for
20 comprehensive support. And that's the federal
21 accountability identification. So they were
22 identified as CSI in 2018-19, and they've never
23 gotten off that list; and so now they're on that next
24 step.

25 State Board classified them in Level 5 support

1 in November, and then did not grant the waiver in
2 December. So that's where we are today, okay --
3 because the waiver was not granted, the conversation
4 for consolidation.

5 I will tell you since the Level 5 support was
6 granted in December we've had multiple staff on
7 campus weekly. In fact, the OCSS staff that's here,
8 if you'll stand for me real quick. Now these folks
9 that are in the back and right here on the side, they
10 are here weekly as a presence supporting directly the
11 students on campus. Today alone, we had 11 co-op
12 people from the DeQueen-Mena Co-op and two from the
13 Guy Fenter Co-op here assisting in the high school,
14 directly teaching in classrooms. So we have been
15 providing very direct support for instruction since
16 we classified them in Level 5.

17 So what are the considerations today?

18 One, we have to talk about the consideration of
19 consolidation. But as you all know, we've had a
20 legislative session. And so when you made the
21 decision not to grant the waiver back in November/
22 December we did not have some of the other options
23 that I'm going to talk about with you today. We have
24 two pieces of legislation right now, House Bill 1504
25 and Senate Bill 262, which both have been signed. I

1 will tell you Senate Bill 262 did not have an
2 emergency clause; therefore, it does not go -- it
3 does not impact any decision you are making today.
4 It will go into effect around August. Okay. House
5 Bill 1504 did have an emergency clause and it has
6 been signed, and so it does have an effect on
7 decisions that you'll make today. And I will kind of
8 talk you through some of those points.

9 If this Board decides to stay with
10 consolidation, I will probably ask you to wait
11 another week before we make a final decision to make
12 sure that we have vetted everything we need to do as
13 far as some mileage pieces with this legislation.
14 But I will talk you through that as we go through
15 today.

16 The other third bucket that we have to consider
17 today is some opportunities that are provided in the
18 Arkansas Learns Bill, and that's a Transformation
19 Contract.

20 So we've got several things at play today. And
21 as I'm walking you through the different scenarios I
22 will try to make these connections for you as we go
23 out. But I'm going to tell you if you need to stop
24 me at some point and ask me to repeat or clarify,
25 feel free to do so, okay, because it's a lot of

1 information to digest.

2 All right. So first off, I want -- we're going
3 to talk about the consolidation and options that are
4 there. In your binders, not only -- I've given you a
5 hand-copy of my presentation; but in your binders, in
6 the back, you also have some bigger maps, if you want
7 to look at those. But this first here is a map of
8 the surrounding districts and I wanted -- this is
9 something Mr. Wood specifically asked for, just to
10 make sure he can really see the region and what was
11 happening. One of the things that I want you to
12 notice about this region is there is -- was
13 definitely some landmark litigation and legislation
14 in education that definitely came out of this region.
15 You can see on the map where Lake View is situated,
16 and Lake View was consolidated with the Barton School
17 District. Also, this region has been impacted
18 heavily by multiple consolidations over the years.
19 Most of our districts, if you think about them, have
20 two names: Barton-Lexa, Marvell-Elaine, Helena-West
21 Helena. And then there's an assortment of
22 communities that have been consolidated or annexed
23 throughout whose names are no longer in the titles.
24 So just know that there is a rich history here. And
25 there is also very deep feelings about consolidation

1 and how it impacts students and families and
2 communities and we want to acknowledge that, and I
3 know that is something that you want to be thoughtful
4 about as you're going through and making a decision
5 today.

6 So talking about House Bill 1504, there were two
7 elements to that Bill that talk specifically about
8 who's eligible for it. If you're a district that
9 didn't qualify for a waiver, which Marvell was, and
10 you're under 350 students, and a student would have
11 to ride on a bus for more than 40 miles, the law
12 basically says you can't be consolidated; you have to
13 be assumed by the State; your board is immediately
14 dismissed, and your superintendent -- it doesn't say
15 immediately; it says your board is dissolved and the
16 superintendent are permanently removed. Okay.

17 So they have this 40-mile piece in there. One
18 of the things -- and this is again where we would
19 have to spend some more time digging, and this is
20 where I would need the time. This Bill literally was
21 signed this week. Based on that 40-mile piece, it
22 automatically kind of marks out some districts.
23 Brinkley, Clarendon, DeWitt, and McGehee all would
24 have kids on a bus for more than 40 miles. And a lot
25 of people would go, "How come some of the other ones

1 don't?" So let's talk about that. This, right here,
2 when you talk about logical district options -- and
3 even before the legislation passed Barton, Helena-
4 West Helena, and Lee County were the three districts
5 that were the most logical, when we were talking
6 about who doesn't make sense. The map here is kind
7 of a population map. All right. So you can see how
8 many folks live in those areas.

9 There's a larger map over here on the side that
10 you do not have a small copy of because it wouldn't
11 have done you any good. But over on this larger map
12 on the side it actually plots where every student
13 lives in the district. So the students that live the
14 furthest from the district right now when I calculate
15 is 34 miles on a bus, according to Barton, how they
16 do their bus runs -- 34 miles -- 34 -- 34 miles to
17 Barton. They're actually 40 miles to Marvell-Elaine.
18 So you can see when we're talking about this
19 legislation and 40 miles, it's all very close.
20 That's why if we stay with the route of consolidation
21 I would ask you for another day or two to make sure
22 we get that right.

23 When you're looking at -- let me go back to this
24 one right here. I do want to point this out: on this
25 map here, I put this map up here so you can see

1 Marvell and then you can see Elaine. That line there
2 kind of divides what was previously the Elaine
3 community and Elaine School District, and above was
4 Marvell. It's just a general view of that. So when
5 I'm talking to you in a minute about different
6 options if the district were to divide -- and I would
7 say the Elaine community or the Marvell community --
8 that's kind of what I'm talking about, those
9 different groups there.

10 Any questions on that part before I move
11 forward?

12 So let's talk about a Barton option. And I'm
13 going to lead you through the pros and the cons. And
14 I also want to remind us real quick -- as I'm taking
15 you through these options, we're also going to talk
16 about the option of Arkansas Learns as another option
17 at the end. All right. So don't feel like this is
18 your only choices here. Okay.

19 The Barton option -- the pros of the Barton
20 option -- and the map that you see here on the screen
21 actually shows what the Barton School District would
22 look like if they consolidated with Marvell and
23 Elaine, both communities, the full school district.
24 The pros keep the students together. It is the
25 closest district, just down the road. It is in the

1 same county. Dr. Ray has shared with me that she had
2 done a survey at one point and that a lot of the
3 community had expressed that Barton would be the
4 choice. So those are some of the high points of
5 Barton. I have spent some time and talked to Mr.
6 Guthrie, the superintendent of Barton, about
7 concerns. One thing that Mr. Guthrie really wanted
8 me to emphasize today was he does not want anybody to
9 walk out of here today to think that Barton doesn't
10 want the students of this community. He was very
11 clear kids are kids and we're going to do what's best
12 for kids. A very big concern though for the Barton
13 School District is in rezoning. You can look at the
14 large area that would become Barton. That includes
15 those from the Marvell and the Elaine. If you look
16 at that population map that I showed you earlier, it
17 is possible that because they would have to rezone
18 the Barton school board, position-wise, could
19 potentially lose four to five of their positions to
20 Marvell and Elaine communities and maintaining only
21 two to three from the Barton-Lexa community. So
22 there was great concern by their board about that.
23 They feel like they are making positive progress
24 right now in their district, where their schools are.
25 They feel like they have momentum. So there was

1 concern about that and the complete changing of the
2 board and how that make-up would be. They also
3 shared that they are much more comfortable taking
4 part of the community, the Elaine community. They
5 felt like as far as distance-wise that that was the
6 best place for those students to go, that were a part
7 of that community. There is a large number of
8 students that school-choice from the Elaine community
9 into their school district. And they felt like with
10 the number of students that would be coming it would
11 be something that they would be able to handle,
12 easily put into their school system and be able to
13 meet the students' needs. Taking on the entire
14 Marvell community and Elaine community, all 300
15 students -- and they are currently around 700 now --
16 that would be a big job. But, again, he said he
17 didn't want anybody to walk away thinking we don't
18 want kids because that's not it.

19 So pros and cons there --

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Can we ask a question?

21 MS. SMITH: Yes.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: What would that do to -- if we
23 did just -- if it was just the Elaine community, what
24 would that do to the number of board members if they
25 were rezoned?

1 MS. SMITH: I would have to dig into that more.
2 I would think it would probably be -- the population
3 there is not as much. It would probably be at least
4 two.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So two out of the seven?

6 MS. SMITH: Two -- I would say two to three.
7 Uh-huh.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Two to three out of seven.

9 MS. SMITH: Uh-huh.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

11 MS. SMITH: Most of the concentration of
12 population is in the Marvell community.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

14 MS. McFETRIDGE: Say that again. I'm sorry.

15 MS. SMITH: Most of the concentration for the
16 population is in the Marvell community.

17 I see Mr. Sutton. Sorry.

18 (MIC REVERB)

19 MR. SUTTON: I'm not even pushing it.

20 MS. SMITH: Okay.

21 MR. SUTTON: My question is this -- when you say
22 keep students together, are you saying that this
23 district would maintain its K through 12?

24 MS. SMITH: So I'm going to repeat your question
25 so that everyone can hear.

1 So he was asking specifically about what did I
2 mean by the phrase "keep students together." What I
3 was paraphrasing was the students from the Marvell-
4 Elaine School District, together as a school student
5 body, would go to Barton. Barton School District
6 would -- they have said they will close these
7 buildings.

8 MR. SUTTON: That's important.

9 MS. SMITH: Uh-huh. Thank you for that
10 clarification.

11 Another option for you to consider is the
12 Barton/Helena-West Helena option. So this would be
13 dividing the district. Now you're going to see
14 Barton involved in all three of these scenarios and
15 that is applying the new piece of legislation that a
16 student cannot be on a bus for more than 40 miles. A
17 student traveling from the furthest southern region
18 of the Elaine community would be on a bus for more
19 than 40 miles going to Helena. But if the district
20 was split and the Elaine community went to Barton,
21 again, they're at -- that furthest student is at 34
22 miles. Okay. And then Lexa.

23 So the pros of a Barton/Helena-West Helena
24 option -- Elaine students are closer to Barton.
25 Several Elaine community students already school-

1 choice into the Barton School District now. It is in
2 the same county. The bus route to Barton from Elaine
3 is actually shorter than the current bus route. And
4 Helena-West Helena is equipped to take on the Marvell
5 population of students. I talked to Superintendent
6 McGee; they do have room, they do have facilities.
7 So they would be equipped and could handle that
8 number of students coming into their district.

9 The cons --

10 MS. WOODS: I was just going to say, is there
11 any option for like the entire senior class to be
12 able to migrate to one school district if we do split
13 them, or is it going to be truly based on --

14 MS. SMITH: I think at that point that's where
15 we would have like school choice options. We will
16 allow seniors to school choice to the district they
17 -- and then work with students and district supports
18 surrounding.

19 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can you repeat the question,
20 please?

21 MS. SMITH: Yes, I can. She asked was there an
22 option to keep the senior class from Marvell-Elaine
23 School District together, to one school. And I said
24 that it would probably just be school choice at that
25 point.

1 Okay. Concerns with this option -- currently,
2 Helena-West Helena is a Level 5 -- classified in need
3 of Level 5 - State Authority and they currently have
4 a limited authority board. While I love to brag on
5 the progress we're making, there's still a lot of
6 work to be done in the district. And I think we can
7 all -- we all acknowledge that the superintendent
8 acknowledged that. Their board president is here;
9 she would probably acknowledge that. There's still a
10 lot of work to be done. And they're on a good path,
11 but they're not there yet. So that is a concern.

12 There is a concern regarding debt, so let me
13 talk you through this because this is a big one and
14 this impacts both the two. So, right now, for
15 facilities for Marvell-Elaine they have about a
16 \$4,000,000 facilities debt. Okay. Right now, they
17 pull in enough local revenue to pay their debt
18 service payment each month. So their local revenue
19 with the community of Elaine and the community of
20 Marvell, with their mills, they pay -- they bring in
21 enough money to pay that payment. So if it was a
22 consolidation with Barton alone, there would be
23 enough local revenue brought in to actually pay the
24 payment for the debt. The concern here is if you
25 split the community and the Elaine students go to

1 Barton, there's no facilities in that area in which
2 there is debt. So Barton would get zero debt, but
3 they would take the local revenue from the students
4 in the community that's going to their school.
5 Helena would get the Marvell community, in which this
6 is where these facilities are, and that is where the
7 debt is. And so they would take the local revenue
8 from this region. It's probably not enough to
9 actually cover the debt service payment and that is a
10 big concern. It would be a big concern for either
11 district taking on this area, so that's another
12 negative or concern to think about. It is 17 miles
13 from Marvell High School to Helena-West Helena High
14 School, so we're well within -- you know, range-wise,
15 even if we go past the Marvell community, you're not
16 going to get over 40 for this community traveling to
17 Helena, about 21 minutes. That's not on a bus,
18 that's driving in a car. Helena-West Helena has
19 expressed that they would probably, most likely close
20 these campuses. They would like to use them or
21 consider exploring possibilities for an ALE, CTE
22 pathway, doing some career technical things. They
23 wouldn't just want them to sit here; they'd want to
24 figure out something to do with them. But as far as
25 the students staying on this campus, most likely they

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would close.

Third option, Barton and Lee County. You're going to see several of the same pros and cons. And here is the map that shows what that would look like. You can see Helena on here. They would not be a part of the consolidation, but you can just see where they're located. The Elaine community, again, they would go to Barton because of the mileage. And this is one of the points -- when Mr. Stone actually met with Dr. Ray, they drove around the whole district because in the beginning Mr. Stone was like, "We can take them all. We've got room. We can do this." And then when they really drove to the far south end of Elaine community he said, "There's no way a kid can be on a bus from here all the way up to there." You're talking over an hour, easily. So there was -- so that -- the split part, of the Marvell community going, wasn't as big a concern. Several Elaine community students already go to Barton; I've said that. Lee County is a contiguous district, where Helena-West Helena is not. You're driving through one to get to another. Same county, but not side-by-side. Lee is side-by-side, different county. Lee County is equipped to be able to take on the number of students from Marvell as far as like hiring

1 additional staff is not an overload. Some of their
2 classes already have space to be able to add extra
3 students. They would have to add FCEs, but not --
4 it's not like putting in a whole school. And that
5 was the same for Helena.

6 Some of the concerns -- Lee County is also a
7 district in need of Level 5 support and under State
8 authority. They do not currently have a board. So
9 we've done this before as a board where we annex a
10 district with a district who didn't have a board, and
11 there was very hard community feelings about that.
12 You know, it was one of those things -- every time I
13 stand before you with these things I hope we learn
14 from our past and we think about that as we move
15 forward. So that's something for this board to
16 consider: they do not have a board, we are their
17 board. There is a concern regarding the debt. The
18 miles from the elementary to the elementary is 23
19 miles. The high school is -- I think it was 21.
20 They are in two different counties and that was
21 expressed as a concern by the county tax collector/
22 assessor. And they too indicated that they most
23 likely would close this campus.

24 So those were the three scenarios for
25 consolidation. There is not a winner in any of the

1 three options. I do think you have some that may be
2 -- if you're going to pick one, there's some that I
3 would say this may be the most logical one. And we
4 can get into that conversation later. Okay. But to
5 me, those are the three options that if you were
6 going to continue on with the path of consolidation
7 those would be the three to consider.

8 I'm going to pause at that point before I move
9 on to the next part of it.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Mr. Sutton.

11 MS. SMITH: Steve -- Mr. Sutton.

12 MR. SUTTON: Do you happen to know what the
13 current outstanding debt is for Marvell-Elaine?

14 MS. SMITH: It's about \$4,000,000.

15 MS. SMITH: And Eric is here to -- he's got some
16 more of the specifics on the financials.

17 MR. SUTTON: I'm sorry?

18 MS. SMITH: Dr. Saunders is here. He can go
19 into more specifics, if needed. But it's around
20 \$4,000,000.

21 MR. SUTTON: And the current student count is --

22 MS. SMITH: Three hundred and --

23 SUPT. RAY: 306.

24 MS. SMITH: 306.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Can you tell me how the

1 millage rates compare within the three districts?

2 MS. SMITH: Yes, I can. So the millage rate for
3 Lee County is 28.3; the millage rate for Helena-West
4 Helena is 43.8; for Barton it's 41.5; and for
5 Marvell-Elaine it is 33.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

7 MS. SMITH: So let me --

8 DR. HILL: Stacy.

9 MS. SMITH: Yes?

10 DR. HILL: Would there be any -- would there be
11 any possibility for any --

12 [MIC REVERB]

13 MS. SMITH: I'll repeat it.

14 DR. HILL: Would there be any possibility for
15 any Covid debt relief on any type of outstanding debt
16 for the buildings or anything like that? Because
17 that has happened throughout the country.

18 MS. SMITH: So Dr. Hill's question was is there
19 a possibility of Covid relief funds to be used for
20 debt. I don't think so. That would be a question --
21 I think because it's not directly related to Covid.
22 There is definitely some things that we could
23 investigate a little bit -- if today we stick with
24 consolidation and I ask for that week to make sure
25 I'm interpreting the law correctly and we make sure

1 the mileage piece is right, that is something I will
2 look into.

3 Mr. Wood.

4 MR. WOOD: Stacy, in -- as you were explaining
5 the history as we get to where we are today, we kind
6 of skipped over the part between December's meeting
7 and today's meeting where the local community had an
8 opportunity to work on their own consolidation plan
9 or plan to avoid State Board action. What of these
10 options was considered by the local community prior
11 to today, when they had the opportunity to do it?
12 And what were --

13 MS. SMITH: So --

14 MR. WOOD: -- the results of those?

15 MS. SMITH: Yeah. So, and Dr. Ray in a minute
16 is going to come up. You'll be able to ask her
17 specific questions. I'm going to paraphrase what I
18 believe happened, and then when it's time for
19 questioning you can come up and she can go deeper.
20 But I am aware that she made arrangements and met
21 with the different superintendents from around the
22 region. I know she did tours for those that were --
23 they went on some tours of the region to, you know,
24 see what the -- how far it is to the Elaine
25 community. They went over finances together. In the

1 end, the Marvell-Elaine school board did not come up
2 with a recommendation to the State Board. So when
3 they talked about different folks, I think one thing
4 they felt strongly about -- and, again, I'll let them
5 make sure that this is accurate -- they felt strongly
6 that they wanted the Marvell and Elaine communities
7 to stay together.

8 Is that fair, that they wanted the kids to stay
9 together?

10 That was kind of a conversation that went on. A
11 lot of times when that conversation happened it was
12 "I'm not sure we can take everybody." And so they
13 never came to an agreement with another district.
14 Because, again, this is -- what we're talking about
15 was happening to these schools, this is going to have
16 an impact on another community as well. And so
17 during that time period it was about the two
18 communities working together, two school boards
19 working together to say can we come up with a
20 solution that we both agree on, and that did not
21 happen.

22 MR. WOOD: Were all of these options considered
23 by the local board?

24 MS. SMITH: I'd have to let them answer that
25 question. So I can pause now and we can go to

1 questions, if you want to, or I can keep going
2 through my presentation.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Let's go ahead and go through
4 all of it, and then we'll -- we can come back to the
5 board questions. I think that will work better.

