

ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

JANUARY 12, 2023

9:00 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  
MS. LISA HUNTER  
MR. JEFF WOOD

NON-VOTING PARTICIPANTS:

DR. IVY PFEFFER, Asst. Commissioner  
MS. JESSICA SAUM, Arkansas Teacher of the Year

DESE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. LORI FRENO, General Counsel  
MS. SHASTADY WAGNER, Attorney

LOCATION:

ARKANSAS DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION  
- Auditorium  
#4 Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, AR 72201

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P R O C E E D I N G S

1  
2 1) CONSIDERATION OF STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION WAIVER  
3 REQUESTS

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: The first item on the Action  
5 Agenda is Consideration of Standards for  
6 Accreditation of Waiver Requests. Dr. Sutherlin.

7 DR. SUTHERLIN: So, Matthew Sutherlin, Standards  
8 and Systems Support/Charter.

9 We have two waivers for Class Size that are  
10 being considered today.

11 a) CABOT SCHOOL DISTRICT

12 DR. SUTHERLIN: The first one is a consideration  
13 of a Cabot School District Standards for  
14 Accreditation Waiver. Cabot School District is  
15 requesting a waiver of 1-A.5 Class Size for the 2022-  
16 2023 school year for its 5th and 6th grade art and  
17 music classes. The district would exceed the maximum  
18 number allowed by standard in Cabot Middle School by  
19 five students, and the district is compensating  
20 teachers. So I think they're online.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Is there anyone from  
22 Cabot online?

23 MR. RANDOLPH: I'm here.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Oh, he's here.

25 DR. SUTHERLIN: Oh, good.

1           CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. You want to come  
2 up and maybe tell us a little bit? And then, we'll  
3 see if we have any questions.

4           MR. RANDOLPH: Aaron Randolph, Assistant  
5 Superintendent, Cabot School District. And, yes,  
6 ma'am, thank you all for allowing me to speak today.

7           This waiver request comes about just because we  
8 had an exceptionally large 5th grade class this year,  
9 more so than we were originally slotted for. And so  
10 when we got to time to really finalize classes we  
11 realized where we were. We looked at the law as it  
12 stood and knew that we could seek a waiver for this  
13 and also wanted to make sure we worked with our  
14 staff, approached our staff members about this. And  
15 our staff members said, without hesitation, that they  
16 did not want to move any of their kids to any other  
17 classes.

18          CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

19          MR. RANDOLPH: They wanted to keep them. And so  
20 what we did was we worked with our school board, we  
21 got their approval and made sure that these staff  
22 members were adequately compensated for having the  
23 overage. And to this point, we did it in one  
24 semester, and moving into the second semester we're  
25 still about the same number. And so we agreed to

1           them again and they're being compensated fairly at  
2           their daily rate of pay for those students.

3           CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Let's see if we have  
4           any questions for you.

5           Anyone on my left have a question?

6           Over here?

7           One question I would ask would be would this  
8           waiver be applied only in that specific instance?

9           MR. RANDOLPH: Yes, ma'am.

10          CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

11          MR. RANDOLPH: Yes, ma'am. And that was one of  
12          the things our school board was very adamant about  
13          was they did not want to use this for any core  
14          classes or anything else.

15          CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right.

16          Any other discussion?

17          DR. MOORE: I do have a question.

18          CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Dr. Moore.

19          DR. MOORE: So the pay, is that required by law  
20          or is that something that --

21          MR. RANDOLPH: (Nodding head up and down.)

22          DR. MOORE: Okay.

23          MR. RANDOLPH: Yes, ma'am.

24          DR. MOORE: And so, but your board worked out  
25          the formula for the teachers?

1 MR. RANDOLPH: There was a very specific formula  
2 that's listed in the law.

3 DR. MOORE: Okay.

4 MR. RANDOLPH: Actually, in the rules. And so  
5 you essentially take whatever their daily rate of pay  
6 is, you look at the total number of students at 150  
7 per day, and then you multiply that out. So whatever  
8 you're in excess of that 150 per day they get that  
9 certain amount for the semester.

10 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other discussion?

12 MS. McFETRIDGE: So are your 5th and 6th grade  
13 classes combined?

14 MR. RANDOLPH: No, ma'am. We -- they rotate.  
15 We have a team structure in 5th and 6th grade, and so  
16 just they serve both 5th and 6th grade students  
17 during the day. And so that's what put them there.  
18 They were not exceeding that maximum of 30 per day --  
19 or, sorry -- per class period. But when you worked  
20 it out they were exceeding the 150 per day.