6 MS. SMITH: Yeah. I don't want to answer for
7 their boards or for their folks.

8 All right. So now I want to -- earlier, when I
9 showed you different things to consider,
10 consolidation was one of the things to consider.
11 Since then, we've had Arkansas Learns which is
12 legislation that has been recently passed. It is the
13 Governor's landmark educational policy that was
14 passed this session. And there is an opportunity in
15 Arkansas Learns that could benefit this community, if
16 this board so chooses to go that direction.

17 I'm sorry. There's not a lot of room up here.
18 Sorry, guys.

19 So Arkansas Learns allows the Department of
20 Education to use this option to actually do -- go
21 into what we call a Transformation Contract with a
22 third-party entity. Okay. This was not an option
23 for you to even consider in December. What a
24 Transformation Contract is -- and, again, this was
25 signed in an emergency bill that was passed and

1 signed in March; so this literally has just happened.
2 A Transformation Contract would allow the school
3 district, the board -- local school district board or
4 the Commissioner of Education to enter into a
5 contract with a third-party entity. To be eligible
6 to go into a contract like this, the school district
7 has to have a D or F rating, which the district does,
8 and they have -- or they have to be classified in
9 Level 5, which the district is. It gives them the
10 opportunity to contract -- to partner with a
11 governing body of an open-enrollment charter or
12 another entity approved by the State Board.

13 Now at this point we don't have a long list of
14 other entities approved by the State Board because
15 this is all moving very quickly. Okay. But we do
16 have open-enrollment charter organizations,
17 management organizations; we do have educational
18 cooperatives in the state. We did not go out and ask
19 for proposals. But I will tell you I've had three
20 different options or proposals sent in saying we want
21 to work with the Marvell-Elaine School District. One
22 was by a charter. Another was a proposal by two co-
23 ops working together to say, "Hey, we want to try to
24 do something, we want to try to help," and that came
25 out of organically them being here and being in the

1 buildings. And another was a community organization
2 that sent in a letter saying, hey, we have some ideas
3 that we would like you guys to consider. I think
4 that's promising.

5 Do we need to stop? Okay.

6 (PBS I.T. WORKS ON MICROPHONES)

7 MS. SMITH: So there is -- I will tell you the
8 fact that we had people reaching out to us when we
9 were considering or when we were vetting the
10 different consolidation options, and seeing that
11 every one of them had some serious concerns, seeing
12 that there were people proactively reaching out to us
13 saying, "Hey, we want to do something" was actually
14 pretty refreshing because it gave us, I think, some
15 other options for this board to consider that
16 actually pay attention to some of the things that you
17 heard by community members at the last State Board
18 meeting. One of the opportunities that was put forth
19 by a charter came from listening to community members
20 at the last State Board meeting and folks meeting
21 together afterwards on their own. It's the
22 opportunity that some of -- I think -- I feel like
23 some people feel like this has given them an
24 opportunity for voice and some more opportunities for
25 choice. So let me kind of talk you through some

1 other things there.

2 If the Board decided to go down this route --
3 and I think I'm talking pretty vague, so I'm going to
4 be a little bit more specific. Okay?

5 [MICROPHONE CUTS OUT]

6 MS. SMITH: I'm almost kissing it. Okay. My
7 lips are touching it. That feels weird. All right.

8 So if the Board chooses to go down this route
9 you would have to rescind your previous vote not to
10 grant the Act 60 waiver. You then would have to vote
11 to grant the original petition to waive the
12 consolidation requirement. So you would be un-doing
13 what you did back in November and December. The
14 district would still be classified in need of Level 5
15 support. Even throughout this Transformation
16 Contract, we still are short on time. We are still
17 short -- there are still concerns about staffing.

18 [MIC CUTS OUT]

19 MS. SMITH: There's still concern about
20 staffing. But it does give some opportunity for us
21 to lengthen the timeline a little bit and try to put
22 some more supports around a possible proposal.

23 So as the Board what do you need to consider?

24 For Learns, it's a new option for a
25 Transformational Contract. It is listening to

1 stakeholders. It is encouraging parent empowerment.
2 The district would remain in Level 5 support;
3 therefore, our office would still be supporting
4 directly. It does keep the district open. It would
5 use the current facilities. It would allow the local
6 revenue to stay within the Marvell-Elaine community;
7 so the debt that we talked about earlier wouldn't be
8 split. And it still allows school choice to be an
9 option. So if we went with a third-party charter
10 management organization or a co-op plan or something
11 different, and a parent decided in this community
12 that that wasn't for them, they'd still have the
13 option to school-choice because that path is open and
14 they could go to one of the other surrounding school
15 districts.

16 Yes, sir?

17 MR. SUTTON: I'm sure there would be costs for
18 that contract. Who pays?

19 MS. SMITH: The Marvell-Elaine School District's
20 budget would be the one covering that contract.

21 So I do want to say this, because I don't want
22 people to go -- there's some false hope here, we're
23 going to keep it all. All right. There has to be a
24 transformative change in this district. What is
25 currently happening in the classrooms is not okay.

1 We are not providing the kids the education that they
2 deserve. So if we went with this Transformational
3 Contract, the Board -- I would recommend to the Board
4 -- the Department would recommend to the Board that
5 we would dissolve their board. We would keep them in
6 capacity in an advisory model for the remainder of
7 the year. We've got seven, eight weeks left of
8 school. There was no assumption through a
9 consolidation that the board would stay intact, so I
10 don't feel like this would be -- you know, nobody was
11 expecting the board to stay in place. But I do
12 believe the board members -- I do believe the
13 community members want to have a voice, they want to
14 be heard, they want to be listened to; so I would
15 hope that we would assume authority over the
16 district. So right now they're classified in Level
17 5, so let me make that distinction for you. You have
18 not assumed authority over this district. So while I
19 have support here helping in classrooms, we do not
20 direct the day-to-day operations of this district.
21 Dr. Ray does not answer to me. Okay. The board does
22 not answer to me and the OCSS. And when I say "to
23 me," I'm saying that as the State's plan, the OCSS.
24 Okay. I offer support and we work alongside each
25 other. Okay. So if this were to happen today, the

1 ask would be to assume authority and appoint the
2 Commissioner as the board.

3 Under this same plan, I will tell you there is
4 still concerns about can we staff the school. I have
5 had a meeting, about an hour-and-a-half, with a
6 charter organization that has actually done public
7 meetings in the community. They on their own have
8 taken it and run. I think there has been some
9 thought or comment that there's this -- this deal
10 already done, and there's not. In my conversations
11 with them, they said, "We want to be up and ready to
12 go if this is -- if we're allowed to do this."
13 They're already out recruiting staff, if this were to
14 happen. So I do think there is an option there with
15 a charter management company to come in and do this.
16 There still would have to be support provided and the
17 State would continue to do that.

18 On the consolidation side, what do you do? It
19 might address the staffing concerns, because these
20 other districts do have the staff to pull in the
21 kids. A lot of their staff though are not licensed
22 as well. It still provides school choice as an
23 option; however, we would be looking at closing of
24 this building. We would be consolidating this school
25 district with two other districts that are

1 struggling. Then there's also the debt concern and
2 the board concern.

3 So if there was a recommendation from the
4 Department today it would be to go with the
5 Transformation Contract and to direct the
6 Commissioner to look into that. So that would be --
7 that would be our recommendation today.

8 MR. HENDERSON: Hey, Stacy, I have a question.
9 One thing we haven't talked about with Arkansas
10 Learns' Transformation Contract, what is the timeline
11 on that?

12 MS. SMITH: So his question was what was the
13 timeline on a Transformation Contract. What we would
14 probably look at would be a three-year contract to
15 begin with. The district is classified in Level 5,
16 which you guys classified them in -- I believe it was
17 December; so the five-year time period started then.
18 We would not want to go into a contract with someone
19 that exceeded that five years. All right. But
20 within that two to three year proposal, three
21 probably makes more sense. That's probably what we
22 would be initially looking at. And then the Board
23 would then have to determine at some point is it
24 working, is it not working, do we need to continue
25 down this path, do we need to look at another option.

1 MR. HENDERSON: And two-fold, if the Board -- if
2 we decided to go with let's say the West Helena-
3 Helena consolidation option, which is currently Level
4 5, we could very well end back up in this same stance
5 at a later date?

6 MS. SMITH: Right. Mr. Henderson said if we
7 went with the consolidation option of Helena-West
8 Helena, who's also in Level 5 right now, we could end
9 up in this same state. And I agree.

10 There -- again, I can't say that any of these
11 options are perfect -- one, because we're on a very
12 tight timeline. If we do a Transformation Contract,
13 it will be very quick. But we have to do something
14 different in these classrooms for next school year.
15 We cannot -- we cannot continue --

16 This is off again.

17 We cannot continue to do what we're doing now.

18 MS. WOODS: What if we get to a point where they
19 can't afford the third-party contract?

20 MS. SMITH: What if we get to a point where they
21 can't afford the third-party contract. So that's
22 within -- I mean, that's within the contract
23 negotiations. Okay. I think the promising piece
24 here is that these third-party entities have reached
25 out to us to say, "We want to be a part of this."

1 Most of the time, especially with charters, they're
2 not pulling in local revenue. In this case, this
3 would not be a charter school; this would be the
4 Marvell-Elaine School District in a contract with a
5 management organization facilitating the school.

6 MS. SAUM: Can I ask what would happen to
7 existing staff contracts for next year if that
8 charter organization stepped in, like teachers and --

9 MS. SMITH: Most likely, they would all have to
10 reapply.

11 MS. SAUM: Okay. Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So I want to make sure that we
13 understand. This third-party would not be called a
14 charter. It would still be the Marvell-Elaine
15 district. They would get the millage rate, property
16 tax. Everything would be like a -- what we call a
17 normal district; it would be just run by a third-
18 party?

19 MS. SMITH: The board for the Marvell-Elaine
20 School District, if you were to appoint the
21 Commissioner, would be the Commissioner. And then
22 that would be going into a contract with the charter
23 organization or a third-party entity. Yeah.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Whoever that third-party is?

25 MS. SMITH: Yes.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So the third-party would run
2 it, but -- and he would be the board. But everything
3 else would still be the Marvell-Elaine district?

4 MS. SMITH: Yes. And all those points would
5 have to be -- all those points would have to be --
6 all those points would --

7 (PODIUM MIC CUTTING OUT; MIC IS REPLACED)

8 SECRETARY OLIVA: You've got to turn it on.

9 MS. SMITH: Can you hear me?

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ewww, yeah.

11 MS. SMITH: Okay. Maybe you can hear me. I
12 don't know if this is going to work. Is this
13 working?

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Do you want to -- do you want
15 to try -- never-mind, my mic is not working now. Do
16 you want to try -- I'd give you this one, if it
17 works, but it's not working either.

18 MS. SMITH: So let me say this real loud and
19 then we can -- while they're -- you think it's
20 working? Okay. Thank you.

21 So I can't even remember what the last question
22 was.

23 I don't think it's working.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: It was talking about the board
25 and it still being Marvell-Elaine.

1 MS. SMITH: Right. So it would still be the
2 Marvell-Elaine School District that would contract
3 with a third-party entity. This legislation --
4 Arkansas Learns actually allows any school district
5 in the state to do that. So if there is a school
6 district in the state that has a D or F in one of
7 their schools, this would allow them the opportunity
8 to --

9 (PODIUM MIC IS CUTTING IN AND OUT)

10 MS. SMITH: Do you want to take a break and get
11 this fixed?

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah. It's not just the mic;
13 it's the system.

14 MS. SMITH: Yeah.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. So why
16 don't we take a break and we'll try to get this issue
17 figured out and come back -- what time is it? It's
18 five after eleven, and we'll come back about 11:20.
19 That should give us time to work this issue out and
20 get us going again. How about that? Does that work?

21 MS. SMITH: Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

23 (BREAK: 11:06 a.m. - 11:23 a.m.)

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Are y'all ready? We
25 appreciate your patience in helping us get the kinks

1 worked out. You can imagine getting a microphone
2 system in here and getting it to live-stream to the
3 rest of the state.

4 (MANY AUDIENCE MEMBERS STILL TALKING IN THE GYMNASIUM)

5 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hey! We need everybody to
6 find a seat.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I want to say a quick thank-
8 you to the ones that are our technical assistants
9 this morning. You can imagine getting a microphone
10 system to do what we're doing, and then plus also
11 live-streaming it to the rest of the state. It is a
12 big issue and I want to say thank you to all of them
13 because they have worked diligently today and we
14 appreciate their efforts and their hard work. So
15 thank you to them.

16 And so, Ms. Smith, I think we hopefully got all
17 the kinks worked out, so we're ready to --

18 MS. SMITH: Okay.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: -- begin again.

20 MS. SMITH: Thank you. I will say the County
21 Assessor, Mr. Ryan Turner -- Turner, is that right?
22 -- came up to me during the break and he said, "Are
23 we" -- this is his question, "Are we just kicking the
24 can down the road?" And here's the things we have to
25 consider when we're doing this. This region needs a

1 long-term plan that is more than just the school's.
2 And we -- there needs to be time to establish a 10-
3 year, 15-, 20-year plan on what this looks like --
4 really digging into the data and making sure that
5 we've got a framework in place to make sure that
6 we're doing the right thing. But what I do know is
7 when we have a school that's not meeting the needs of
8 our students today, currently, we can't wait 10 years
9 to figure that out. And I was very -- I hope that
10 when I delivered the presentation in November I
11 expressed my concerns for the instruction going on in
12 this school and the struggles that they were facing.

13 So today, Board, you have to decide between do
14 we move forward with a consolidation -- and the
15 Department does believe that there are some problems
16 with that, specifically around the debt, specifically
17 around consolidating with other districts who are
18 struggling. Our recommendation to the Board would be
19 to do a Transformation Contract. It would be done
20 very, very fast. That too has its obstacles and
21 problems. Either way, we -- our unit, our department
22 is willing to roll up our sleeves and do what has to
23 be done to support whatever decision this board
24 makes. I do think that the Arkansas Learns
25 opportunity does allow and does listen to what the

1 stakeholders in this region were asking for. So I
2 say that, but I also say it has to be a
3 transformational change and we can't continue to do
4 what we've been doing and just call it something
5 different. But with that, if this is something we
6 do, we have to make a 10-year plan. We have to. If
7 enrollment continues to decline in the region, as it
8 has been, we have to -- we have to have a bigger
9 conversation about what that looks like and do our
10 current legislation and policies benefit what we're
11 trying to do. If this Transformational Contract
12 works -- you know, a lot of folks -- when you look at
13 the consolidation laws, it says administrative
14 consolidation. But financially it's not always
15 feasible to keep those buildings open and just
16 consolidate; so you see buildings closing down. So
17 there's things there to talk about. But there's not
18 current legislation or policy to support any
19 conversation on that right now, today. So there's --
20 so I'm going to challenge the region that they need
21 to come together and start looking at how it looks
22 long-term. And I know they've got folks working on
23 that.

24 So I'm going to pause here to see if the Board
25 has any further questions for me. And then we have

1 local area superintendents; we have the board from
2 Marvell-Elaine School District -- the whole board is
3 here, actually, if they have any comments or
4 questions, as well.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So let me give the
6 Board a little bit of direction here.

7 We have representatives from, you said, Marvell-
8 Elaine -- superintendent and board; and
9 representatives from Barton, Lee County, and Helena-
10 West Helena here. Also, if you have questions about
11 the third-party, what you would need to say in that
12 question would be if you have things that you would
13 like the Department to address, things that you're
14 concerned about that you would want to make sure that
15 were in a third-party contract, then you would
16 address those to Secretary Oliva and Ms. Smith to
17 make sure that they thought about that when they were
18 talking to the different third-parties that might
19 enter into a contract about Marvell-Elaine. Does
20 that make sense on directions that your questions
21 might go, Board?

22 MR. WOOD: Yes.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Anybody?

24 Okay. All right. So, Dr. Moore, we'll start
25 with you. Do you have any questions for any --

1 DR. MOORE: I think I'll start with Stacy, if
2 that's okay. Does this work? Is it on? Okay.

3 Thank you for the presentation today. I know
4 this is hard [mic cut out]. This is hard. And thank
5 you to community for having us here [mic cut out].

6 Would you pass that down?

7 When we're looking at these options -- as I'm
8 thinking about what this Transformational Contract
9 looks like, I would like a little bit more details
10 around it. If we're looking at, you know, community
11 -- a wonderful community that has a lot of challenges
12 with academic performance, are those things -- lack
13 of opportunity in career and technical education,
14 afterschool, summer care opportunities for students
15 -- are those types of things that will be included in
16 a contract? What does that conversation look like as
17 y'all are discussing?

18 MS. SMITH: Good question. Very good question.
19 You know, one of the things for me, and I know for
20 Secretary Oliva that he has pointed out, was at the
21 last State Board meeting it was the community folks
22 who said we're going to show up and we're going to be
23 there and we're going to support these other things
24 that need to happen. I know there's been questions
25 around will there be sports, will there be this -- I

1 can't answer any of those questions today. That
2 would all have to be outlined in the contract. I can
3 tell you our number one priority setting up for the
4 contract for education would be on the academics and
5 making sure that our classrooms are staffed, making
6 sure that we have quality curriculum and instruction
7 going and that there's a way to measure that. So
8 those would be some of the number one priorities that
9 we would be looking at. We would be expecting the
10 community -- because we're trying -- this is an
11 effort to listen to what the community asks for. We
12 would be expecting the community to show up and do
13 their part. So if that means that there needs to be
14 assistance with outside activities -- because when
15 you talk about the tiered systems of support and what
16 are other things that make a quality community and --
17 there's lots of things, but it's the community's
18 maybe responsibility to provide some of those things.
19 The school alone can't fix what's happening
20 throughout the whole region. It takes the entire
21 community to be a part of that.

22 So I know I can't give a lot of detail about the
23 -- so when we -- when -- if the decision of this
24 board is to move that direction, we will literally
25 say we need to call the proposals; we'll sit down and

1 we'll meet with each of the proposals and we'll look
2 at who is best situated to come in here and be able
3 to start school next year, meeting academic needs of
4 students first and then hitting some of those other
5 items.

6 DR. MOORE: Like when you're looking --
7 obviously, as you stated, one of the large challenges
8 in this whole region is staffing and finding
9 teachers, and finding teachers who will stay long-
10 term. Your agency has been working with looking at
11 teacher salaries. Where are we around that? What is
12 that conversation looking like? Will there -- there
13 won't be waivers from that?

14 MS. SMITH: No. The expectation for this school
15 district's teacher salaries that remains under a
16 Transformation Contract would be a beginning salary
17 of \$50,000. That was outlined within the Arkansas
18 Learns legislation, so there's no waiver for that.
19 And, again, this would be the Marvell-Elaine Public
20 School District going into a contract with a third-
21 party.

22 DR. MOORE: And that third-party would then come
23 to us for waivers for licensure, other things, just
24 like a regular district would?

25 MS. SMITH: Those would be outlined in the

1 contract that this board then would approve. We
2 would be bringing that back to you.

3 DR. MOORE: Okay. We -- looking -- you know,
4 looking at, again, back to academics, students aren't
5 performing in literacy where we are. What type of
6 supports do you envision the agency to provide or a
7 third-party to provide to really dig down and get
8 students to reach their full potential?