21 MS. McFETRIDGE: So you don't believe you'll  
22 have the same issue next year?

23 MR. RANDOLPH: We are currently working on  
24 looking at re-zoning and everything else that may  
25 come along with that. And also, again, this 5th

1 grade class was a lot larger than what we've had in  
2 the past.

3 MS. McFETRIDGE: Okay. Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other discussion or  
5 questions?

6 Okay. We're ready for a motion.

7 MS. McFETRIDGE: I'll make the motion that we  
8 approve the waiver.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion to  
10 approve by Ms. McFetridge.

11 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Henderson.  
13 All in favor?

14 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

16 Congratulations.

17 MR. RANDOLPH: Thank you.

18 b) SOUTH CONWAY COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. South Conway  
20 School District.

21 DR. SUTHERLIN: So consideration of South Conway  
22 School District Standard for Accreditation Waiver,  
23 South Conway School District is requesting a waiver  
24 of 1-A.5 Class Size. The district is over the  
25 maximum number of students allowed by standard, which

1 is 28, by one student in two 5th grade classrooms  
2 (art and music). And the district is compensating  
3 teachers for the overage.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Fifth grade again, huh?

5 DR. SUTHERLIN: Uh-huh.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Is there someone  
7 here or online from South Conway?

8 MS. HENDRIX: Yes, ma'am. I'm Lori Hendrix.  
9 I'm online. I'm the Associate Superintendent.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Welcome, Ms. Hendrix.  
11 Would you like to speak a little bit to this?

12 MS. HENDRIX: Well, very similar to what other  
13 districts may be experiencing, we have a large 5th  
14 grade class, and it's one of those things where we  
15 fluctuate. In some classes it's only being over by  
16 one. This is catching us in our activity periods  
17 when we rotate through. We don't anticipate this  
18 being a long-term problem; it's just that it's a  
19 large class and we're trying to be efficient with  
20 staffing. And we did compensate the teachers; they  
21 signed addendum contracts. And it should be a short-  
22 term problem. It's just that we're growing and we  
23 weren't prepared for that.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Growth is a good thing.  
25 We'll see if we have any questions.



1                   Anyone over here on my left have a question?

2                   Over here?

3                   All right. Again, my same question, this waiver  
4 will be only used in this specific situation?

5                   MS. HENDRIX: Yes, ma'am.

6                   CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. All right. We're  
7 ready for a motion.

8                   MS. McFETRIDGE: I make the motion that we  
9 approve the waiver.

10                   CHAIRMAN NEWTON: We have a motion by Ms.  
11 McFetridge.

12                   DR. MOORE: Second.

13                   MR. SUTTON: Second.

14                   CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Dr. Moore.  
15 All in favor?

16                   (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

17                   CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

18                   Thank you. Thank you for being here.

19                   MS. HENDRIX: Thank you.

20 2) ARKANSAS ACADEMIC MATHEMATIC STANDARDS

21                   CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We pulled the Math  
22 Standards.

23 3) CONSIDERATION OF CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL OPEN ENROLLMENT  
24 CHARTER RENEWAL DECISIONS

25                   CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So we are to the Charter

1 Renewal Decisions. Ms. Summons.

2 MS. SUMMONS: Good morning. Dorie Summons --

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good morning.

4 MS. SUMMONS: -- Public School Charter Director.

5 The Charter Authorizing Panel met on December  
6 13th and 14th of 2022, to consider renewals for the  
7 open enrollment charter schools that are on the  
8 agenda. Each of the following open enrollment  
9 charters were approved unanimously. And so we'll  
10 need your vote to either review or not review each  
11 one of these charters.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We'll begin with  
13 KIPP?

14 MS. SUMMONS: Yes, ma'am.

15 a) KIPP DELTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

16 MS. SUMMONS: The first one up is KIPP Delta  
17 Public Schools. The district is requesting a renewal  
18 of the charter for a five-year period. The campuses  
19 serve grades pre-K through 12. The current cap  
20 enrollment is 2,600 students. And the charter will  
21 continue to follow a college prep educational model.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Is there someone  
23 from KIPP?