9 MS. SMITH: Good question. And I'm going to
10 actually talk a little bit about other districts that
11 are in this region. So we've got Dr. Stone here, or
12 Michael Stone, and we've got Keith McGee -- Helena-
13 West Helena and Lee County. And when we talk about
14 the support going into those districts and what we've
15 done, it would be similar here. One, we would expect
16 the third-party to have a curriculum aligned to the
17 Science of Reading. We would expect those teachers
18 to be -- they would be receiving the literacy
19 coaching support that any school district in the
20 state that has a D or F would be receiving; so they
21 would have a direct coach that's directly working
22 with them. At any time the accountability piece --
23 and this is something, Mr. Wood, we have visited
24 about on -- if we're pushing people in for direct
25 coaching and folks aren't following through, what are

1 the next steps. And so this would be the same
2 situation here. You know, I do believe that there is
3 opportunity under the current way this school is
4 structured for some efficiency pieces, and that is
5 something you saw that we did in Helena-West Helena.
6 We changed people's positions around; we looked at
7 license; we moved things around. We've done that in
8 some of our other districts too, and found people
9 that have license that could be back in the
10 classroom. So there are opportunities, I think, for
11 this school district to do something similar.

12 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

13 MS. McFETRIDGE: Ms. Smith, I know you've talked
14 about a charter school that's very interested. Can
15 you share the name of the charter school? And also,
16 how successful have they been with their charters?

17 MS. SMITH: So the charter school that expressed
18 interest that has hosted community meetings in the
19 region is Friendship Charter. So as we move forward
20 with -- if we move forward with a Transformational
21 Contract, we would really almost -- I mean, if you
22 guys make that decision today we would pretty much
23 kind of do an all-call; if there's anyone who's
24 interested that wants to be a part of this, let us
25 know. Friendship has been proactive in -- and,

1 again, that came out of the meeting at the last State
2 Board meeting. And I heard about it just because
3 there were tours happening and community meetings
4 happening. I picked up the phone and called and
5 said, "What's going on?" And they then sent me a
6 letter of intent that they would like to pursue
7 something.

8 MS. McFETRIDGE: Can you talk to us about how
9 successful they have been in other areas?

10 MS. SMITH: So I don't have a whole lot of depth
11 on them today. I think if they were the ones to get
12 the Transformational charter [sic], when we come back
13 at the next State Board meeting we would actually
14 share their success and where else they've been. But
15 I do know that they have some schools right now that
16 are like a C.

17 MS. McFETRIDGE: But your concern really,
18 keeping the teaching staff here?

19 MS. SMITH: We are considering -- it would be
20 keeping the building open here.

21 MS. McFETRIDGE: Okay.

22 MS. SMITH: It would not necessarily be keeping
23 the current teaching staff here. Those teachers
24 would have to apply, probably under any
25 Transformational Contract that we would enter into.

1 MS. McFETRIDGE: Okay.

2 MS. SMITH: And, again, you know, while
3 Friendship has reached out and showed intent, there
4 is -- there is no done-deal. Okay. I will say, for
5 credit on their part, they're being proactive and
6 pursuing an opportunity and saying "we want to
7 partner." But we have not sat down and negotiated
8 any type of contract.

9 MS. McFETRIDGE: Okay. I think my concern, too,
10 is really building capacity for the current staff and
11 just trying to keep as many staff people here from
12 the community in this community, if at all possible.

13 MS. SMITH: I -- if -- if we're meeting the
14 needs of students.

15 MS. McFETRIDGE: Right.

16 MS. SMITH: So the first priority is to be able
17 to put the best person in the classroom with our
18 students -- the best people with the students. Just
19 because you're a current employee doesn't mean you're
20 going to be guaranteed a job; you would have to
21 interview. If you are the best person for the
22 position, then I -- but, again, this would be up to
23 the third-party entity on who they're hiring. Stacy
24 Smith wouldn't be hiring; Secretary Oliva on that
25 piece wouldn't be hiring.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Smith, am I correct
2 though, no matter which one of these options we went
3 with, whether it was a third-party or it was a
4 consolidation, the teachers would have to reapply in
5 all of those situations? Would that be fair?

6 MS. SMITH: Yes.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right.

8 MR. WOOD: If we were to follow this new model
9 of a Transformation Contract, who is in charge of
10 what when it comes to Secretary -- it would be
11 Commissioner Oliva and the third-party organization?
12 Mr. Oliva would be, by law, the school board and he
13 would have entered into a management contract. Who
14 gets to make the decisions in that situation?

15 MS. SMITH: The board. So it would be -- if you
16 assumed authority and made the Commissioner the board
17 or if you left the current board in place -- so the
18 board would negotiate that contract.

19 MR. WOOD: Sure, about the contract. But I
20 guess I mean who decides whether there's a basketball
21 team or who decides whether there's a CTE program or
22 who decides -- who makes the decision?

23 MS. SMITH: Again, it would go back to who is
24 serving as the board.

25 MR. WOOD: Okay. So, Commissioner --

1 MS. SMITH: Yes.

2 MR. WOOD: -- Oliva?

3 MS. SMITH: Uh-huh. Whoever is serving --

4 MR. WOOD: As the board.

5 MS. SMITH: -- as the board would be negotiating
6 that and making those decisions with the third-party
7 entity.

8 MR. WOOD: So is the third-party entity
9 essentially stepping into the shoes of like a
10 superintendent type of a role, where they recommend
11 to the board to make a decision, and the board then
12 gets to decide whether to follow that path or not and
13 empower?

14 MS. SMITH: So we still have the law -- so this
15 would still be the Marvell-Elaine School District.
16 They would have to adhere to the laws set forth for
17 all of our K-12 schools in the state. They would
18 have a superintendent, unless they came before and
19 asked for a waiver of that. Okay. So they're still
20 under the same rules and requirements that any other
21 K-12 would be a part of. Some of the decision points
22 in the contract, if I can -- like who's providing
23 food service, who's running transportation, who's
24 over the academics, who's choosing the curriculum --
25 like all of those fine points on the day-to-day

1 operations of what a school looks like, we're going
2 to have to see who is in the best position to do all
3 of those things. So when I say that we had a
4 cooperative reach out to say, "Hey, we want to help,"
5 they were best-positioned to help in the area of
6 academics. I'm not sure that they could all of a
7 sudden take over the day-to-day busing; like I'm not
8 sure that they're positioned to do that. And so,
9 again, for us, we would have to be considering all of
10 those factors on who can be up, who can be running by
11 July 1, so that when we open our doors we're doing
12 what's best academically for students.

13 MR. WOOD: So it sounds to me, if this is a fair
14 summary, that we are not -- if we were to follow that
15 model, we would not simply be contracting with
16 someone else to come in and just take over and do
17 what you want to do; there would be some
18 accountability back to Mr. Oliva and then kind of
19 indirectly to us?

20 MS. SMITH: Yes. And there's going to be
21 measurement markers in there; there's expectations.
22 And when I say there's not one of these that's
23 perfect, there's not a single one of these options
24 we're providing today that's perfect. Okay. I think
25 this gives us the most opportunity to do something

1 different than we've ever done before. Okay. Right
2 now, if we consolidate, we're moving you down the
3 road, unless you consolidate all with Barton. Okay.
4 But then we talked about some of the concerns around
5 that. If we divide you up, we're working with other
6 districts who are struggling. Okay. And I would
7 argue that -- and I would let Mr. Guthrie say this
8 for himself when he comes up -- the Barton School
9 District has -- they're on a path of progress right
10 now, as well. But they have also had their
11 struggles. So it's a regional -- we need a regional
12 plan. But we've got to figure out what's the best
13 plan for this group of students, 306 kids, for the
14 fall.

15 DR. HILL: Thank you. You've done a good job
16 explaining it to me.

17 MS. SMITH: Thank you, Coach.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: If you got Dr. Hill's
19 approval, you've done a good job.

20 MS. SMITH: Listen, I'm good. When I get done
21 I'm going to turn around and bow again and these
22 people back here are going to go crazy and he'll be
23 good.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

25 MR. HENDERSON: Stacy, I'd like to co-sign on

1 that. You have done a really good job.

2 I want to reflect back to a comment you made
3 earlier about the consolidation of Helena and Barton.
4 If we were to do that, you mentioned that one of the
5 proposals that was made was perhaps having a CTE
6 program. My question would be if we do decide to go
7 with the Transformational Contract, does that same
8 CTE opportunity exist in that?

9 MS. SMITH: So one of the promising things, I
10 think, for this region is you do have superintendents
11 who are talking together about opportunities that
12 they can provide. I know you've been very involved
13 in areas of the state around CTE. So when we talk
14 about a long-range plan and what that looks like, I
15 think that's all a part of the conversation. Each of
16 our districts, even the ones that we work with very
17 closely, they're all trying to improve those areas.
18 But we would expect anyone that we do a
19 Transformation Contract with to be part of the
20 conversation and be at the table. So we've got to
21 leverage each other's resources in the region in
22 creating pathways that we're sharing with each other
23 and giving opportunities. And so if this were to
24 happen with the Transformation Contract, I would
25 expect whoever we're working with to be working with

1 the other area superintendents and be part of it.

2 MR. HENDERSON: You know, when I think of
3 Arkansas Learns, you know, I can't help but think of,
4 you know, obviously, Workforce Educational
5 Development. And, fundamentally, I think that if we
6 do the contract that it's not an option; the CTE has
7 to be part of it.

8 MS. SMITH: Thank you.

9 MR. SUTTON: Also, good job, Stacy.

10 I would like to see us come up with the option
11 that maintains the buildings and the students on --
12 as they exist today and we employ our sources to fix
13 it, get it back on track. You know, schools mean so
14 much to the community. I'm a big supporter of that,
15 as are other people.

16 MS. WOODS: Stacy, would it be appropriate to
17 have -- is anybody from Friendship here?

18 MS. SMITH: They are. However, I think we
19 probably need to -- because there's not a -- there's
20 not -- there's not a contract there. So if the State
21 Board decides to direct us to do a Transformational
22 Contract that could be several different vendors --

23 MS. WOODS: Sure.

24 MS. SMITH: -- or opportunities. And so I think
25 that would be something we'd have to bring back to

1 you.

2 MS. WOODS: Okay. So just asking why they would
3 be interested is premature?

4 MS. SMITH: Probably.

5 MS. WOODS: Okay. That's fine.

6 And I'll just echo I think you've done a
7 fantastic job, as always.

8 MS. SAUM: I'm pretty sure I know the answer to
9 this. But just to be sure, this would be the first
10 school -- first district that would be part of this
11 Transformational Contract. Correct? There has not
12 been another place that we've --

13 MS. SMITH: We'd be blazing a trail.

14 MS. SAUM: Okay. All right. Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions from the
16 Board?

17 MS. SMITH: Okay. Again, we have area
18 superintendents and you have the board of Marvell-
19 Elaine School District and administration here if you
20 have any questions for any of those. And if not --
21 and, again, I don't know if you -- we have public
22 comments, so I don't know if you even want to give
23 the opportunity for comment as far as for those folks
24 that are here.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I think it would probably be

1 appropriate to let the -- each district, if they had
2 something they wanted to add to the conversation.

3 MS. SMITH: So that would be up to them.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. I want to let them --
5 see if anyone from Marvell-Elaine, superintendent or
6 board, had something you wanted to add to the
7 conversation. Mr. Williams?

8 MS. SMITH: Mr. Williams, board president.

9 SUPT. RAY: He's right here.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: He's right here.

11 MS. SMITH: Did you want to make any comments or
12 are you okay?

13 MR. WILLIAMS: No, I'm fine. If the board wants
14 to -- I'm fine.

15 MS. SMITH: Okay.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

17 MS. SMITH: Dr. Ray?

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Dr. Ray?

19 SUPT. RAY: Let me again say thank you all for
20 coming down today. It means a lot not only to this
21 community but to the educators here on campus for you
22 all to be here to make this huge decision.

23 I'm going to reiterate what the board has stated
24 throughout. Let me, first of all, say thank you to
25 the board for their work. They work tirelessly.

1 They do. They are the elected officials here. But
2 the one thing that they have said on numerous
3 occasions is that they wanted to keep the communities
4 together. They've also said, you know, that they
5 will do, you know, whatever it takes in order for
6 that to happen, and it sounds like we're possibly
7 going in that direction and that's what they wanted.
8 And so I'm going to, again, stand before you to say
9 that, you know, with this new opportunity I'd like
10 for us to be just open-minded about giving them an
11 opportunity to remain in place, because now we're
12 getting some options; we're getting the support and
13 the help that I asked for nine months ago, and we do
14 appreciate that. But, again, I said because this is
15 new and innovative that this would be a time that we
16 consider all options. And so, like I said, we do
17 appreciate you all being here and the work that --
18 again, I just wanted to recognize them for the work
19 that they have put in over this past year. And for
20 many of them, they've been on the board for many
21 years. So I just wanted to publicly say thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you.

23 If there's someone from Barton that would like
24 to add something to the conversation?

25 MS. SMITH: They said no.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: No. Lee County?

2 MS. SMITH: No. He said --

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: No. Helena-West Helena?

4 MS. SMITH: Helena-West Helena?

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So, all right. I
6 didn't want to skip over y'all in case you had
7 something you wanted to say.

8 Okay. All right. So, public comment now -- is
9 that okay with you, Ms. Smith?

10 MS. SMITH: Yeah, I think public comment is
11 appropriate.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So, Board, if you would
13 like to enter into a phase of public comment I will
14 need a motion to accept public comment.

15 MR. WOOD: I move to accept public comment.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. I have a motion by Mr.
17 Wood to accept public comment. Do I have a second?

18 DR. HILL: Second.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Dr. Hill.
20 All in favor?

21 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

23 Okay. So we will begin with public comment. I
24 just want to let you know how public comment will go.
25 We are going to ask -- because we have several pages

1 of public comment, we're going to ask that we limit
2 ourselves to three minutes. I've been given this
3 device that I hope I can operate -- but anyway, it's
4 set for three minutes. When you start it'll be
5 green, when you have 30 seconds left it'll be yellow,
6 and when your three minutes is up it'll turn red. So
7 that will kind of give you a cue of where you're at.
8 So I think it came from the kindergarten classroom,
9 so maybe we can operate it this morning. And so,
10 okay.

11 All right. So we are going to begin public
12 comment. And, again, I want to thank you for being
13 here, Community, whether you get to speak or you
14 don't get to speak. I know your heart for Marvell-
15 Elaine and your heart for the students that are here
16 and the future students that are -- that will be in
17 these communities. And so I want to thank you for
18 being interested. And one thing I'm going to ask is
19 don't let your interest and your outpouring for this
20 community stop today. It has to continue on. And we
21 as a board desire your input and we desire and want
22 you to be a part of this school and this school
23 community. So we hope that you will continue to
24 impact the students of this district as we go
25 forward.

1 All right. So, our first one is Pastor Larry
2 Johnson.

3 PASTOR JOHNSON: All right. Well, I promise I'm
4 going to be real short because --

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

6 PASTOR JOHNSON: -- I've got to be back in
7 Little Rock at 1:30. Greetings to all of you, to the
8 Superintendent Dr. Ray, Marvell-Elaine School Board,
9 to all other officials that's present. Honor to my
10 Father in Heaven. Special thanks to the State Board
11 of Education for your kindness and your consideration
12 to drive all the way from Little Rock to be in this
13 big city of Marvell, Arkansas. We thank you so much.

14 As some of you may remember, I was at the
15 meeting -- the last meeting you had in Little Rock
16 regarding Marvell-Elaine School District. As a
17 graduate of then-Marvell High School, my plea of
18 consideration is still the same. While education is
19 a major component to the equilibrium of life, at
20 least will you all consider holistically the
21 decisions that Marvell and Elaine needs from you?
22 Please consider that the environment for a student
23 must be conducive if he or she is to learn
24 effectively. I'm sure it will be a major shift for
25 all of our students, and especially for our juniors

1 and seniors, if they will have to move. It takes
2 time to adapt and accept it. Whether it be Marvell-
3 Elaine standalone or third-party, there's a great
4 need for our school to remain for our students and
5 our community.

6 I admit I don't know the financial pieces of the
7 school puzzle, but it is my hope that Marvell and
8 Elaine School District receive the same attention and
9 resources as all other schools.

10 Again, yes, I think it's imperative that our
11 students be educated academically. However, we
12 cannot be one-dimensional in raising our children.
13 We must consider that a child must be educated
14 socially, physically, academically, spiritually,
15 emotionally, economically, financially, and the list
16 goes on. Our jails and prisons are full of educated
17 men and women with high school degrees, college
18 degrees, as well as business owners. I don't, in no
19 way, want to undermine the importance of academics,
20 but I do want to stress that academics is only one
21 piece of the puzzle -- and, yes, we want our children
22 to be well-educated.

23 We must deal with the whole person if we want to
24 produce a positive and productive person. Our
25 children here in the delta deal with countless

1 obstacles that inner-city students would never face.

2 It is my hope with the Learns Act now in place
3 that we're able to attract more licensed and
4 qualified instructors to help us become all that we
5 know we can be. We are so grateful for all of our
6 current teachers, paraprofessionals, substitute
7 teachers, and our volunteers. If time was in my
8 favor, I could name several -- I'm going to close
9 now, y'all. If time was in my favor, I could name
10 several doctors, nurses, lawyers, dentists, business
11 owners, and so-on that came right out of Marvell,
12 Arkansas.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you. Thank you, Pastor.

14 PASTOR JOHNSON: I said that to say that we are
15 more than capable of learning if we've got the
16 resources and everything we need.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Thank you, Pastor.
18 I think your three minutes is up. I'm sorry. A
19 quick close.

20 PASTOR JOHNSON: So in closing, I'm here today
21 to plead on behalf of our students and community --
22 if you give them everything they need to succeed, I
23 promise you that they will be as successful as any
24 student across the globe. Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Thank you, Pastor.

1 All right. Remember, it's three minutes. And
2 when that little red light goes off -- okay. All
3 right.

4 Kayla Gatson.

5 And if you know you're going to sign up for
6 public comment, I think they've got an area up here.
7 If you want to go ahead and move up here, it'll be
8 just fine.

9 MS. GATSON: Hello. Hello.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Welcome.

11 MS. GATSON: Good morning. I want to thank the
12 State Board of Education for allowing me to speak
13 today. I also want to thank Marvell-Elaine staff for
14 signing me up to speak, because I submitted comments
15 and questions at one of the town hall meetings but
16 they were not addressed. So thank you both so much.

17 My name is Kayla Gatson. I am a junior at the
18 Marvell-Elaine High School. I rank number two in my
19 class and my friend Camille ranks number one. I am
20 an A-B Honor Roll student and I am currently waiting
21 for my ACT results. I am looking at attending
22 Arkansas State University, among other choices. I am
23 a track athlete and a blue and gold Mustang. I've
24 been at this school from pre-K up until now.

25 It saddens my heart to think that my school

1 might close and this Saturday might be my last time
2 at my school. This is very emotional for all of the
3 students.

4 As you can see, everyone is not failing at this
5 school. We have some good teachers who are
6 certified, like Ms. Brown, Ms. Albert, Mr. Copeland,
7 and Ms. Rogers. These teachers care about us and our
8 education.

9 We are being told that our school might be
10 consolidated again or become a charter school. We do
11 not want our school to be a charter school or be
12 consolidated with another school. We have worn
13 uniforms at this school and we have been
14 consolidated, and neither has helped us. We love the
15 school that we have. We just need some help. Please
16 help us and not just throw us away for someone else
17 to deal with. Please give us the help we need to
18 keep our schools from closing. And if being a
19 Marvell Mustang has taught me anything, it has taught
20 me that Mustangs always stick together.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you, Kayla.