24 MS. SUMMONS: Yes, ma'am. We have a couple of  
25 people that are online for KIPP.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

2 MS. SUMMONS: I mean, excuse me, not KIPP --  
3 that is -- let's see --

4 MS. STITZINGER: Hey, y'all. This is Megan  
5 Stitzinger with KIPP Delta.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. We'll see  
7 if we have any questions from the Board.

8 Anyone over here have a question about KIPP?

9 MR. SUTTON: Is DESE making any recommendation  
10 for renewal or is this --

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: It came from the Charter to be  
12 -- Charter Panel to renew.

13 MR. SUTTON: They've recommended it?

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

15 MR. SUTTON: Okay.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any questions over here?

17 Mr. Wood.

18 MR. WOOD: I don't know that it's exactly a  
19 question. I do have concerns about the number of D  
20 and F schools in the organization. I'm not sure that  
21 it wouldn't be worth a little bit of review and  
22 discussion with --

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

24 MR. WOOD: -- the organization to --

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

1 MR. WOOD: -- as to their plans for that.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Because we can't really  
3 discuss it here, because the charter is not prepared  
4 with questions. So if we want to dive deeper we  
5 would need to make a motion to review instead of not  
6 review.

7 Okay. Is that your motion?

8 MR. WOOD: If there's no other discussion about  
9 it, that would be my motion that we would review  
10 KIPP's application.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion to  
12 review by Mr. Wood. We've got --

13 DR. MOORE: May I ask a question?

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Let's see what --

15 MS. WAGNER: Good morning. Shastady Wagner with  
16 DESE Legal.

17 So if you choose to review, you have to be very  
18 specific about what exactly we want from the charter  
19 so they can come prepared for the next scheduled  
20 meeting.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. So we'll  
22 see if we get a second and then we'll make a list of  
23 what we want them to be prepared to answer.

24 Dr. Moore, you had a question?

25 DR. MOORE: I think in process we have been able

1 to ask questions of the charter.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: It's very few questions  
3 because the charter is not prepared -- if I'm right  
4 -- you correct me if I'm wrong -- we don't really get  
5 into a big discussion on this day.

6 MS. WAGNER: Correct. If you have some factual  
7 questions, that's fine. But if we're going to get  
8 into the weeds of things so-to-speak, then, yes, we  
9 would have to call them back for review so the  
10 charter is prepared.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So we do have a motion  
12 to review. Do -- is there a second?

13 MR. SUTTON: Can I ask a question?

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

15 MR. SUTTON: So pushing this back, is that  
16 detrimental to the school?

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Summons can answer that  
18 question. Would it in any way prevent the district  
19 from -- or the charter from moving forward?

20 MS. SUMMONS: No. But we do have several that  
21 are on here that you may choose to review or not  
22 review.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Dr.  
24 Pfeffer, did you have --

25 MR. SUTTON: Are you saying you didn't think

1 this would be one of them?

2 MS. SUMMONS: No, I'm not saying that.

3 MR. WOOD: Probably warning you about how many  
4 we want to review, but --

5 DR. PFEFFER: Yeah. Would you -- and maybe you  
6 can talk a little bit about their timelines and why  
7 we have the reviews set at the certain times and then  
8 what takes place and maybe give the Board just a  
9 little more context?

10 MS. WAGNER: Sure. So these charters are  
11 actually -- they're all approved through the end of  
12 this school year. So if we review it now -- if the  
13 Board decides to review it now, that will not -- it  
14 will not affect them finishing out the school year.  
15 No. So, which is why we do this so early, so that if  
16 there are reviews we can go ahead and get them taken  
17 care of so it doesn't affect their timeline at all.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We still have a  
19 motion on the floor to review. Is there a second?

20 MR. SUTTON: I'll second Mr. Wood's --

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have --

22 MR. SUTTON: -- motion.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right -- have a second by  
24 Mr. Sutton.

25 All -- we'll see if we can just do a voice-vote.

1 All in favor?

2 (MAJORITY CHORUS OF AYES)

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

4 DR. MOORE: Yes.

5 DR. HILL: Yes.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So we had one opposed.

7 DR. HILL: Two.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Two. Two opposed.

9 So the motion passes.

10 All right. So this would be on our next month  
11 agenda. We need some, Mr. Wood, specific items that  
12 you would like to have the charter prepared to answer  
13 -- specific questions.

14 MR. WOOD: Okay.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Can we get that to you at some  
16 point today or do you need it now?

17 MS. WAGNER: Today is fine. We just need to be  
18 able to notify the charter exactly of what we need  
19 from them.

20 MR. WOOD: I don't like speaking unilaterally;  
21 you know, my issues are not necessarily the Board's  
22 issues.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right.

24 MR. WOOD: But I wasn't necessarily prepared to,  
25 you know, have a list of topics to discuss and

1 review. I didn't know that was part of this process  
2 to announce topics or whatever.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

4 MR. WOOD: But I would welcome assistance from  
5 the Department with regard to what that type of  
6 meeting would be like with these organizations that  
7 we have --

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Smith is coming to your  
9 rescue.

10 MS. SMITH: So, remember this -- Stacy Smith,  
11 Deputy Commissioner. I would suggest since you  
12 specifically said the D and F that you would like to  
13 know more information about the academics and the  
14 intervention and support in improving their academics  
15 --

16 MR. WOOD: Yes.

17 MS. SMITH: -- specifically, around their letter  
18 grade.

19 MR. WOOD: Yes.

20 MS. SMITH: So what students they've identified,  
21 what interventions they've put in place, what's their  
22 curriculum -- I think that's the -- well, I think  
23 that's what you're looking for.

24 MR. WOOD: That's exactly right. That, I mean,  
25 comprehensive --



1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

2 MR. WOOD: -- look at what --

3 MS. SMITH: Yeah. You're --

4 MR. WOOD: -- what is their plan forward to  
5 improve from their current letter grade --

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

7 MR. WOOD: -- of a D or F.

8 MS. SMITH: I think well-stated.

9 MR. WOOD: Okay. Yes.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Very good.

11 DR. PFEFFER: And also for the board members, on  
12 the agenda there are the voting sheets from the  
13 Charter Panel members and you can see what their  
14 comments were as they made their decision.

15 MR. WOOD: I see.

16 DR. PFEFFER: Yeah. And also the transcript  
17 from the meeting would be available to be able to go  
18 back and look at, prior to the next meeting.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes. Ms. Coffman.

20 MS. COFFMAN: Deborah Coffman, Accountability.

21 Just to also let you know, the Charter Panel is  
22 also reviewing all charters with D's and F's, so they  
23 started that process in November. They ask for  
24 additional information and that information is coming  
25 back to the Charter Panel in February. So you might

1 want to tune in.

2 MR. WOOD: Sure.

3 MS. COFFMAN: You'll see a lot more of a  
4 discussion about the schools at that time as well.

5 DR. MOORE: You know, I was going to state that  
6 I voted not to review because I feel like the process  
7 is efficient and they do that review and we do that  
8 review. Is there a way for us to be more involved in  
9 that review at their -- you know, for us to send  
10 questions to the Panel to be asked? Could we be  
11 there? I mean, if we were there could we ask  
12 questions or --

13 MS. COFFMAN: Absolutely.

14 DR. MOORE: I don't want us to get --

15 MS. COFFMAN: We'd love it. Come on.

16 DR. MOORE: -- personally get in a habit of  
17 having both --

18 MS. COFFMAN: Yeah.

19 DR. MOORE: -- reviews, just because --

20 MS. COFFMAN: The only issue is the timing, in  
21 that --

22 DR. MOORE: Yeah.

23 MS. COFFMAN: -- you know, you'll come back in  
24 February and review this one, and then the following  
25 week the Charter Panel will be having their review.

1           So if questions are answered here, then probably  
2           we'll go lighter in the discussion of that one  
3           because most of -- we'll be watching this one, as  
4           well; our panel members will too. So -- but, yes,  
5           you're more than welcome to send your questions to us  
6           --

7           DR. MOORE: Okay.

8           MS. COFFMAN: -- and we'll be able to ask them  
9           for you or we'd love for you to attend.

10          DR. MOORE: Okay. I think our board gets a  
11          general just email saying this is happening, but I  
12          think it might be in the future helpful for us to be  
13          more included in this is specifically what's  
14          happening at that board so that when it -- you know,  
15          we get the very last -- we're the very last stop and  
16          haven't seen everything that's gone on in the process  
17          to get there. I think it might be helpful.

18          MS. WOODS: I do seem to remember, when I first  
19          joined, we did sit in on like a Charter Authorizing  
20          Panel review of one or two, just to see the process  
21          work. I know we've basically turned over the Board  
22          again since then, so it might be worth hosting that  
23          again.