22 Elaine Scaife. Is that correct?

23 MS. SCAIFE: Good morning.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good morning.

25 MS. SCAIFE: Thank you for allowing me to speak

1 again. I spoke, like Pastor Johnson, last month in
2 Little Rock.

3 So I'd like to say that -- first of all, I'd
4 like to say that I just think like it's just coming
5 back around. Because when I was a child here at
6 school, in sports, and when we would always go and
7 play with Elaine, I would always get teased because
8 that's what my name is. So I just thought that that
9 was interesting that this is like coming full circle.

10 But my name is Elaine Scaife. I'm a 1987
11 graduate of the Marvell High School. And I'm also a
12 board of director of the Marvell Community
13 Empowerment Incorporation. And so we're just here
14 today just to -- I feel like, you know -- oh, I'm
15 sorry, did I do that?

16 MS. SMITH: No, you're good.

17 MS. SCAIFE: Okay. I feel that, you know,
18 Commissioner Stacy has pretty much already said
19 everything I need to say, because she's basically
20 just totally changed my whole -- whatever I was going
21 to say today. So she's already said it, pretty much.
22 But I did -- I took some notes and so I want to speak
23 from some of these notes, as we were speaking.

24 So one of the things we talked about here today,
25 we talked about the 40 miles. And it didn't appear

1 to me, when we talked about the 40 miles, we didn't
2 consider students who live on the Marvell side, who
3 live in Turner. Okay. So I don't think we had an
4 opportunity to take that into consideration, as well.
5 To get from Marvell to Turner, that's quite a bit
6 away. Okay. So I want to make certain that we're
7 not just looking at it from the Elaine and the Snow
8 Lake side, but we also need to look at it from the
9 Marvell side. Okay. So we have Turner, Trenton,
10 Cedar Lane, Turkey Scratch, Jones Ridge. Okay. But
11 we have all those places that those kids have to
12 drive -- ride the bus from just to even get to here.
13 So let's make certain that we, you know, take that
14 into consideration as well.

15 And also, routes -- you know, have we looked at
16 the routes? You know, when we just, you know, plug
17 in, well, how far is it from here to here, are we
18 considering routes. Okay. So I want us to take that
19 into consideration as well.

20 In terms of -- let's see here -- I really
21 appreciate the fact that we're not going to look just
22 at one organization that has shown interest, but
23 we're going to look at everybody. Because that flyer
24 that went out on the 11th, that caused a lot of
25 concern to the community; it caused fear; you know,

1 it caused anxiety that an opportunity had already
2 been made. Okay. So -- and so I'm glad that we got
3 that cleared up.

4 In terms of a -- we are really into the idea of
5 the Learns Act with the contract, the Transformation
6 school. And we really want --

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Can you go ahead and close for
8 me?

9 MS. SCAIFE: Huh?

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: You're out of time, so can you
11 close?

12 MS. SCAIFE: Oh.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Can you close for me?

14 MS. SCAIFE: I'm sorry. I didn't know. I'm
15 sorry. I was just going on.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: That's okay.

17 MS. SCAIFE: Okay. So just to close, I just
18 want to say find a way to say yes instead of saying
19 no. Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Mr. Andrew Bagley.

21 MR. BAGLEY: Good morning. And I want to thank
22 you for coming to Marvell today to hear from the
23 community. Normally I -- since buying a newspaper I
24 don't take the extraordinary step of speaking. But
25 over 20 years ago, as a young man, I was a teacher in

1 Elaine, Arkansas, and it changed my life, it changed
2 my perspective, and helped to soften some rough
3 edges. And one of my former students is in the
4 audience today, the executive director of the Rural
5 Community Alliance, Candace Williams, and she
6 succeeded in spite of me. But that's why I'm talking
7 today. And I'd just like to cut to the chase. I'm
8 not a preacher; I'm going to get this done in less
9 than three minutes.

10 I would like for you to accept the Department's
11 recommendation to do the Transformational Contract.
12 I believe that the Learns bill should -- that those
13 opportunities should be afforded to the students and
14 the communities in Marvell and Elaine. This district
15 has immense potential. It has good facilities. It
16 has students that are capable. And I believe if you
17 will take Dr. Smith's recommendation to put Dr. Oliva
18 in charge, offer strong leadership, get a
19 Transformational Contract in place where the
20 superintendent would normally be, I believe this
21 district can become a national showcase for why the
22 Learns bill was the right answer to the question and
23 finally got us outside of our silos, outside of our
24 boxes that have held us back as we have tried to
25 solve the public education question in this region of

1 the state.

2 Consolidation is no longer practical. It's run
3 its course. Geographically, it just doesn't make
4 sense anymore. And I think you see that the
5 legislature and the Governor agreed with that as
6 House Bill 1504 worked its way through the
7 legislature, 98-to-nothing in the House, 31-to-
8 nothing in the Senate -- rare bipartisan moments.
9 And everybody knew 1504 was the Save Marvell bill.
10 So I think the legislative intent is clear, I think
11 the Governor's support for Marvell-Elaine is clear,
12 and I think Learns gives us a huge opportunity to do
13 something like we've never done before for the
14 students of this region. And I would ask you to take
15 Dr. Smith's recommendation.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Mr. Michael
17 Scaife.

18 PASTOR SCAIFE: Good morning.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good morning.

20 PASTOR SCAIFE: My name is Pastor Michael Scaife
21 of the New Life Christian Church, Indianapolis,
22 Indiana. I'm a graduate of Marvell High -- Marvell
23 High School, class of 1982.

24 I would just like to say that there is still one
25 thing that we as a community and as a school that we

1 must deal with, and that's what does the Lord
2 requires. Micah 6:8 tells us that God, He requires
3 for us to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk
4 humbly before God.

5 Do justice, simply doing what's right. Do
6 what's right for this community, for this school, and
7 for these kids.

8 Secondly, love mercy. What that means, to show
9 compassion and grace to those in need. This school
10 is in need. This school is in need of certified
11 teachers and someone to support them and mentor them
12 to grow and develop. These kids are in need and they
13 are in need of a good education; they are in need of
14 support from staff who truly cares about them. And
15 this community is in need. What happens if the
16 school closes and then this community has nothing
17 here? It will die.

18 Lastly, walk humbly before God. What that means
19 is this: you have power, but don't forget God is all
20 powerful. And whatever you sow is that what you
21 should reap.

22 So we're asking you to help our community, help
23 our school, help our kids to stay here. But give
24 them the help, give them the financial resources,
25 give them help to stay here and grow. Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you, Pastor.

2 Taleshia Powell.

3 MS. POWELL: Good morning.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good morning.

5 MS. POWELL: I don't know if you can remember
6 me, but I did make the trip to Little Rock and I
7 spoke to you there. I'm going to speak briefly. I'm
8 not going to hold you long. I'm not a preacher; I'm
9 a Christian. I believe in God. I'm not a
10 politician, so I'm not going to try to act like I'm
11 one. But I am married to a 20-year or more city
12 council member of Marvell. He's a retired fireman;
13 he is a retired school resource officer of this
14 school. He's also working now. But I am a parent.
15 I am a parent. I have had three to have graduated
16 from Marvell-Elaine. They are a product of me. I
17 work with my kids. Other parents, I feel like -- I
18 felt like I was accountable; I have that
19 responsibility to educate my kids at home. I held
20 that key. I'm still holding that key because with
21 your children it's a never-ending job. Okay. The
22 third one will graduate May 6th. I'm going to be
23 dancing. That's a success for me. I have an A and B
24 Honor Roll student. She's not up here speaking
25 today, but that's fine. Everything that she's

1 accomplished, it speaks for itself.

2 What I say is that I'm praying that you all make
3 the right decision for all of our kids. That is all
4 I'm asking. As parents, I feel like I can speak for
5 the parents in this community, Elaine, Marvell,
6 whomever else may decide they want their children to
7 come here. I feel like that we are going to be a
8 success story here at Marvell-Elaine.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Is it Rorie Tate? Is that --

10 MS. TATE: Rosie Tate.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Rosie Tate. I'm sorry.

12 MS. TATE: I'm definitely not Rorie.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Rosie, yeah. I should've
14 known that, Ms. Tate. I'm sorry.

15 MS. TATE: Oh, no, I'm just teasing with you.

16 I don't plan to be up here long at all, but --

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Can you get closer to the
18 microphone so we can hear you?

19 MS. TATE: That was my daughter that just spoke.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I know you're very proud of
21 your daughter.

22 MS. TATE: And, you know, she has my grandkids
23 and I've helped her along, all the way with our
24 grandkids and then my other grandkids. Everybody's
25 kids I've helped, and the whole Phillips County

1 because I did my first five years down at Elaine and
2 then I went to Helena-West Helena and I did 34 years.
3 I did my last 11 years here at Marvell. Marvell is
4 where I've been living for, oh, I believe I counted
5 up 56 years now. So Marvell is my community. When I
6 came from Helena I came out here and did a whole one
7 of my years that I was retired the first time -- I
8 did a whole one of those years here at Marvell. I
9 stayed out here from 7:30 in the morning until 10:00
10 or 10:30. If I check, I might've -- if I think about
11 it, I might've stayed until a little bit later than
12 that helping to blend all of the material from Elaine
13 -- from Elaine, that they brought down here to blend
14 in with Marvell. I put in their accelerated reading
15 system in both of their libraries. It took me a
16 whole year to do that. I really have it in my heart
17 for Elaine students and the community and Marvell.
18 All of them love me, I believe. If they don't, they
19 -- if they don't, they're making a fool out of me.

20 So when I think about our children -- and the
21 reason I say I'm not going to be long, I have a
22 little song I want to sing for our kids, all of our
23 kids in the community, Elaine and Marvell. And it
24 goes like this:

25 "I believe the children are our future. Teach

1 them well and let them lead the way. Show them all
2 the beauty they possess inside. Give them a sense of
3 pride to make it easier. Let the children's laughter
4 remind us how we used to be. I decided long ago
5 never to walk in anyone's shadows. If I fail, if I
6 succeed, at least I'll live as I believe. No matter
7 what they take from me they can't take away my
8 dignity. Because the greatest love of all is
9 happening to me. I found the greatest love of all
10 inside of me."

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you, Ms. Tate. Thank
12 you.

13 MS. TATE: I'm singing this -- I'm singing this
14 for the kids because hopefully we are going to stay
15 at our school. Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you, Ms. Tate.

17 Again, I'll try to remind everyone, three
18 minutes -- because we've got several pages and I'm
19 not even through with the first page yet. So, all
20 right.

21 Mr. Wright, Darrell Wright. Is it Danielle
22 then? Okay. Danielle Wright. I'm sorry.

23 MS. WRIGHT: Good afternoon. I am Danielle
24 Wright. I'm a parent and employee and a concerned
25 citizen I would say for Marvell and Elaine. I'm

1 active in both communities and I work with several
2 organizations.

3 My concern is that the Helena-West Helena
4 district is under the state microscope; this is their
5 third time, I believe. I just wish that we could get
6 that same opportunity. And it's just I was a
7 witness, in 2015, when we first consolidated with
8 Elaine, and it wasn't a pretty look. We closed
9 several times, never made it to much. It was just a
10 disaster. And I know that these other districts we
11 are close to, our kids play ball and they communicate
12 with those other kids. And I know it's going to be
13 even worse because the generation that we're raising
14 and teaching has changed.

15 I also had a concern but y'all did address that
16 you guys didn't make a decision when Friendship made
17 the post on Facebook about the salary and all of
18 that. Thanks for clearing that up.

19 I was also looking at some of the same things
20 they are doing prepping their kids for college. A
21 lot of our kids are not college material. Our kids
22 don't have the opportunities for trades. In this
23 area agriculture is a big thing, like farming,
24 driving big trucks, and we don't have that in the
25 district to get them prepared for things like that.

1 And I'm just asking for whatever decision that you
2 guys make can we kind of incorporate some of those
3 things to get them ready for the ones that's not
4 college material.

5 I've been working in the district since 2013. I
6 kind of fill the gaps wherever help is needed.

7 And I want to speak from the community side. I
8 spoke with several communities, both Marvell and
9 Elaine. We do not want a charter; we want to stay
10 public, if that is an option.

11 I don't know; I'm kind of stuck right now. But
12 it's just -- it's hard knowing that we don't know
13 what the plans is just waking up every morning.
14 We've been traumatized, we've been led wrong. So we
15 just wish that if it's in you guys' hands, we just
16 want the best for our kids.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes. All right. Thank you.

18 Christopher Neal.

19 MS. WRIGHT: This is my son.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

21 MS. WRIGHT: He's 10.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

23 MS. WRIGHT: He asked if he can speak; so he
24 wrote down some notes the night before.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

1 MR. NEAL: Good morning.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good morning.

3 MR. NEAL: My name is Christopher Neal.

4 MS. WRIGHT: Wait. You can't put your hand on
5 top of the mic.

6 MR. NEAL: My name is Christopher Neal and I'm
7 in the 5th grade class. I do not like the way that
8 Dr. Ray treated my teacher, Ms. Frazier. My teacher
9 Ms. Frazier quit (inaudible) because of Dr. Ray, and
10 it made my class mad and I feel sad. We will never
11 have the same teacher. I really was hurt when Dr.
12 Ray was yelling at my mom in front of my class. I
13 just want my teacher and my mom to be treated fairly.
14 And can you please help us stay a public school,
15 please?

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you, Christopher.

17 I'm not sure of the first name. Is it Gage? Is
18 it Jennie or -- Johnny, okay. Johnny Gage. Some of
19 the handwritings are hard to read, so --

20 MR. GAGE: It's Johnny Gage. First of all, I'm
21 a Marvell alumni, 1984. I'm going to kind of do
22 things a little different because everybody has
23 pretty much said everything that I wanted to say.
24 And so with that being said, I want to acknowledge
25 our students here at Marvell-Elaine School District.

1 I want you to know that we are proud of you.
2 You have done the best that you can with what you had
3 to work with. And so we want to encourage our kids
4 to keep doing the best that you can because the best
5 is yet to come.

6 And I want to also share with you that when we
7 seen the House Bill 1504, there was some comments
8 made that stuck to me. I believe Sister
9 Chesterfield, she made a comment about this area --
10 and we're so grateful for her knowledge and her
11 wisdom to understand that when we close these schools
12 and we consolidate these children the only thing
13 we're doing is tearing down communities. And then I
14 also heard Mr. McElroy, a comment that he made that
15 stuck to me; he was talking and he said, "I'm not too
16 proud to be here." He said, "Please give our
17 children a chance." And that's what we're asking you
18 today, to give our kids a chance. It feels like
19 they're being -- they're being done a different way
20 because of the rural area that we live in.

21 I wanted to share with you that our kids have
22 dreams. They have goals in their lives. And their
23 goal is to come forward, but lately we have been
24 moving lateral. And every time I'm going lateral I'm
25 moving away from my goals. So we need to have a plan

1 set in place. Whatever decision is being made, we
2 just hope it is the right decision that will take our
3 kids forward instead of lateral. In other words, if
4 we need certified teachers -- I've been hearing that
5 all along. If we need certified teachers, if that's
6 the issue, why are we discussing going to other
7 schools and other entities that have noncertified
8 teachers? That is not what this district needs. And
9 I'm going to say this, and I'm going to sit down: it
10 kind of reminds me of a football team. They may have
11 a losing season for four or five years. They don't
12 shut their team down. They don't move their team.
13 What they do, they make some adjustments. They might
14 find a head coach. They may get rid of the defensive
15 coordinator. They may do all of this.

16 So we're asking you all to just help us put some
17 pieces of the puzzle together. Thank you so much.
18 May God bless you, may God keep you.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Gage.
20 We usually get our football analogies from Dr. Hill,
21 so -- but we appreciate you this morning.

22 Netasha -- is it Brown or Bronn? Brown.

23 MS. BROWN: Good morning to our local and state
24 boards, our school administrators, and all that
25 protocol requires that we address.

1 I serve through AmeriCorps VISTA at Boys, Girls,
2 Adults Community Development Center here in Marvell,
3 Arkansas, and also stand as a resident of Brinkley,
4 Arkansas, which is a neighboring community.

5 My purpose for being here is to ask you all to
6 rescind your initial decision and consider the Learns
7 Act. We know that the system that we had in place
8 simply did not work. But what we want you all to
9 know, that although we say that we are godly people
10 -- and we absolutely mean that -- but we also
11 understand God's word that faith without works is
12 dead; so we understand that there is work that we
13 need to do. We understand your position and your
14 decision and your belief that it's not enough to just
15 want a good school district; we have to put some work
16 in place to insure that we have a successful school
17 district. And we want you to know that it's not just
18 about having a name on the building, but the pride of
19 the community.

20 And we want you to know if the Learns Act is
21 accepted that we have protocol in place -- we've
22 refined our protocol and we have such partnerships
23 that will work to improve the CTE program, such as
24 our partnership with PCCUA; such as our partnership
25 with Arkansas Workforce, which is in Helena. And

1 we've worked to refine those things, not to only work
2 with individuals once they are out of high school but
3 we're looking at measures to bring those entities
4 into the school district as someone who can work with
5 the students as they are here in the school district,
6 so that they are productive citizens once they leave
7 the school district.

8 We also want you to know that we're working with
9 such state entities as Excel by Eight. We also are
10 looking at grade level, working with grade level
11 reading and other entities. We also are working with
12 our local co-op which -- I'm not sure what the flash
13 means. But we also work with our local co-op and
14 things of that nature to insure that we're taking
15 advantage of the area resources.

16 So, in closing, we know that, again, our current
17 system failed completely. But we do want you to know
18 that we also have community organizations in place
19 and a system of retired teachers that will come in to
20 support students that are falling behind that may
21 need such things as mediation and also those new or
22 inexperienced teachers that will also need support.

23 So, in closing, we thank you for your time, we
24 thank you for your consideration, and we ask that you
25 give us a chance to make it right. Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you. We like to hear
2 about the community willing to support. So thank you
3 for that.

4 Martin Rauls.

5 MR. RAULS: Good morning.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good morning.

7 MR. RAULS: Thank y'all for coming. I represent
8 Marvell on the Quorum Court in Phillips County.

9 Can you hear me? There we go.

10 I represent Marvell on the Quorum Court in
11 Phillips County, and it's our honor to welcome y'all
12 to one of our campuses. We appreciate you being here
13 and taking your time to join us today.

14 First of all, since this has started, the
15 consolidation issues, and when the Learns initiative
16 passed, in my mind and several of our minds the first
17 thing we thought about was the Learns Act and what it
18 entitled with the initiative hub and all that stuff,
19 the third-party initiatives. So I was thrilled to
20 hear the recommendation this morning from Dr. Smith
21 on -- I don't know where she went -- but on what she
22 suggested about her presentation; as I've heard from
23 constituents from Turner to Trenton to Marvell, to
24 everywhere in between, that the two most important
25 things that the community wants is to keep the school

1 here, to keep the kids together, and to not
2 necessarily be a charter school. That's every -- I
3 have not heard I don't think a single thing against
4 that. And every constituent, every phone call, every
5 letter I've heard has been that statement. So when
6 Dr. Smith said her recommendation, I'm pretty
7 positive that would agree with the majority of the
8 people in this community is what she said.