24          DR. HILL: And let me comment because I've been  
25          involved in a couple of charters, and that's the

1 reason I voted no, because I had the process to --  
2 you know, I've actually had the charter school to  
3 call me, worked with -- been on several of those  
4 situations to know that that process is a process  
5 that we just come to stamp, knowing what they're  
6 doing. So that's why I voted not to review, because  
7 I'm comfortable with the decision, after six years  
8 knowing what's going on in that process.

9 MS. COFFMAN: The Charter Panel is quite  
10 thorough.

11 DR. HILL: Absolutely.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

13 MR. WOOD: Can I just say I appreciate those  
14 comments. I didn't know about that, you know, going  
15 on. So I'm not trying to create extra layers of just  
16 more work and more review. I would -- I guess, why  
17 are we being asked to approve these before that panel  
18 has done their more thorough review?

19 DR. PFEFFER: Ms. Coffman, you mentioned that  
20 the Charter Panel was going to be doing a review of D  
21 and F schools. Is that correct?

22 MS. COFFMAN: Correct. So the Charter Panel  
23 started that review in November, as per our timeline,  
24 and then application renewals come up in December.  
25 So, typically, when you do your D and F review,

1           you've done that in November, and then the  
2           applications for renewal come up in December.  
3           However, this year the Charter Panel, in their  
4           thoroughness, reviewed all the data and asked for  
5           additional data and we had to have time to bring --  
6           gather all that additional data. So we're working on  
7           putting all of the additional data documents into  
8           Boardbook and -- to prepare for February. We didn't  
9           have time to get it all done with the application  
10          process -- and it's a lot. So, we are working right  
11          now -- the team has been pulling together all of the  
12          additional data, just like they asked you "what would  
13          you like to see or hear;" so they've been pulling all  
14          of those additional documents. And all of that will  
15          be on the February agenda for continued review by the  
16          Panel. So, typically, it's not out-of-order.

17                 MR. WOOD: I see.

18                 MS. COFFMAN: It's out-of-order this year  
19                 because there was a continuation and more thorough  
20                 review.

21                 MS. HUNTER: So was there an option to defer the  
22                 application process? You know, because --

23                 MS. COFFMAN: Not by law.

24                 MS. HUNTER: -- just to -- not by law?

25                 MS. COFFMAN: Huh-uh.

1 MS. HUNTER: Because of these D's and F's,  
2 because of this situation?

3 MS. WAGNER: Yes. The application timeline was  
4 already approved; so they had already started through  
5 that timeline prior to knowing what their scores  
6 were. So we had no ability to postpone all of that.  
7 But the CAP -- the CAP -- the CAP is the Charter  
8 Authorizing Panel, and it takes care of reviewing  
9 charters and all of that. So that is statutorily set  
10 that they have to do all that, and then it comes to  
11 you guys for review or not review. So that is just a  
12 statutorily set timeline, so that's why it works that  
13 way.

14 DR. MOORE: May I ask a question on that? If  
15 the Charter Panel were to find grave concerns at  
16 whatever point in time for a school, they could  
17 choose at whatever point in time to vote for closure  
18 or probation or that type of thing?

19 MS. COFFMAN: That's --

20 MS. WAGNER: Yes.

21 MS. COFFMAN: That's correct. At any time that  
22 we have a concern the Charter Panel can request that  
23 charter come in, we go through a full-blown hearing,  
24 and then a decision can be made that would then come  
25 to the State Board. So, I mean, the Office of

1 Charter keeps an eye on charters. They have  
2 regularly scheduled monitorings in our state -- in  
3 our standard operating procedures. They come through  
4 this timeline in the Charter Panel, and then they  
5 come before you to review. But as Ms. Hunter said,  
6 we're a little out of the order because we've asked  
7 for additional information -- and the reason we've  
8 asked for additional information is because we've  
9 been through a pandemic. So the questions we're  
10 asking are -- we understand there have been drops in  
11 scores; we understand that. The question is, what  
12 are you doing to address those, how are you  
13 addressing the learning loss to get back on track in  
14 a rapid pace. And so that's what we've been having  
15 those conversations about.