9 And I was often told that -- I moved back here
10 after college. I've lived here all my life. I was
11 often told that the delta has no chance, nobody cares
12 about the delta. But I think that's contrary, not
13 necessarily true. It was shown in the legislature
14 that House Bill 1504 passed complete, unanimous
15 consent -- both Democrats, both Republicans. The
16 Governor supported the bill. I think the Governor's
17 Learns initiative is the perfect place to start in
18 Marvell, Arkansas; where better to start and have a
19 national achievement story right here in the delta.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you.

22 So I think a good follow-up to that will be
23 Representative McElroy.

24 REP. McELROY: I just want to say thank you.
25 Thank you so much for coming here today. And I hear

1 you. You listen to the people, you really do. I
2 want to thank the staff, I want to thank the Board of
3 Education -- because I know y'all are going to do the
4 right thing. I heard it today.

5 And y'all give them a round of applause.

6 I want to thank our Governor. The Learns Act is
7 just what we needed at this time. We needed a chance
8 here. And, you know, I just can't say thank you
9 enough. And the community all stuck together and
10 brought our community together. All in all, it was a
11 wonderful journey and I just want to say thank you.
12 And I want to finish up like Ms. Rosie, I ain't too
13 proud to be here. Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Anika Whitfield.
15 Dr. Whitfield.

16 AUDIENCE MEMBER: She left.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I think she's not in here.
18 Okay.

19 Lesce Gilbert.

20 MS. GILBERT: Thank you. First, I want to say
21 thank you so much for coming to us. That's awesome,
22 and it goes a long way.

23 I stand before you as a 19 -- proud 1986
24 graduate of Elaine High School. And I don't know if
25 anybody knows this -- a few in the room might -- we

1 had a school in Snow Lake, and I attended Snow Lake
2 School before I was bused because -- before the
3 school consolidated and I was bused to Elaine 45
4 years ago. So I'm telling my age. And then 17 years
5 ago, approximately, my family, friends, cousins,
6 nieces, nephews were consolidated and bused again.
7 Now I'm watching potentially a third generation of my
8 family, my friends, my nieces, my cousins, nephews --
9 third time, bused again -- three generations. We are
10 bused-weary; we are generationally traumatized-weary;
11 you know, economically-weary; we are community
12 decimated by consolidation-weary. I'm tired. I'm
13 tired. They said it's harsh for -- someone mentioned
14 in the meeting that it seems harsh when they talk
15 about consolidation and busing the kids from Snow
16 Lake. I was one of those children. And when they
17 were here I started crying, because that wasn't
18 harsh, that was cruel. There's a five-year old right
19 now in (inaudible) -- just imagine a five-year old on
20 that bus, rural roads, deer running, coming to
21 Marvell, and somebody had the nerve to say you're
22 going to bus them 50 more miles, a five-year old.
23 That is cruel and unusual.

24 I am asking you to give us a rest. We're weary
25 and we're tired. And keep this community intact,

1 keep the students intact, and give us an opportunity
2 -- this is your chance right now for the Learns Act
3 to be that example. When you think of our history
4 and the third generation of students potentially
5 being bused, you can show that the Learns Act -- the
6 potential it has and the change that can happen in
7 rural Arkansas, in the delta. We're proud people
8 here. And like Representative McElroy said, we're
9 not too proud to beg and we definitely are not too
10 proud to put the work in -- parents, teachers, and
11 community -- to keep Marvell-Elaine schools open.
12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you.

14 Mr. Jerome Turner.

15 AUDIENCE MEMBER: He left.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Annie
17 Probie. I'm not sure what the last name is. Annie
18 Pribie maybe.

19 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Annie Pike.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Pike, okay. I wasn't even
21 close, was I?

22 MS. PIKE'S FRIEND: We're trying to get there.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah. Welcome, Ms. Pike.

24 MS. PIKE: Hello, everybody.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Hello. Good morning.

1 MS. PIKE: Everybody, whatever title you hold,
2 you are God's child. Whatever title you hold,
3 wherever you are from, I wish to thank you on behalf
4 of the communities of Marvell and Elaine for what
5 you've done, the hard work you've done. And I know
6 that there have been many hours that you have spent
7 that we can't even calculate them. But you are here
8 today; you're here to put Marvell back on the map.
9 Once, I thought Marvell had gone -- all the lights
10 are out, the doors are dark. Talking about closing
11 schools down, oh, no, it can't be. You are a part of
12 the school remaining open and you are a part of
13 giving our community a chance. You are a part of
14 helping our children to grow further.

15 Our boys have their pants down; our girls have
16 their dresses too short. They look like they're
17 going to a nudist party or either going to a party to
18 where everybody has diarrhea and their pants are
19 down. I thought I would turn around and say it loud
20 to the crowd. We need to take these children and try
21 to teach them something, other than a laptop. Hello?

22 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Ms. Pike turns to face
23 the audience and away from the microphones).

24 MS. PIKE: Parents, you are supporting those
25 children; they get their money from you to buy all

1 this mess. Hello?

2 I'm going to tell it like it is. Marvell, you
3 need to wake up. You have almost lost your
4 community. It's on the verge of going across the
5 river to the casinos and getting stuff, getting a
6 prize. They are losing your money. They're not
7 paying for your houses. Hello? They're not paying
8 your taxes. Hadn't nobody turned around today to all
9 of you-all, but I turned around.

10 And I want you to know that both of my feet are
11 broken and I'm going to tell you in a few minutes how
12 they got broken. But I want you parents to wake up;
13 I want your children to wake up. You talk about
14 going to another school; when you go over there
15 you're going to get ruined too, if you don't wake up
16 and put those laptops down and go to studying your
17 lessons. Get your education. "I don't want to go to
18 that school because they've got too many
19 assignments." I have asked kids over and over, "What
20 is your assignment?" "It's on the computer." Hello?
21 (inaudible) you don't get no education.

22 So, okay. Let's just wake up. Let's wake up.
23 Let's get up, wake up, and try to work with your
24 sisters and brothers. We are all in this thing
25 together. When Marvell dies, you're going to die.

1 Hello? What I'm saying to you, let's wake up, let's
2 get up and do something about our lost community.

3 I used to be proud that I belonged to Marvell,
4 that I lived in Marvell. I have an estate in
5 Marvell. I have an estate in Marvell, I have
6 everything in Marvell. But it got to the place where
7 I wished I had gone somewhere else. Now you have
8 brought hope to us. Hello?

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you. Ms. Pike, thank
10 you so much. And I think --

11 MS. PIKE: Yes. So any time this -- this
12 program can bring us (inaudible, turned away from the
13 microphones).

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Ms. Pike -- Ms.
15 Pike --

16 MS. PIKE: And I close by saying this, there is
17 a destiny that makes us brothers.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

19 MS. PIKE: (inaudible, turned away from the
20 microphones).

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank -- thank you, Ms. Pike.
22 And crowd --

23 MS. PIKE: (inaudible, turned away from the
24 microphones).

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I think we'll all say yes,

1 ma'am to Ms. Pike, won't we? Yeah. So we thank you,
2 Ms. Pike, for giving us some direction that sometimes
3 we need to hear, don't we?

4 All right. Thank you.

5 I think our last one is Sherman Tate. Welcome,
6 Mr. Tate.

7 MR. TATE: How are you all doing this afternoon?

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: We're good. Thank you.

9 MR. TATE: I appreciate you all letting me take
10 a few minutes. I think I've got, what, three
11 minutes?

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes, sir.

13 MR. TATE: And some of you may not know, but
14 Marvell is my hometown. I grew up here. I'm still
15 in and out of here on a regular basis. And I
16 appreciate the fact that you all are here looking at
17 and listening to and evaluating this very important
18 issue. I have a dream. Dr. King wasn't the only one
19 that had a dream. I have a dream, and my dream is
20 that you will vote to leave this school and Elaine
21 open as public institutions. We need that. Please
22 do not fall victim to any notion that it's not worth
23 the effort. The students here are students of value,
24 students of interest, and parents of interest. And
25 my plea is that you will vote to leave these two

1 schools open in a partnership or however you want to
2 do it, as public. And as we go forward, I have a
3 dream that the parents and the students will take
4 advantage of this opportunity and will work closely
5 with you all, and vice-versa, and communicate to make
6 it better as we go along from day-one. When you go
7 on the playing field typically the first play is not
8 going to be a touchdown, but you will move the ball
9 down the field. These people, with your support and
10 your understanding, will move the ball down the
11 field. And my dream is that as that happens parents
12 will become more involved, more supportive, and
13 communicate not only with you all but communicate in
14 a different fashion with those students that are here
15 in making sure that the students are paying attention
16 to what they need to do and should be focused on in
17 the classrooms.

18 So thank you very much. Please, anyone coming
19 before you, elected or otherwise, suggesting that
20 this school and Elaine be closed, I hope you would
21 gracefully but consistently march them out the door.
22 Thank you very much.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Sometimes we need
24 to hear plain speaking, don't we? So I appreciate
25 your comments, I appreciate the community support,

1 and I assure you that we hear what you're saying
2 today.

3 So, Ms. Smith, do you have anything else that
4 you would like to add or --

5 MS. SMITH: No. I would encourage the Board to
6 go ahead and maybe at least make a consideration
7 whether or not you're going to rescind the vote or
8 stay as-is. If you are going to go with the
9 consolidation, then I would not make any
10 recommendation for any type of action today, because
11 we need to figure out how the House Bill 1504 impacts
12 --

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Sure.

14 MS. SMITH: -- and make sure we have the
15 distance pieces correct. If you're deciding to go
16 with the Transformational Contract, then you would
17 need to rescind the votes.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So right now, Board, we
19 are -- I think the two major decisions that we -- or
20 the major decision that we have to make right now is
21 do we want to go with a consolidation option or do we
22 want to go with a Transformational option. Okay?
23 Because each one of those will send us in different
24 directions. Okay? So that would be our first
25 decision to make, I think, as a board, is which

1 direction as a board do we want to go.

2 So I'm open to discussion or -- I don't know
3 that we would need a motion to go for a
4 Transformational or a consolidation. I think that
5 direction would direct what our motion would be after
6 that, wouldn't it?

7 MS. SMITH: Yes. And so, Ms. Newton, we have
8 provided for you a recommendation of what the
9 Department would recommend. And we would recommend
10 that you rescind your previous vote on December 8th,
11 and then follow-up with granting the waiver and that
12 would be doing a Transformational Contract.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

14 MS. SMITH: So you could do a motion for that or
15 against that. And if you do it against it, then we
16 stay with the consolidation.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right.

18 Okay. Is the Board clear on that then?

19 Mr. Wood, did you have a comment or --

20 MR. WOOD: If I can respond to your last --

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I'm sorry.

22 MR. WOOD: I was just going to respond to your
23 last request for board direction. I would like to
24 set it in motion toward the Transformational
25 Contract.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Dr. Moore?

2 DR. MOORE: Do we -- are we -- is discussion
3 appropriate right now for a second or --

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I think -- we haven't made a
5 motion, so --

6 DR. MOORE: Okay.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: -- so discussion is okay.

8 DR. MOORE: Okay. So in listening -- and I
9 appreciate everyone who's speaking today -- I think
10 there's just a lot of -- there's just a lot that
11 still is to be determined. And at the base, Stacy,
12 as we're looking at this, when we're thinking about
13 going down the route of transformation, the
14 Department -- we are then going -- we would direct
15 you all to search out a third-party entity to work in
16 this school district. That third-party entity, if it
17 was a charter school, this would not operate as a
18 charter school, meaning that the way a charter
19 operates in our state is any student from any
20 boundary can come to it and they don't get property
21 tax. This would be a school that receives property
22 tax and students in these boundaries come from.
23 Isn't that correct?

24 MS. SMITH: Correct. They would still have a
25 board that would be overseeing that and making those

1 approvals.

2 DR. MOORE: Okay. By that, when -- just really
3 quickly, I -- looking at the data, when I was pulling
4 up things last night, this district receives one of
5 the highest amounts of money per student in the
6 state; it's over \$16,000 per kid. But it's one of
7 the smallest districts in the state. So when you're
8 looking at Benton who's receiving \$8,000 per kid,
9 you're receiving double that per student but it's so
10 small. Are we financially setting up this
11 Transformation -- you know, do we feel comfortable in
12 that aspect as we're moving forward?

13 MS. SMITH: So at one point when the district
14 was on fiscal distress there were concerns in that.
15 So they have worked -- they have worked on that
16 element of it.

17 Dr. Saunders, is there anything financially at
18 this point that you're prepared to make comment on?

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Nothing of worth.

20 MS. SMITH: Okay. I mean -- I mean, it would be
21 something we would continue to have to watch. And if
22 we did a Transformation Contract we'd have to make
23 sure the budget piece was there and we'd have to talk
24 about all those elements. Those are key pieces we
25 would have to figure out. If the -- so today, I'd

1 also recommend, if we move this past, that the State
2 assumes authority. If we don't find a
3 Transformational Contract that we feel comfortable
4 with, the State will have assumed authority and be
5 responsible for the school district. And, you know,
6 there will be lots of things and steps that we'd have
7 to do there. Ideally, we would like to use the
8 Transformational Contract in bringing additional
9 resources and support. But we're going to try to
10 make sure that whatever we do is in the best interest
11 of the students who are going to show up for class.

12 DR. MOORE: Thank you. I mean, looking at that,
13 we are receiving -- I mean, the district is receiving
14 the highest amount per student in money and the
15 lowest performance in the state, and every kid can
16 learn. So we need to -- we have to act -- and I hear
17 it today -- with urgency, that we are changing what's
18 going on so that students are learning at their
19 highest potential. And that was my comment.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Does anyone over here have a
21 comment that you would like to add?

22 Okay. Mr. Wood, I think you had a motion that
23 you wanted to make.

24 MR. WOOD: I move that we rescind our vote of
25 December 8, 2022, in which we denied the petition of

1 the Marvell-Elaine School District for a minimum
2 school district size waiver.

3 DR. HILL: Second.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Yeah. We have a
5 motion by Mr. Wood to rescind the vote, and we have a
6 second by Dr. Hill. All in favor?

7 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

9 MS. SMITH: I'd like to just take a moment to
10 explain --

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

12 MS. SMITH: -- the next step, for the audience.
13 The next recommendation would be is to -- now
14 you would need to grant them the minimum school
15 district waiver that you just rescinded. So that
16 would be the next recommendation.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Do we have someone who
18 wants to make that motion?

19 MR. HENDERSON: I'd like to make a motion to
20 grant that school waiver back.

21 MR. SUTTON: Second.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion by Mr.
23 Henderson and a second by Mr. Sutton that we grant
24 the petition filed by the Marvell-Elaine School
25 District on November 18, 2022, for a minimum school

1 district size waiver. All in favor?

2 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

4 Okay. Motion passes.

5 MS. SMITH: So an additional recommendation that
6 the Department would make to the State Board is to
7 assume authority over the Marvell-Elaine School
8 District currently classified in Level 5, and as far
9 as the Marvell -- keeping them in an advisory
10 capacity for the remainder of the school year.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

12 MS. WOODS: I move that the State Board assume
13 authority over the Marvell-Elaine School District
14 which is currently classified as In Need of Level 5
15 Intensive Support under the Arkansas Educational
16 Support and Accountability Act. I move that the
17 State Board remove all powers of the district's board
18 of directors, but allow the board of directors to
19 operate under the direction and approval of the
20 Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education in
21 an advisory capacity through the end of the year.
22 And that the State Board direct the Commissioner to
23 assume authority over the district's board of
24 directors, as may be necessary to operate in the
25 public school district.

1 MR. SUTTON: And I'll second that.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We have a motion
3 by Ms. Woods -- yeah, okay -- and we have a second by
4 Mr. Sutton.

5 MR. WOOD: As a former local school board
6 member, I just want to commend the local school board
7 for all of the work you have done. There is a lot of
8 unappreciated work that goes into being a school
9 board member, and so thank you all. Even though this
10 -- these might be hard words to hear, you're very
11 much appreciated for the work you've tried to do for
12 this community. I am excited for the direction we're
13 going and the hope that it gives the community. But
14 this is certainly by no means to be taken as an
15 insult to all of you.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you, Mr. Wood, for that.
17 That was perfectly said.

18 All right. So we have a motion and a second.
19 All in favor?

20 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

22 MS. SMITH: And the final recommendation that we
23 would ask of the State Board is to direct the
24 Commissioner of Education to commence discussions to
25 go in -- to enter into a Transformational Contract

1 that the Arkansas Learns provides.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Ms. Woods.

3 MS. WOODS: I move that we direct the
4 Commissioner of Education to commence discussions
5 with entities authorized under Act 237 of 2023,
6 Section 14 to explore entering into a contract for
7 school transformation for Marvell-Elaine Elementary
8 School and Marvell-Elaine High School.

9 MR. WOOD: Second.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. So we have a
11 motion by Ms. Woods and a second by Mr. Wood. And
12 so, any discussion? Okay.

13 DR. MOORE: Is it appropriate to ask a question?

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

15 DR. MOORE: Okay. What -- in doing this we're
16 not putting a date on anything. Is that correct?

17 MS. SMITH: No, there's no date.

18 DR. MOORE: Okay. And so are you all -- is it
19 going to be our board to make that final approval or
20 is that Secretary Oliva's final --

21 MS. SMITH: We would bring the contract back to
22 you and then do a proposal to you.

23 DR. MOORE: Okay.

24 MS. SMITH: So our hope would be to quickly be
25 able to try to turn something around. But until

1 we're comfortable with a contract we won't bring you
2 something. If we can bring you something in two
3 weeks, we will; if it's next month or if it's the
4 month after that.

5 DR. MOORE: Okay. And we'll be in contact with
6 the district and the community as far as what's that
7 looking like along the way?

8 MS. SMITH: At this point the district is under
9 State authority. So, yes.

10 DR. MOORE: Okay.

11 MR. WOOD: I want to say one thing to also honor
12 the co-ops that have put in a tremendous amount of
13 work to come -- to come and support this school
14 district. I'm really overwhelmed with gratitude for
15 them. I'm very, very impressed by their willingness
16 to step up and come in and almost rescue a school
17 district that needed so much support. Today, you
18 said it's Mena and -- who?

19 MS. SMITH: It's DeQueen-Mena --

20 MR. WOOD: Mena --

21 MS. SMITH: -- and some specialists from Guy
22 Fenter.

23 MR. WOOD: Mena and DeQueen. And if you don't
24 know, that's the far western side of Arkansas that is
25 coming to the far eastern side of Arkansas to support

1 education. So I'm very thankful for all the work
2 that they do as we move forward in this new path.

3 MS. SMITH: Thank you for acknowledging them.
4 And I want to shout-out to my OCSS team that is
5 boots-on-the-ground here every day, so --

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. So we have a
7 motion and we do have a second. Any more discussion?

8 All right. All in favor?

9 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

11 Motion passes.

12 MS. SMITH: I was just going to let Ms. Newton
13 know that I got everybody's name down that went over
14 three minutes, and I'm going to hold them over here
15 when people go to lunch. Okay? And we're going to
16 have a lesson.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Do you want to say something?

18 SECRETARY OLIVA: Yeah. Chair, if I could
19 indulge the Board and the community and just first
20 echo some of the sentiments that we've heard here
21 today. We have a community that understands the
22 value of a neighborhood school. And I can tell you
23 as somebody that's been new to this conversation,
24 this community, for at least the last three board
25 meetings that I've been to, drove over 100 miles to

1 Little Rock to make sure they were sitting in the
2 audience to hear the discussion about the future of
3 their district. And when we left the last State
4 Board meeting I remember walking away, saying, "This
5 community told us we will do whatever it takes to
6 save our school" -- and we want to hold you
7 accountable to that. You know, it was at that time
8 that we recently had some of Governor Sanders' vision
9 on how we can save schools, how we can invest in
10 neighborhood public schools, especially and primarily
11 our small rural schools, with the signing of the
12 Learns bill. And I went back to the staff -- Stacy
13 and team, I commend them -- said, "How do we use the
14 flexibility we have now to do something that this
15 state has never seen?" We have leadership from a
16 Governor that's told us as a board to do what we can
17 to make sure we're putting the pieces in place that
18 honors the commitments that we have made to the
19 communities by making sure that every student has an
20 opportunity to be successful in life -- and we are
21 doing that, and we did that today.

22 So I want to applaud Governor Sanders'
23 leadership for the vision and in getting this
24 legislation across the line.

25 I want to applaud this board for having the

1 faith in our agency and in the community and the
2 testimony that we've heard here today on how we can
3 be innovative in our approaches to supporting
4 teaching and learning.

5 I want to thank Dr. Ray and the board and
6 everybody that's been having conversations around
7 what does the vision for this community look like.
8 And I think we all agree the vision starts with
9 having high-quality education -- and when we can
10 build that we're going to continue to see this region
11 of the state thrive and succeed.

12 So thank you for your faith today. I want to
13 assure this community to let them know that we are
14 fully invested and we are fully committed to rolling
15 up our sleeves and doing whatever it takes to make
16 this community thrive. So, thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. I think we've been
18 sitting for a while, so how about let's take a break
19 for some lunch. Does that sound good? All right.
20 So 1:30, 1:45, which one? 1:45, okay. All right.
21 1:45.

22 (LUNCH BREAK: 12:57 p.m. - 1:55 p.m.)

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We are back after
24 lunch. And I want to thank whoever was in charge of
25 lunch; it was delicious and we appreciated it very

1 much and enjoyed it. And thank you for providing
2 that for us today.

3 2. CONSIDERATION OF REVISIONS TO ARKANSAS MATH STANDARDS

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: We're going to move on in our
5 action agenda, and the first thing is Consideration
6 of Revisions to Arkansas Math Standards. Dr. Kiffany
7 Pride and Kisa Morman.

8 DR. PRIDE: All right. Good afternoon. Volume
9 good? All right. Great.

10 All right. Good afternoon. Kiffany Pride,
11 Assistant Commissioner of Learning Services, DESE.
12 And I am here before you for the consideration of
13 math and ELA standards. And we're going to start
14 with mathematics.

15 All right. So this is sort of the flow of how
16 we will go through talking about the standards.
17 You'll see I have an overview of ELA and mathematics
18 revisions together. They were revised in the same
19 summer. So I'll give you some highlights of the
20 commonalities that they have in common, and then we
21 will submit for your consideration math and then
22 literacy. And the team is here with me and they're
23 going to also help me to present today. So we'll
24 talk about the contributions and goals, standard
25 organization, and then give you what are the changes,

1 and then we'll talk a little bit about
2 implementation.

3 So what were the goals?

4 So, again, we have a three-prong approach for
5 standards revisions. We wanted to insure that we had
6 strengthened out standards, which is really just
7 about insuring that we have a logical learning
8 progression K-12. We wanted to make sure that we had
9 the essential knowledge and content and skills
10 represented in our standards, and that we also took
11 the time to clarify the standards to make sure that
12 our expectations were clear. And you will see, as we
13 talk a little bit more and go a little bit deeper,
14 how that happened.

15 So just being really conscientious around what
16 it is that our students need to know and be able to
17 do -- and a lot of that happened through
18 simplification of language, making the language as
19 friendly -- parent-friendly, student-friendly -- as
20 possible, and so that our teachers really have a good
21 understanding of what is the expectation in teaching
22 and learning.

23 And then our third thing is to really just
24 provide enough support for our teachers to have the
25 explanatory front matter that we need and to also

1 have an appendix of resources that will be of value
2 to teachers as they are studying the standards and
3 preparing and doing the intellectual prep to teach.

4 All right. So this is just a view of our
5 timeline for revisions. As you see, it spans across
6 2022 and 2023. And there you see from DESE prepping
7 from January to May, getting ready for teacher teams
8 to come in in the summer, in June and July; and then
9 taking those recommendations and the work of the
10 committees back to DESE for formatting, for reading,
11 and to make sure that we can put together a document.

12 We also had in that process -- you see expert
13 feedback, public feedback. And we did bring it to
14 the board at some point, but we were charged by our
15 Secretary to go back and to take a deeper look.
16 We're glad we did that. We think we have a great set
17 of standards to bring before you today. Major
18 changes that happened from summer of 2022 to when we
19 first presented them to the Board, and then you'll
20 see significant changes from that point. So we took
21 a really good look at the standards and we think we
22 have a body that will be acceptable here today.

23 And then we're here before you today and we will
24 work -- continue to work and provide professional
25 learning this summer and throughout the next year and

1 really focus on support around implementation. So, a
2 long journey. We're glad to be here today.

3 All right. So, who contributed?

4 This was definitely an educator-driven process.
5 We had, as you see there, lots of stakeholder
6 participation from Arkansas teachers to our community
7 members; national and state experts; our leadership
8 at DESE and ADE; we had Higher Ed. contributions; our
9 DESE specialists and our regional specialists.

10 And just over to the side you see there a chart
11 that sort of shows you some numbers. So in terms of
12 our Arkansas teachers, we had 187 teachers. I'm sure
13 there were a lot more, because just along the way we
14 would always ask for feedback -- but 187 teachers who
15 actually convened at different times, whether that
16 was in the summer or whether that was in a session
17 after school to contribute to the standards -- the
18 writing and the review of the standards.

19 Also, before we do standards, before we ever
20 send them out in the summer, prior to that we always
21 send out a survey. So what you see there is -- so,
22 pre- the revision committee getting together in the
23 summer we sent out a survey for all teachers to be
24 able to have some input, and we had lots of responses
25 there. You see we had 1,971 responses and that's

1 across math and literacy, because, again, we send
2 them both out at the same time. Lots of feedback at
3 every grade level. We like to insure that we're
4 getting feedback -- and if not, we continue to send
5 it out for feedback at every grade level.

6 And then as you saw in our journey, we brought
7 them to the board and then we went back and took a
8 different look, and then we revised the standards and
9 put them out again for public comment. So that's
10 where you see the 428. It was after we had gone back
11 and taken a second look. We also sent them out
12 through our Commissioner's Memo for public comment.
13 And we had 428 stakeholders to provide feedback, and
14 we made some changes again from that feedback, and
15 it's still open today. So we watch them roll in
16 every day, if something comes up, and we want to make
17 sure that we have the best set of standards and we're
18 making all considerations around this work.

19 We had five national and state experts. This
20 was after we had taken a second look. We engaged in
21 experts again, along with our stakeholders here in
22 the state of Arkansas.

23 And so, again, 19 Higher Ed., national and state
24 experts. This was prior to us taking a second look.
25 And then we have our DESE specialists who have worked

1 really hard to pull all of this together. There's
2 about 21 of them on the home-front who have burned
3 the oil night and day nearly, weekends to provide you
4 with standards in about a three month period, taking
5 that second look that would take years. So we
6 appreciate them. They used all of the time that they
7 had and dedicated it towards this work.

8 And then, so in terms of our ESE regional
9 specialists, we had 100 specialists -- over 100
10 specialists who participated in support of this work.
11 So, lots of educators. This was definitely an
12 educator-driven process.

13 All right. So we're going to start with math
14 and Kisa is going to help me with this in just a
15 moment. But in thinking about math, this is just a
16 good view of the state. And when you think about
17 that committee of 37 math educators who started this
18 work in 2022, this was the representation across the
19 state. So it's really important to have all of our
20 regions represented so that we can really hear what
21 are the concerns, what are the recommendations from
22 across the state. So this is just a good view for
23 you to see.

24 Also, ELA -- this is just another picture of the
25 representation of 78 ELA educators that came across

1 the five regions to convene in that original summer.

2 All right. So I'm going to bring Amy Counts up.
3 She's our Director of Curriculum Projects. She spent
4 considerable time making sure that all of the things
5 that needs to get done -- you know, that sort of day-
6 to-day task -- she was in charge of that, like making
7 sure we had it in the documents correctly, making
8 sure the teams were meeting. She probably knows
9 every detail of what happened during the revisions.
10 But she's going to come to you and talk to you about
11 the change of the organization of the standards.

12 MS. COUNTS: Hi. Amy Counts, Director of
13 Curriculum Projects.

14 So the organization of the standards is now the
15 same for both math and ELA. Prior, they were a
16 little bit different. So that's really going to help
17 with -- we hope with our elementary teachers who have
18 to be responsible for multiple sets of standards.
19 That organization system is pretty consistent now
20 with terminology. They are now organized in strands,
21 components, and then the standards. And I'm going to
22 show you a couple of examples in just a second.

23 That organizational chart is also mimicked here,
24 and then new nomenclature that's been developed. As
25 you can see, it starts with the grade level and then

1 it moves into the strands, and then the actual
2 standard number. For ELA, they went one more level
3 deep and actually have the component represented
4 there as well. So that's the new nomenclature for
5 the standards. Again, consistent for math and ELA.

6 So, these next couple of slides just are
7 examples of how this organization has changed.
8 You're going to see on the left the 2016 version, and
9 on the right the proposed 2023 organization. And
10 what I hope you've noted is how the language has been
11 simplified; it just seems a little bit cleaner for
12 our teachers to access and also our community
13 members, our parents as well.

14 So what you see here is a math kindergarten
15 example and then you have an 8th grade example for
16 math. And then we move on to ELA for kindergarten,
17 and then we have an 8th grade ELA.

18 So now I'm going to switch it back to Dr. Pride.

19 DR. PRIDE: Okay. So I hope what you saw in
20 that is that there was a dramatic change from 2016 to
21 2022, to now 2023. So lots of work and thought put
22 into the organization, which is really impactful when
23 you're planning and prepping for learning.

24 So let's get to the good part. What are the
25 changes that we see in common around math and ELA?

1 I think we've said probably four times already
2 that the standards were written in a parent-friendly
3 language. And so as you know, we're -- yeah, there's
4 nothing wrong with a good clap for that. So really
5 reducing unnecessary jargon; you know, we all in our
6 professions like to use our jargon, and we will still
7 do that sometimes with teachers. But we wanted to
8 make sure that these standards were accessible for
9 everyone, no matter who the stakeholder was reading
10 the standards.

11 All right. And then the other thing we see in
12 common across math and ELA is that we really had a
13 really strong focus around grade level learning
14 progressions, showing how learning changes and builds
15 over time, wanting to increase the precision of the
16 standards by eliminating any redundancy that we might
17 see so that we're clear about what the expectation is
18 at grade level.

19 Also, I think just really focusing on like are
20 there any standards that need to be eliminated or
21 moved because they may have been redundant or
22 unnecessary; so we did a lot of that with our teacher
23 teams and our experts. And so, you will see dramatic
24 differences if you sit the standards beside each
25 other from the 2016 version to now.

1 And then, again, as Amy just talked about, we
2 simplified the organization and structure of the
3 nomenclature. And so the physical appearance is very
4 similar across both math and ELA, which makes it
5 easier for teachers to really talk across the bodies
6 of standards.

7 And, again, here's a look -- you saw the
8 nomenclature earlier. This is the actual look at the
9 standards. So 2016, on the left, for ELA. And then,
10 remember, in 2022, remember, we brought them to the
11 Board and this is what they looked like; so slightly
12 different. Here is math in 2016, and math in 2022 --
13 again, a slightly different look. But after that
14 second look you'll see they look totally different;
15 and so this is what look like in current form, very
16 similar. This is kindergarten ELA and kindergarten
17 mathematics, very similar, though different in
18 content. And here is an 8th grade example -- on the
19 left side, you see 8th grade ELA, and 8th grade math
20 standards. So no matter the level you will see
21 similarities around the physical appearance of the
22 standards.

23 All right. So I know everybody loves math, so
24 we're going to talk about the changes around math.

25 And the way we structured this, so just to

1 visually give you some cues, those things in black
2 are the things you will see across K-12 -- that were
3 consistent across the K-12 standards. So the
4 organization -- again, technical language simplified
5 to be parent- and student-friendly; reduction of
6 verbs, just provide clarity. So when you have a
7 bunch of verbs in a standard, sometimes you say,
8 "Wait a minute. Which verb am I supposed to do and
9 when am I supposed to do it, which one comes in what
10 order." So we want to be really clear, so you'll see
11 them -- you'll see standards be a little bit more
12 clear, a lot more concise than they were before; not
13 a change in the rigor of the verb, but a reduction
14 sometimes in having three or four verbs in a standard
15 which can be confusing to teachers to say which of
16 these should students master, and in what order, and,
17 you know, then how much time do I have to do that.
18 So we've really tried to work there.

19 And, again, conceptual and procedural knowledge
20 -- and Kisa is a better expert than I am -- really
21 clarified how that looks across the body of standards
22 and really reflecting a balance in the approach and
23 that students have to be able to do both. So you
24 will see those things in black to be consistent
25 across K-12.

1 And I'm going to bring Kisa Morman up. She is
2 our fearless leader of mathematics across the state
3 of Arkansas, and she's going to talk to you across K-
4 12 about those things that were significant in the
5 standards revision.

6 MS. NORMAN: Thank you, Dr. Pride. Again, my
7 name is Kisa Morman. I am the K-12 Math Program
8 Manager.

9 So Dr. Pride has already kind of explained some
10 of the common things, in black. And then I'm going
11 to go over a little bit deeper around the K-5 first
12 content and then I'll move on to 6-8 Algebra I and
13 Geometry.

14 So we have a counting component for K-2, which
15 we had counting at first, but, however, it was
16 scattered out in multiple domains. And so now you'll
17 start seeing counting for -- the counting component.
18 And that's for the logical progression so teachers
19 can identify exactly where they need to fall in that
20 progression. And then the basic fact fluency is also
21 incorporated in it, and you'll see in some grade
22 levels that you'll see when it needs to be mastered.
23 I think in our previous standards we didn't
24 articulate that as clearly. But in these standards
25 we have an end. And then when we say "end," I want

1 you to be mindful that -- I always tell people "end"
2 means it's probably the last time that they can get
3 it in Tier 1; it's not the end forever. So you might
4 have to go back and help them get that, but this is
5 the last opportunity that student gets to see that
6 material in Tier 1 instruction.

7 Okay. And then we also combined our Geometry
8 and Measurement standards, as well, just because we
9 had measurement and data earlier. And as we all
10 know, as we think forward in our forward-thinking,
11 that data is very important. Data science is coming
12 along and all of that is very important to us. So we
13 have data analysis in every component and in every
14 strand, in every grade, and it will be by itself. So
15 Geometry measurement and strand is put together for
16 that reason.

17 So then I want to talk to you about 6-8 and then
18 Algebra I and Geometry, as well. So Dr. Pride again
19 has shared everything in black, and I'm just going to
20 give you just a second to look at what she said
21 around those things, around in the black font.

22 And so then what are we talking about in 6-8 --
23 and so we also have Geometry and measurement in 6-8
24 as well, so it continues with the K-5 to 6-8
25 progression, and so that wasn't on there. But 6-8

1 also has a Geometry and measurement and they also
2 have a data analysis. So in addition to that -- and
3 when we talk about our high school courses we have
4 standards that are grouped by majors. Previously in
5 our standards they were all under -- let's say that
6 what you were to do instead of what type of function;
7 like am I working with something specifically and
8 what am I working. So they had to go through that
9 document and find where it fell. And so now they can
10 put their eye on exactly that function and what am I
11 supposed to do around that function. And then math
12 times are clarified; so the high school also looked
13 at 6-8 very closely to make sure that we're using
14 common language. We do realize that math is a
15 language that I love, and so therefore we wanted to
16 make sure that our math terms go across in making
17 sure that all teachers understand that 6-8, as well
18 as Algebra I and Geometry, should have a connection.
19 And if we're using different verbiage, then we need
20 to address that.

21 And then the last but not least is Algebra I and
22 Algebra II is uncoupled. So in previous standards we
23 had shared standards, is what we called them. And a
24 lot of our Algebra I teachers, when we read the
25 surveys, said, "I do not know -- I'm not sure when

1 I'm to stop the learning." And so, therefore, we
2 said, "Hey, we're going to need to put it in Algebra
3 I or we're going to put it in Algebra II." So with
4 these new ones you will see them uncoupled and it's
5 very clear where the learning will stop and where
6 they need to begin and start.

7 And so I'm going to pass it back.

8 DR. PRIDE: So we'll stop there. Any questions
9 about math?

10 Stay up here because you've got to answer math
11 questions.

12 MS. MORMAN: Okay.

13 DR. PRIDE: Any questions about math? Yes.

14 DR. MOORE: I do, but I don't want to go first.
15 Does this work? Okay.

16 Thank you. I spent one year as a math
17 interventionist, so I'm really -- no, I'm just
18 kidding. No, I'm not. But what is exciting to me is
19 that this is very concise. You know, I'm looking at
20 -- if I'm a kindergarten teacher I can see my
21 standards on two pages -- and that is not to be
22 lowering the standards, that they should be teaching
23 less. But it's saying, okay, I can wrap my mind
24 around what my student needs and know at the end of
25 the year. And here are my two pages and let's break

1 it apart from there.

2 That being said, I've heard a lot over the past
3 three years of a lot of districts doing the work of
4 them having to pull out in the main standards what's
5 most important and sort of mapping from there -- and
6 I'm sure that's -- I think that's really great work
7 for a lot of them. But it seems like a lot of time
8 is spent planning when that time may be -- could be
9 spent doing interventions and digging deeper. Do you
10 feel like these standards are situating districts and
11 teachers better so they can work quickly, figure out,
12 you know, progression -- and I know that that's tied
13 to the curriculum too, but progression of standards
14 and how that goes?

15 DR. PRIDE: Yeah. Do you want to answer part of
16 it? You may have some things to say.

17 MS. MORMAN: Go ahead.

18 DR. PRIDE: Yeah. So thank you for noticing the
19 conciseness in the standards. The team worked really
20 hard on that.

21 But I would say these standards will provide
22 teams with more time for intellectual prep, not
23 necessarily just the planning piece where they have
24 to breakdown the standard and do a lot of unwrapping.
25 So I think a lot of time will be saved on the

1 unwrapping piece, which is where you sometimes see
2 where you can get the labor in that. But this will
3 be clearer and they can spend more time in the
4 intellectual prepping which will jump them right into
5 the things that you're talking about. Really having
6 a strong core, that was the focus of the standards.
7 But then also being able to see how do I move my core
8 instruction over into small groups, that Tier 2 piece
9 that kind of -- I don't know -- am I still on? --
10 point in time -- point in time support around Tier 2
11 interventions and then really clearly see if students
12 need some Tier 3 support.

13 MS. MORMAN: And so I -- am I on?

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

15 MS. MORMAN: So I agree too. So I understand
16 from an interventionist hat; so I wear many hats. So
17 I'm going to put that hat on first. You're
18 absolutely right. So hopefully you can see a
19 learning progression. I'm not saying we are changing
20 the rigor, because the rigor is still intended. But
21 we're definitely saying that in a -- even if you're
22 in core instruction, which is your Tier 1, or
23 interventions that you should be able to see a
24 progression. And so you should be able to clearly
25 see where I possibly need to go back and pick up that

1 student and bring -- and where to take them in the
2 long-run.