16 DR. MOORE: I wonder if could we have a joint  
17 meeting at some point in time or -- you know, it used  
18 to be that the State Board did the whole entire --  
19 did the review and then it got pushed to the Panel.  
20 And so I think we're still in this different members  
21 coming at different times, grappling with what is our  
22 role in that review process.

23 MS. FRENO: Dr. Moore, I think when you're  
24 talking about a joint meeting the law governs the  
25 Charter Authorizer Panel and then what the State

1 Board's role is. If you're talking more about like a  
2 work session where everyone can come together, the  
3 Charter Authorizer Panel and the State Board, that  
4 would be perfectly fine. But that would be a work  
5 session.

6 DR. MOORE: Okay.

7 MS. FRENO: Not, you know --

8 DR. MOORE: You couldn't do the review at the  
9 same time. Okay.

10 MS. FRENO: Yes.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: We had a work session --

12 MS. FRENO: I think we had --

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: -- with the Charter Panel not  
14 long ago. Was it December, November? We had  
15 training with them. Yes.

16 MS. FRENO: And you might remember we did that  
17 with PLSB once. We had the State Board and PLSB get  
18 together and have a work session.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

20 MR. HENDERSON: You know, I know we just voted  
21 to defer until February. Does the possibility exist  
22 for voting after the Board had opportunity to do  
23 their assessment?

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So would we -- and I guess,  
25 Ms. Lori, you may need to help me here. We've



1 already had a motion to review. Could -- if the --  
2 it was the Board's pleasure to rescind that motion  
3 and then -- once y'all review again in February, it  
4 would come back to us again. Right?

5 MS. FRENO: (Shaking head from side to side.)

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: It will not?

7 MS. FRENO: It would have to be tabled.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

9 MS. FRENO: So what you would do is you would  
10 start -- if Mr. Wood wanted to rescind his motion, he  
11 could. And then, you know, we'd need a second and a  
12 vote. I mean, and then if that would happen and the  
13 motion would be rescinded, at that point then there  
14 would be -- you would have a motion to table this  
15 item until the next State Board meeting.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Until after the --

17 MS. FRENO: The motion, second, and vote.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: -- after the Charter Panel?  
19 Because the next board meeting --

20 MS. FRENO: Correct.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: -- wouldn't be far enough  
22 along the line. Okay.

23 So just trying to clear up some options for  
24 y'all. It's up to you, the Board, what y'all will  
25 like to do.

1 MS. SAUM: Can I ask one more question?

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

3 MS. SAUM: In looking at these different  
4 requests, some are for five, some are for seven, some  
5 are for ten years. Is that reflective of concerns  
6 about the charters or is that just what the  
7 districts, the charters had requested?

8 MS. WAGNER: So for district conversions --  
9 there are two district conversions on there, which  
10 are Bauxite and Polk County. Those by law can only  
11 have a five-year renewal; so that's why theirs are  
12 five. Now the open enrollment charters can have up  
13 to -- they can ask for a 20-year renewal; so those  
14 renewals were asked for by the charters and those --  
15 they were either asked for by the charters -- now  
16 some of them asked for more and that's what the  
17 Charter -- that's what the Panel gave them. So the  
18 years that are reflected on the agenda are exactly  
19 what the Panel authorized them to renew for.

20 MS. SAUM: Thank you.

21 MS. WAGNER: You're welcome.

22 MS. SMITH: Can I make a comment? I'm just  
23 dying --

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Smith.

25 MS. SMITH: -- back here in my seat.

1                   CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

2                   MS. SMITH: Okay. So one thing to think about  
3 -- I think we've got two different things going on  
4 here. One is the approval of their application to  
5 function as a school and be open next year, and  
6 that's what you're being asked to review that  
7 application, accept it or not accept it. Then you  
8 have the second thing where the Panel has said you  
9 have a letter grade of a D or an F and we want you to  
10 come and talk to us about why that's the case.  
11 Traditional public schools don't have to come in here  
12 and ask to be open if they have a D or an F or have  
13 an application to be open next year. Okay. So their  
14 application, when it says for five years it's to  
15 function as an open school next year. The same way  
16 that we're talking about possibly having a work  
17 session for public schools and just understanding why  
18 they have D's and F's and those schools coming and  
19 possibly visiting or talking to you and telling what  
20 they're doing is the same thing that the Charter  
21 Panel is doing. So, today, you're making the  
22 decision on approving their application to be open as  
23 a school for the next five years. At any time you  
24 can direct the Charter Panel to pull the district  
25 back in and reconsider that; you could -- I mean they

1 could have another hearing. So application, and then  
2 the like how are you functioning. I don't know. I  
3 was trying to separate the two.