3 DR. PRIDE: Yes. I don't know if that fully
4 answered your question, but I think also where we
5 will see the teachers will save some time is because
6 with getting a new assessment we'll also be able to
7 support them around essential pieces around our
8 blueprint for assessment. So that will also be a
9 nice compliment to having a new set of standards and
10 I think it will save them lots of time.

11 DR. MOORE: I think -- and, you know, having
12 been in this place for the past 10 years there's been
13 a lot of time devoted to the conversation around
14 computational math versus conceptual and common core
15 and all that. What does this look like now? I was
16 joking like what is my kids' homework going to look
17 like. No, no, no. But where are we with that, and
18 what are these standards -- how do these standards
19 address that balance?

20 MS. MORMAN: Absolutely. So I can't answer the
21 homework question part, but I definitely can talk
22 about conceptual and procedural understanding. So
23 there should definitely be a balance between the two.
24 And so -- and you -- when you're reading the
25 standards I think a lot of times -- because it's the

1 new look that the verb is in front, and so we tend to
2 jump straight to the verb. Dr. Pride gave us the
3 challenge, and Oliva gave us the challenge, as well,
4 is what is the essence of the standard, what is the
5 math that needs to be brought forward. And so the
6 math is still there, and so there's a balance between
7 the two. And so when I say balance, you'll see real-
8 world still interwoven throughout our standards. And
9 I want you to understand that is the opportunity for
10 you to model and get conceptual understanding still
11 in and make it real-world and make sense of the
12 mathematics that's being presented in front of you.
13 But then there's also the opportunity to notice what
14 skills that they will need to be able to achieve
15 that, as well.

16 DR. PRIDE: I'll say Kisa and I had this
17 conversation. Actually, we were on a plane together
18 and we were coming back and we had this conversation
19 about how we can really simplify teachers really
20 understanding how do you move from conceptual to
21 concrete, or the other way around, when necessary.
22 And so the team really has a good plan around summer
23 training, to really show how the standards don't
24 neglect either one but they compliment one another.

25 SECRETARY OLIVA: I'll -- if I could, I'll add

1 into that. And these are the real experts, so I
2 always get nervous when I have to talk to them about
3 PCN learning. But I think, Dr. Moore, to your point,
4 with some of the frustration that parents have felt,
5 especially in the primary space, with supporting
6 their children with homework is because the homework
7 that gets sent home focuses so much on the strategies
8 associated with conceptual math. And the strategies
9 may be new to parents who don't know how to implement
10 them, and that was because former versions of the
11 standards included strategies with the standards; so
12 that got interpreted as to we should be taught and
13 measured. And this new focus on the standards is
14 about that balance between procedural and conceptual
15 fluency. But it's about making sure that students
16 have access to multiple strategies and that they can
17 use the strategy that works best for them, and not
18 whether or not we're going to assess this student on
19 their ability to apply a strategy but whether or not
20 they can solve the problems.

21 And I want to make sure we're clear that
22 conceptual math is not a bad thing. We need to
23 understand how the world works and how numeracy is a
24 part of it. But if that level of automaticity that
25 you want to see around math facts, especially in

1 early grades, isn't a heavy focus, then that's going
2 to hold students back from being able to apply those
3 middle math strategies into higher levels of math.
4 So if you don't know your multiplication tables in
5 third grade it's really hard for you to master
6 factoring in pre-Algebra, because you're using too
7 much cognitive load trying to determine your math --
8 basic math facts and then how you applied those
9 concepts.

10 So, focusing a little bit less on specific
11 strategy implementation is going to be where you see
12 a little bit of difference in the expectation that we
13 set for our classrooms.

14 DR. PRICE: All right. Thank you.

15 DR. MOORE: That's awesome. It's awesome, and I
16 know y'all have spent a lot of time working and
17 thinking on that.

18 My last question would be, now, when y'all are
19 going through public comment, especially the second
20 round of it, what was most of that comments about?
21 And did that bring about any changes as y'all were
22 working that through?

23 DR. PRIDE: Yeah. So I'll let you share.

24 I'm going to brag that I looked at all the good
25 ones; right? Like, I was like, okay, lots of good

1 feedback on clarity and that these are easier to read
2 and I feel like I know -- sort of what you said, Dr.
3 Moore -- I feel like I know what students are
4 supposed to learn. But Kisa might talk a little bit
5 more about the details of math.

6 MS. MORMAN: Absolutely. So she's correct on a
7 lot of it was thankful for the clarity, but a lot of
8 it was still around the support document that we'll
9 put out around to what level on some questions that
10 we need. But overall, it was more around like
11 providing them additional support. They're used to
12 the teacher notes that were always there earlier, the
13 examples that were always there earlier. And so
14 we'll have a support document that can answer some of
15 them. But they were very general overall, just
16 pretty much saying like, hey -- essential standards,
17 they asked questions about stuff like that, but that
18 doesn't necessarily have to deal with us selecting
19 those. So, therefore, a lot of it was just around
20 making sure that they understood a specific standard
21 or needing a little bit more support around that.

22 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions?

24 I had one question on, I guess, probably more
25 the Algebra and the Geometry. Have you done a

1 curriculum map to see in a classroom is it doable, as
2 far as in a school year, where the classroom of ever-
3 how-many students -- is it doable to make it through
4 standards?

5 MS. MORMAN: Yes. So a good question. So what
6 we want to be mindful of is that it will be doable if
7 you pair these up. If you teach in isolation, it's
8 not doable. But you're going to have to dig into
9 your standards and decide where do things intertwine
10 and where can I connect these, which is what we
11 should be doing in mathematics, not teaching in
12 silos. And I think it will be doable.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

14 MS. MORMAN: And it does seem a lot longer for
15 Algebra and Geometry because previously we had like
16 30,000 verbs under one component and it has to be
17 broken up. So there is still going to have to be
18 some work around talking about hey, what can I pair
19 up to make sure that I am not teaching things in
20 silos but teaching them in connections. And we know
21 when connections are together, then it gives us
22 deeper understanding.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah. But I guess that's my
24 concern or -- not really a concern, but just making
25 sure that we don't go back to I have a checklist and

1 I want to get through all of these standards and I'm
2 making it through but I'm not worried about whether
3 my kids are actually learning the concept. I don't
4 want it -- you know, the old way of saying it was "a
5 mile wide and an inch deep." You know, we don't want
6 that. We want to make sure the kids are getting that
7 understanding and, you know -- and I understand a lot
8 of these do pair up and work well together. But I
9 just want to make sure that we don't get back to, you
10 know, I'm going to check them off and I've covered it
11 and now I'm going on. You know, we've got to think
12 about the kids and making sure that they are learning
13 the concepts, what they're going to need for higher
14 level in mathematics.

15 DR. PRIDE: Yes. Thank you, Ms. Newton. And I
16 definitely agree with you; we don't want the
17 checklist. And one of the things we'll work on with
18 the summer training is how do you use your high-
19 quality instructional materials to help you --

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right.

21 DR. PRIDE: -- around units of study. That's
22 going to be key. Again, just making sure that we
23 know how those standards should be grouped so that
24 you can teach them within a year span, and also using
25 good assessments to know what your students really

1 need will be a part of that piece. And those are
2 embedded deeply into their high-quality instructional
3 materials. And so Kisa has done a good job designing
4 training for this summer, so we'll hit that really
5 hard and make sure that we're supporting our teachers
6 around that part.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So have you already looked
8 materials that will -- again, I'm thinking Algebra
9 and Geometry. But have you already looked at
10 materials that are high-quality, that are combining
11 these concepts in a way that teachers will feel
12 comfortable being able to make it through the
13 standards, but it will also be where the students
14 will be learning at high levels? Have you looked at
15 materials, specifically at materials?

16 MS. MORMAN: Yes. So we do have a list for
17 high-quality instructional materials where they can
18 select which ones they wish to use. And then, there
19 they already have them paired for them. So they're
20 still going to have to do some work. But, yes, there
21 is a list where schools should look at to select
22 possibly which one they choose for high-quality
23 instructional materials. And then in the work that
24 they're going to have to do, the thinking around that
25 is, hey, is this paired together, and then that is

1 where I can say yes or no. So, yes, very --

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So I guess what I'm asking,
3 you've coordinated these standards to those high-
4 quality materials?

5 DR. PRIDE: I was going to say, you know, we --
6 so those pieces that we have -- and I know you know
7 about our Arkansas EdReports page. It's a resource.
8 And, of course, for math that's their choice to use
9 it. But in that there are criteria around what those
10 materials must have. And so when she says there's a
11 list, that's that resource there available. And we
12 had this conversation about whether or not those
13 standards that we have now, would high-quality
14 instructional materials still support these
15 standards.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

17 DR. PRIDE: And the answer is yes.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. That's my question.

19 DR. PRIDE: Yes, ma'am.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

21 MS. SMITH: And, you know, as far have we
22 reviewed curriculum materials that are out there with
23 these new set of standards, no.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

25 MS. SMITH: Okay. We haven't had time to do

1 that. They have been reviewing high-quality
2 instructional materials that are used in an Algebra
3 course. What we want to be really clear in our
4 classrooms in Arkansas, is that we're really clear on
5 what we expect to be taught in Algebra, Geometry, all
6 of our math classes across the state. The next phase
7 is they're going through and putting their resources
8 and documents together. It is a step-up. Okay.
9 Let's go back to our high-quality instructional
10 materials. Let's look at our standards and see where
11 are there gaps.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

13 MS. SMITH: Where are there places to do
14 supplemental resources. And this is where our
15 educational cooperatives really come in. And they
16 will look at their area schools and see what
17 materials are being adopted so that we can do
18 training specifically around those materials in the
19 classrooms aligned with our standards. So we're
20 going to get there.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Are districts adopting
22 materials this fall or is it up to the individual
23 district?

24 MS. SMITH: It's a continuous process that
25 they're adopting. So we do have some districts who

1 have adopted in the last two years; we've had some
2 districts who are adopting in the fall. If you look
3 at the actual content itself of what's in our Algebra
4 standards, or even in our math --

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

6 MS. SMITH: -- it's generally the same.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

8 MS. SMITH: Okay. What we're being really clear
9 about is what are we assessing on our state exam and
10 where are we putting the emphasis in Arkansas. And
11 so as teachers are selecting the materials or
12 utilizing the materials we're going to make sure that
13 those key standards are going to be taught in
14 classes.

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

16 I think -- and one comment I want to make is
17 these standards have made a lot of Algebra and
18 Geometry teachers very happy. So thank you for that.

19 DR. PRIDE: Thank you. All right. So here is
20 the time that we are standing before you --

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Just a second. We have one
22 more question.

23 DR. MOORE: So there's a lot of other high
24 school math courses as well. When do those undergo
25 revisions?

1 DR. PRIDE: The team is working on those. We're
2 hopeful to come --

3 DR. MOORE: Okay.

4 DR. PRIDE: -- in the next few months. It just
5 depends on --

6 DR. MOORE: Is that -- are they all -- do they
7 all have to be on the same cycle, or are they all --
8 is everything on a seven-year cycle for every
9 subject?

10 DR. PRIDE: Yes. So what we're bringing before
11 you now is aligned with what's going to be assessed
12 for our assessments.

13 DR. MOORE: Okay.

14 DR. PRIDE: The rest of them -- they've revised
15 them, but they're still working on them --

16 DR. MOORE: Okay.

17 DR. PRIDE: -- with some teacher teams. But
18 they're coming.

19 DR. MOORE: Okay.

20 DR. PRIDE: But they -- we've done those that
21 are going to be aligned with the assessment.

22 DR. MOORE: Okay. That makes sense.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions on
24 standards so far?

25 Okay, Dr. Pride. Go ahead.

1 DR. PRIDE: All right. All right. So we're
2 standing for -- in front of you for consideration of
3 the math standards. We respectfully submit those to
4 the State Board of Education for approval. Again,
5 groups of educators representative of the state
6 revised the standards for grades K-8, Algebra I and
7 Geometry. Schools will fully implement in the 23-24
8 school year.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So the first set of
10 standards that we're considering today are the
11 revisions to the Arkansas Math Standards. Do we have
12 a motion on the math standards?

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

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion by Dr.
15 Moore to approve the standards.

16 MS. McFETRIDGE: Second.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Second by Ms. McFetridge.

18 All in favor?

19 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

21 Motion passes.

22 DR. PRIDE: Okay. Thank you so much.

23 Kisa, you can take a deep breath.

24 3. CONSIDERATION OF REVISIONS TO ARKANSAS ENGLISH LANGUAGE

25 ARTS STANDARDS

1 DR. PRIDE: All right. So the changes for ELA,
2 we're standing now to share those changes. And Amy
3 is going to come, along with the ELA team, to present
4 those changes.

5 MS. COUNTS: So, again, like before, the two
6 bullet points that are in black are consistent across
7 the K-12 for English Language Arts. The first one is
8 really about the organization of English Language
9 Arts standards were aligned to the Science of
10 Reading. In doing so, we created a new strand that
11 was specific to vocabulary and pulled some standards
12 that had been in different sections and then created
13 a strand that was specific to vocabulary. So that
14 was kind of the first big piece that's across the K-
15 12 spectrum.

16 And then, also, our language standards were
17 clarified at the grade levels to indicate when
18 mastery was expected for specific skills. And so
19 that will make that vertical alignment easier for our
20 teachers as they, you know, begin to teach those
21 skills in the classroom.

22 I'm actually joined by Ms. Sandy Shepard, our
23 RISE State Lead, who will not hesitate to tell you
24 what she thinks, I'm pretty sure.

25 MS. SHEPARD: You may ask yourself why am I

1 never in front of State Board. There's a reason.

2 I'm Sandy Shepard, Career and Learning Services.
3 My job is to coordinate the RISE initiative across
4 the state. I want to explain some of the bullets
5 because some of you might not be kindergarten
6 teachers and you may think what in the world is
7 concepts about print. Right?

8 So the first thing we changed was concepts about
9 print, used to be across K-2. What that really means
10 is how a book works; so left to right progression,
11 return sweep, every word I say can be written down,
12 there are spaces between words. That was across K-2
13 because there were some sentence and paragraph things
14 in 1st and 2nd, and we moved those to language. I
15 just wanted to narrow that down.

16 The second part is handwriting. How many of
17 y'all think handwriting is important? We do too.
18 Handwriting really kind of stopped in 3rd grade in
19 our old standards. And because of that, by the 6th
20 grade our kids couldn't read cursive anymore and we
21 were getting cursed by the middle school teachers.
22 We didn't want to do that anymore. So what we do
23 now, in K-1 we teach handwriting, manuscript
24 handwriting because that's the text they will be
25 reading. Starting in 2nd grade, we transition to

1 cursive -- and you know there's a state law that says
2 cursive by 3rd. We continue it in 4th and 5th as an
3 expectation. They don't really continue to do the
4 handwriting training unless they don't know how to do
5 that. But that will keep that going, I hope, because
6 by the time they hit 3rd grade they need to be able
7 to make notes more quickly and cursive is the way to
8 do that. So that's why we made that shift.

9 Okay. Phonological and phonemic awareness -- I
10 know that's a big hot topic, if y'all are paying
11 attention to the Science of Reading, and we've tried
12 to be really clear that our standards are based on
13 studies. And there are a lot of things that are out
14 that might work, but they don't know for sure; we
15 don't have the study support for that. So we took
16 the broad categories of phonological awareness --
17 that means how many words are in a spoken sentence,
18 how many syllables are in a word, and onset and
19 rhyme. We took those out of standard because the
20 research is clear that those don't lead to de-coding
21 and in-coding. So we narrowed it down to the piece
22 of the individual sound, the phoning. That starts in
23 kindergarten and goes to 1st grade. It was in K-2
24 standards, but it started as really preschool level
25 standards in that larger phonological. So we've

1 moved it down to the phonemic awareness level. And
2 we did that based on the research and our expert that
3 the Secretary asked us to use -- which I was a little
4 irritated with at the beginning, but it worked out
5 good. So, thank you for -- thank you for making us
6 go through that work again. I told y'all that's why
7 I don't come here much.

8 So we basically narrowed it from K-1 on purpose
9 because that's where it needs to be, and it needs to
10 be solid by the end of 1st grade. And if we're
11 continuing to need that in 2nd grade and up, that's
12 an intervention, not core; and so that was our point.

13 The last part is the articulatory features.
14 There's tons of research that shows if you teach kids
15 how to make the sounds that really does translate in
16 their de-coding and their in-coding. And then our
17 phonics standards, we really clarified those. Now
18 that -- if y'all are looking at the phonics
19 standards, you see de-coding and in-coding. And if
20 you look at the in-coding, it looks very ticky; it's
21 very explicit on purpose. And so some of the comment
22 we had in public comment was the de-coding standards
23 are not as specific as the in-coding standards. We
24 tried to be really careful because our quality
25 instructional materials sometimes don't label things

1 until 1st grade, even though they're introduced in
2 kindergarten. So we wanted them to teach the concept
3 without necessarily the label, because we wanted that
4 -- that's why we sort of changed the de-coding a
5 little bit. When we got to in-coding we wanted to be
6 really specific. The old standards were very broad;
7 they said things like spell correctly and that
8 doesn't really help a kindergarten teacher know what
9 is my expectation for teaching. We also created a
10 document across K-5 that shows when the de-coding
11 skill is mastered and when the in-coding skill is
12 mastered, because sometimes it's not in the same
13 grade. If you think about you as a learner, you can
14 probably read more words than you can spell. So
15 that's the same way with kids. Sometimes
16 kindergarten, I can teach de-coding and in-coding in
17 the same year; sometimes I teach de-coding and I have
18 to wait a year for the in-coding. So we switched
19 those -- really, we tried to use our experts to help
20 us know when was appropriate and we used many
21 materials from researchers.

22 I don't know what's next.

23 MS. COUNTS: All right. For 6-12, again, the
24 two -- first two bullet points are pretty much the
25 same. And Amber Prinique is going to come and talk

1 about some of the specific changes to 6-12. And I'm
2 going to say about Amber, she's one of those people
3 that you come to her with what you think is going to
4 panic her and she's just going to take a big deep
5 breath and she's like, "We're going to make it work."
6 So I'm really lucky to work with her.

7 So, Amber, come and talk about 6-12.

8 MS. PRINIQUE: Thank you. And I've taken a
9 lesson from Sandy; I'm going to stay on script, so --
10 Good afternoon. Amber Prinique, Disciplinary
11 Literacy Program Manager in the Office of Learning
12 Services.

13 So a couple of things that I wanted to point out
14 in this 6-12 ELA standard is the addition of content
15 standards in the literary and informational strand.
16 They have been added to expose students to a wide
17 range of the major works of literature. We took a
18 chronological approach to where we aligned the eras
19 covered in the social studies classes, so that as
20 students are learning about world history in 6th
21 grade they're also reading literature from the same
22 time period in their English class. And part of the
23 feedback that we had from public comment was we
24 desire a list of works that we could teach in our
25 class. And so, one of the documents that we are

1 going to be working on is simple texts that teachers
2 can use that line up with those eras.

3 The second thing in the 6-12 ELA standards is
4 the recitation standard of well-known works. This
5 has been included to help students really improve
6 their lexical knowledge, as well as increase their
7 communication, enunciation, and cadence skills.
8 Another thing I wanted to point out here, based on
9 the public comment, is with the recitation it did not
10 necessarily mean that the students need to memorize
11 something, but simply to read aloud and present.

12 Finally, the grades 9-10 and 11-12 standards
13 were uncoupled to allow for a strong vertical
14 alignment.

15 MS. COUNTS: So now we can take questions for
16 the K-12 ELA, if you have any.

17 One thing actually I do want to clarify, the
18 content standards that were added are not meant to
19 determine all the literature that's taught in that
20 grade. It is really just so students get a -- you
21 know, get exposed to it; it could be a work or two
22 works. But it is not intended to drive the content
23 in that grade.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any questions over here on
25 ELA?

1 Dr. Moore.

2 DR. MOORE: Thank you, all. I know this is a
3 lot of work by all of you.

4 I think I'll start K -- looking at the
5 elementary standards changes. I've heard it said
6 that there is no one curriculum that is beneficial
7 for a school to address all of the components of what
8 a student needs to read. And I know that y'all's job
9 is not to tell a school what curriculum to use. Is
10 that true? And what kind of conversations are y'all
11 having because of these new standards with that?

12 MS. SHEPARD: That is true. There's not one
13 that has bottom-of-the-rope and top-of-the-rope
14 that's very well combined. There are some that
15 attempt it, but they haven't done it yet; they're not
16 quite there yet. So --

17 MS. SMITH: Tell them what top-of-the-rope
18 means.

19 MS. SHEPARD: I'm sorry. Bottom-of-the-rope
20 skills are just getting the words off the page to
21 that de-coding piece, and then top-of-the-rope is
22 understanding what you read.

23 And so we usually end up having a dual adoption;
24 they'll do something for the bottom-of-the-rope --
25 they'll do Foundations, they'll do Phonics First --

1 and then they'll do something for top-of-the-rope --
2 they'll do CKLA or Wit and Wisdom. They aren't
3 aligned to Arkansas standards because we just now --
4 you just now are getting the opportunity to say yes
5 to these. So our next steps are to go through and
6 help the co-op specialists, because our job this
7 summer is to explain the standards -- this is what we
8 mean, this is how you assess them, these are the
9 resources that we're going to give you. And then the
10 co-ops in their region might have a whole lot of
11 schools using one curriculum piece. Okay. Now, how
12 are we going to line this out so that it matches?
13 What nine weeks does this standard fit in? Which
14 nine weeks does this standard fit in? Which ones
15 make sense to be reported out as far as grades?

16 So that's kind of a -- we have a dual role.
17 We're doing something at the state and we're also
18 helping the co-ops do that in their -- we have a hard
19 time doing that across the state because there's so
20 many different ones, but in regions they kind of
21 focus on one to two.

22 MS. COUNTS: Yeah, and I can -- and we just
23 recently finished the statewide audit by grade level
24 for ELA curriculums that are being used, which is
25 going to help us roll out those supports more

1 efficiently.

2 SECRETARY OLIVA: I might jump in and add, if I
3 can, with Dr. Pride's summation -- I don't always
4 like to follow her. But I think another piece that's
5 important is, to your point, we like to say the
6 standards drive the curriculum, not the textbook. If
7 there was a perfect textbook that met the needs of
8 all students, then I would like to think that every
9 teacher would be using that textbook. But every
10 student comes to the classroom with their own unique
11 set of skills and abilities. And what's great about
12 Learns, where -- we want to get the standards piece
13 built as that foundation. What's great about the
14 Learns bill is it really also tasks our agency with
15 looking at a fragmented kind of component to some of
16 the early learning progress monitoring in
17 kindergarten through 2nd grade to align with the
18 dyslexia screeners. We will now have the ability to
19 do a statewide procurement that's going to embed
20 dyslexia screeners and embed a unified coordinated
21 progress monitoring system; so that when we take
22 those little snapshots in time on the students, if we
23 have an aligned curriculum that has effective
24 classroom level Tier 1 instruction, we're going to
25 have better tools and then be able to have better

1 resources aligned for students that have been
2 identified as possibly having a substantial reading
3 deficiency; and how do we work with those teachers in
4 a 90-minute reading block so that we can set grade
5 level expectation; and then do small group
6 intervention at a differentiated level for the
7 appropriate ability for those students.

8 So getting these standards is going to start
9 building that foundation that will do the curriculum
10 support work. And then the unified progress monitor
11 is going to give access to student performance in
12 real-time for those teachers to make pivots on those
13 instructional decisions and not have to wait till the
14 end of the school year, that we're going to be able
15 to tailor those interventions immediately.

16 DR. MOORE: That's great. And as I've looked
17 and trying to dig in more into RISE and the work
18 that's been done, the more I realize how incredibly
19 complex this is and how much has changed over the
20 past few years. And I feel that I know a lot of
21 teachers are overwhelmed by this curriculum, this
22 curriculum, that -- and so I think the more you are
23 getting down to the student level to see what they
24 need, I feel better in that sense.

25 SECRETARY OLIVA: And I give this team a lot of

1 credit because they've been leading this work for
2 sometime and realizing that we need an evidence-based
3 approach to supporting the teaching of a systematic
4 -- an explicit approach to teaching literacy was such
5 a big movement for this state in the right direction.
6 And to now look at these curriculumms and saying we're
7 not going to support Three Cueing our whole language,
8 our approach is that we know don't have the evidence
9 to what works best for the students in the state of
10 Arkansas. They've been leading this work, and some
11 of the work that this team has been doing around
12 dyslexia screening and supporting students who are
13 struggling in literacy they've been leading for
14 sometime. And I would even venture to say they're
15 probably light-years ahead of a lot of other states
16 in this early literacy space. And what's really
17 helping get this system aligned is by now going back
18 and looking at the work that they've been engaged in
19 around the Science of Reading and building on
20 stronger standards that support the evidence in that
21 research and then getting that aligned, a coordinated
22 progress monitoring system is only going to continue
23 to see this team propel and benefit our students as
24 we build those foundations. We're going to see
25 drastic improvements.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any questions over here? Do
2 you have a question?

3 DR. MOORE: No, come back to me. That's fine.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Well --

5 MS. SAUM: Just a comment.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

7 MS. SAUM: I started looking through these last
8 night, and as a special educator this was so
9 wonderful to see. I could see how I can build on IEP
10 goals; it was so much more clear. In thinking about
11 that special education lens and wanting to get our
12 students as close to grade level and working on grade
13 level standards, this is going to make writing IEPs
14 so much better. The IEPs are going to be stronger
15 and our kids are going to learn more. So, thank you
16 for this work.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions?

18 DR. MOORE: Yes. I'm sorry.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

20 DR. MOORE: I noticed -- when you talk about the
21 handwriting piece in there, where is typing
22 addressed, in what subject area?

23 MS. SHEPARD: Do you want me to speak to it, or
24 y'all?

25 There are typing standards, but they're not in

1 ELA. They're actually in a different set of
2 standards, so --

3 DR. MOORE: Do those appropriately align with
4 how students are assessed, meaning that they're
5 introduced and able to type before they're assessed
6 through typing?

7 MS. SHEPARD: Yes. I'm going to speak to that,
8 even though I'm not an expert in that area.

9 DR. MOORE: And along those same lines, 6-12, I
10 know there's a lot of national discourse about
11 writing and students not being prepared in writing
12 once they get to the collegiate level and beyond.
13 How are writing standards addressed here? And do you
14 feel like they are appropriately addressed and will
15 allow students to succeed in those areas?

16 MS. COUNTS: So one of the changes that we did
17 with writing is that we took a lot of standards that
18 were very redundant and we kind of collapsed them.
19 So where we have -- we might have standards that were
20 very similar that supported argumentative writing,
21 narrative writing, and we made them -- kind of we
22 collapsed them into one. And so that helped us, you
23 know, focus on these writing skills are applicable,
24 no matter what type of writing you're doing.

25 And then in the style section, writing style, we

1 have the more specific nuance differences between the
2 different writing types, and they do progress in
3 complexity as they, you know, go through the grades,
4 up through 6-12.

5 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions on ELA?

7 Dr. Pride.

8 DR. PRIDE: Okay. That's great. All right.
9 So, now to the part where we ask for consideration of
10 ELA standards; we respectfully submit those to you,
11 the State Board of Education for approval. Again,
12 this was an educator-driven process and it was for K-
13 12 for ELA. And they will go for implementation in
14 the 23-24 school year.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. We are
16 ready for a motion on the Arkansas English Language
17 standards.

18 DR. MOORE: I'll do a motion to approve the
19 standards.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion by Dr.
21 Moore to approve the standards.

22 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Second by Mr. Henderson.

24 All in favor?

25 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

2 Motion passes.

3 DR. PRIDE: All right. Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Dr. Pride, I want to say --
5 okay. I want to say thank you to you, your team. I
6 see lots of smiles there because I know that they
7 have worked tirelessly on this over the last few
8 months. And we want to say as a board we appreciate
9 your work, and I'm sure the teachers in the state
10 will appreciate your work -- but the work is just now
11 starting. I see tears, because this is almost like
12 having a new baby, isn't it? So thank y'all for your
13 work. We do appreciate you and we appreciate your
14 hard work. See, that's a mic drop. There you go.

15 MS. SMITH: Thank you, Ms. Newton, for
16 recognizing the hard work that they did.

17 I'm going to tell you -- I don't even have to
18 ask how many of you cried. I would say every group.
19 How many of you walked out of a meeting mad or upset?
20 Yes. Even Dr. Pride came into my office, she'd go
21 [sharp, loud breath intake].

22 DR. PRIDE: We got it.

23 MS. SMITH: So, tomorrow, you're going to see an
24 additional group, because we're going to honor them
25 tomorrow. But these really are the curriculum

1 leaders in our state for ELA and math. They are the
2 curriculum leaders in our state for ELA and math.
3 And when you say they did a two-year job in three
4 months, they did. They rose to every -- every bar we
5 put for them. We said, "We want to go here. We're
6 taking off some of these different restraints that
7 you had before -- couldn't go this way, couldn't go
8 that way. Go out and make them better." Very, very
9 proud of the work that they did.

10 It's easy to stand here before you and say,
11 "This is my team." They did the work. They did the
12 work. So I just appreciate you taking the time to
13 acknowledge them.

14 DR. PRIDE: Thank you.

15 SECRETARY OLIVA: Can I --

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

17 SECRETARY OLIVA: Just real quick before they
18 disappear, because they're probably going back to
19 start working on resource guides now. Just to echo
20 some of the sentiments that Stacy Smith said -- and I
21 know I kind of came in here and this group was really
22 moving down a wonderful path to help support teachers
23 with expectations and clarity on what teaching and
24 learning is. And I kind of came in new, just meeting
25 folks for the first time, and said, "I see what we're

1 doing here, but I want to think a little bit
2 differently about this and how we consider looking at
3 a few different things," and really put a high bar
4 and challenge. And I'm pretty sure they had some
5 choice words for me after I left the room. But at
6 the end of the day I think they'll all say that the
7 product that we're getting across the finish line
8 today is one of the biggest wins we've accomplished
9 in the last few months, that we can do as a state
10 agency, that we know is going to be directly
11 attributable to seeing improved outcomes in learning.
12 Getting these standards in the posture that they are,
13 at the level and depth of support that we're going to
14 be able to provide is going to give our educators,
15 our talented teachers the laser-like focus that they
16 know that they can set that grade-level expectation
17 for every student, push accelerated opportunities,
18 and then provide interventions when necessary. And
19 the core foundational subjects in ELA and math have
20 to be right. And this team spent probably every
21 night and weekend for the last three minutes -- or
22 three months with that mindset that says we can do
23 this and we're going to get it right. And this is a
24 big win and they deserve all the recognition we can
25 give them. So, thank you.

1 MS. SMITH: Did y'all coordinate the color?

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah, they did. Yeah. Yeah,
3 there we go.

4 All right. Well, thank y'all again for your
5 hard work.

6 4. CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATION FOR A WAIVER OF FIRST-TIME
7 TEACHER LICENSURE APPLICATION FEES

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We're going to
9 move on to our next item, Consideration of
10 Recommendation for a Waiver of First-Time Teacher
11 Licensure Application Fees. Dr. Pfeffer, we haven't
12 seen you all morning.

13 SECRETARY OLIVA: She's been hiding.

14 DR. PFEFFER: Hey.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

16 DR. PFEFFER: Yeah. And I do want to say Greg
17 Rogers had promised to do a cheer when they finished
18 today, and Dr. Pride was trying to get him to fulfill
19 it. So maybe we just hold him to that tomorrow
20 morning --

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah. There you go.

22 DR. PFEFFER: -- with the rest of the crew. So
23 --

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: There we go.

25 DR. PFEFFER: Anyway, thank you. And this item

1 is here before you as part of our obligation to help
2 fulfill one of the Executive Orders that the Governor
3 signed very early and set aside priorities for Learns
4 to help lay that blueprint for what would become law.
5 And we know that the educator workforce is one of the
6 priorities of Learns, and especially to make it a
7 priority to remove barriers to get effective teachers
8 in front of every student. And so the Executive
9 Order asks that the Department would work with the
10 Professional Licensure Standards Board and the State
11 Board of Ed. to examine the burden of licensure fees,
12 particularly for new teachers. And in your packet I
13 believe you have an information sheet that shows an
14 example of costs that a new teacher would incur.
15 Because not only are they going to have to apply for
16 that first-time license, they're also completing the
17 requirements for licensure through their programs and
18 taking their licensure tests; so that burden can be
19 significant for a first-time licensee.

20 The cost for the licensure fee is \$124.25.
21 \$75.00 of that is the application fee; the remaining
22 part is for the background check and the child --
23 Central Registry Child Maltreatment check.

24 The licensure fee that -- \$71.25 of that \$75.00
25 does go to fund the Professional License Standards

1 Unit. They oversee all of the Code of Ethics, the
2 Professional Licensure Standards Board, training for
3 the Code of Ethics throughout the state; so those
4 fees are put to good use. However, it has given us a
5 chance to look at several of the different things
6 that a new teacher would face. And after looking at
7 the budget, talking with the PLSB, we feel
8 comfortable in making a recommendation for you to
9 waive the fees for first-time license-seekers from
10 May 1st to August 31st, 2023. That would be a four-
11 month period when we have most of our new teachers
12 seeking their first-time license, and we feel like we
13 can manage the loss of revenue to that PLSB for that
14 time period.

15 So, if there are -- and if you have any
16 questions I will try to answer those.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any questions over here?

18 Any questions over here?

19 I don't see any questions. So we're --

20 MR. SUTTON: Motion to approve.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Oh, we already have a motion.

22 Dr. Sutton is ready to go -- Dr. Sutton -- Mr.
23 Sutton.

24 MR. SUTTON: Doctor is fine.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Well --

1 DR. PFEFFER: You got a promotion.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Dr. Sutton. All right. So we
3 have a motion by Mr. Sutton to approve the waiver for
4 first-time teacher licensure application fees. Do we
5 have a second?

6 DR. MOORE: Second.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Second by Dr. Moore.

8 All in favor?

9 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

11 Motion passes.

12 DR. PFEFFER: Thank you very much.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you. I know that's made
14 a lot of first-time applicants very happy. So that's
15 a good thing.

16 5. NOMINATIONS FOR STATE BOARD CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Next are our nominations for
18 State Board Chair and Vice-Chair. We had a committee
19 work on that. And, Mr. Henderson, you chaired that
20 committee; so would you like to -- I think that might
21 be easier -- give a report of what your committee
22 recommends?

23 MR. HENDERSON: Yes. First, I'd like to say I'm
24 grateful for having the opportunity to chair such an
25 important committee. We met last month; it was an

1 open meeting. And what -- the recommendations we
2 made to the -- in the meeting was for Dr. Moore to be
3 the Chair and also Kathy to be the Vice-Chair.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Okay. So we will
5 I guess first see if they are agreeable.

6 DR. MOORE: Yes.

7 MS. McFETRIDGE: Yes.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes, okay. So they are
9 agreeable. So our options as a board are to vote
10 this meeting or to reschedule it in May. So do we
11 have any reason to wait? Is everybody okay with
12 voting today? Nods of heads, yes or no?

13 Okay. All right. So the first one, Mr.
14 Henderson, would you like to make a nomination for
15 Chair?

16 MR. HENDERSON: I'd like to make a motion for
17 Dr. Moore to serve as Chair of the State Board of
18 Education.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Do we have a
20 second?

21 MR. SUTTON: I'll second.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Dr. Sutton.

23 All right. All in favor?

24 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

1 All right. Do we have another committee member
2 that wanted to make a nomination for Vice-Chair, or
3 is Mr. Henderson the designated spokesman?

4 Go for it, Mr. Henderson.

5 MR. HENDERSON: I make a motion for Kathy
6 McFetridge to be the Vice-Chair of the State Board of
7 Education.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We have a motion
9 for Ms. McFetridge to serve as the Vice-Chair. Do we
10 have a second?

11 MS. WOODS: Second.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Ms. Woods.
13 All in favor?

14 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

16 All right. Congratulations, you two. I'm going
17 to pass the microphone to y'all and you get a chance
18 to speak.

19 DR. MOORE: Don't do that; I might ask too many
20 questions. Thank you all for your trust in us. I
21 have big footsteps to fill and look forward to
22 working with all of you. I know we have a lot of
23 work to be done, a lot of great work done by the
24 agency that we're going to support. So I look
25 forward to doing that in this next year and

1 appreciate you all.

2 MS. McFETRIDGE: This is a huge honor for me, a
3 long-time local school board member and now to be on
4 the State Board; I'm just still sometimes in
5 disbelief that I'm in this chair and really how much
6 it means to me.

7 But, Ouida, you've done an amazing job and I
8 know we'll get to celebrate you in July. So I
9 appreciate all your work and you've been a good
10 example for all of us. So, thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I think y'all will be in great
12 hands. I respect Dr. Moore and Ms. McFetridge. I
13 know that they will do a great job for you.

14 And you did a good job with your committee and
15 your choices. So thank y'all for serving. I really
16 appreciate -- Mr. Henderson is here; Mr. Wood was on
17 the committee; and Ms. Woods was on the -- no?

18 MR. HENDERSON: Ms. Hunter.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Hunter. That's right.
20 That's right. Ms. Hunter. Boy, I messed that up,
21 didn't I? Ms. Hunter. She couldn't be with us
22 today, but Ms. Hunter was the other one that served
23 on the committee. So I really appreciate them
24 serving and doing that for us. And I look forward to
25 watching online and not being here.

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Okay. All right. So I think that's the end of
our action agenda for today.

(The Action Agenda was concluded at 3:00 p.m.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)
) ss.
COUNTY OF SALINE)

I, SHARON K. HILL, CCR, a Certified Stenomask Reporter and Notary Public before whom the foregoing proceedings was taken, do hereby certify that the same is a true and correct transcription before the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, State Board of Education, in Marvell, Arkansas, on April 14, 2023, that the said proceedings was reduced to typewritten form by me or under my direction and supervision; and that the foregoing pages constitute a true and correct transcription of all proceedings had in said matter.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I have no contract with any parties within this action that affects or has a substantial tendency to affect impartiality, that requires me to relinquish control of an original transcript or copies of the transcript before it is certified and delivered to the custodial agency, or that requires me to provide any service not made available to all parties to the action.

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SHARON K. HILL, CCR
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