4 MS. HUNTER: So that -- I mean I think that is a  
5 very important distinction. And I would add to that  
6 that at any -- and this is a question -- at any time  
7 if, you know, as the Panel is reviewing these D and F  
8 schools they find their plan or their efforts  
9 unacceptable, then those charters can be pulled or  
10 revoked.

11 MS. SMITH: Yes.

12 MS. HUNTER: Is that true?

13 MS. SMITH: That Charter Panel could pull them  
14 in, they could make a vote; then, that  
15 recommendation, whether to close or do something --

16 MS. HUNTER: Yeah.

17 MS. SMITH: -- would come to you --

18 MS. HUNTER: Yeah.

19 MS. SMITH: -- for you to finalize.

20 MS. HUNTER: Okay.

21 MS. SMITH: So it's always going to come back to  
22 you for that final.

23 MS. HUNTER: So the five-year, ten-year,  
24 whatever it is, it is -- it could change at any time  
25 depending on the performance of the school?

1 MS. SMITH: Correct.

2 MS. HUNTER: Okay.

3 MS. SMITH: And for a charter, five years, seven  
4 years, you know, they're talking about leases --

5 MS. HUNTER: Sure.

6 MS. SMITH: -- buildings, contracts for  
7 employees. So when you do short-term, one, two,  
8 three years, you're not giving them the ability and  
9 the structure to set up.

10 MS. HUNTER: Sure. Thank you.

11 MS. SMITH: Does that help? Okay.

12 MS. WOODS: But am I wrong, have we changed  
13 years before from a review standpoint? Haven't we  
14 received applications before that had five years and  
15 we agreed to not review but we did a three-year, or  
16 am I --

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: That's for digital learning  
18 plans, I think. Isn't it?

19 MS. WOODS: Is that -- okay.

20 MS. SMITH: Yeah.

21 DR. PFEFFER: And I think with what you're doing  
22 today is you -- the Charter Authorizing Panel has  
23 made the decision based on the review that they did  
24 with the applicant. So you would either accept that  
25 recommendation from the Charter Panel or you would

1 then bring them in to review and do that more  
2 thorough analysis on your own to make that  
3 modification. So that's -- Ms. Smith's distinction,  
4 I think, was very helpful in terms of it's the  
5 application, are you accepting the recommendation  
6 from the Charter Panel.

7 MS. WAGNER: And, Ms. Hunter, to address what  
8 you asked, we -- so the Charter Authorizing Panel is  
9 actually required by law to review charters every  
10 single year. So all charters are reviewed every  
11 year.

12 MS. HUNTER: Thank you.

13 MS. WAGNER: You're welcome.

14 MR. WOOD: Ms. Newton, based on the conversation  
15 that we've had and things I've learned since about  
16 five minutes ago, I would feel far more comfortable  
17 making a motion to not review the application now,  
18 understanding that there's a significant  
19 accountability process going on that I did not  
20 previously know about.

21 And I do -- I will want the record to reflect  
22 that I am grumpy about D and F schools and I'm  
23 equally grumpy about charter D and F schools, as I am  
24 traditional public schools. And so I am concerned  
25 and want to hear what our leaders across the state

1 are doing to improve the education in those schools,  
2 but I have a better understanding of what we're being  
3 asked now and what the broader process is.

4 So I guess with that I'll make a motion to not  
5 review the --

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Would it be to rescind?  
7 Is that correct, Ms. --

8 MS. FRENO: Yes. There would have to be a  
9 motion to rescind, Mr. Wood --

10 MR. WOOD: Okay.

11 MS. FRENO: - as a first step.

12 MR. WOOD: Sure.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

14 MR. WOOD: I move to rescind the decision that  
15 was just made to review KIPP's application.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We have a motion  
17 to rescind by Mr. Wood.

18 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

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

21 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

23 Okay. Now we need a motion to review or not  
24 review.

25 MR. WOOD: I'll move to not review.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion by Mr.  
2 Wood not to review KIPP Delta.

3 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Henderson.  
5 All in favor?

6 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

8 We got there. And, Ms. Coffman, I think it  
9 shows the confidence that we have in your -- in the  
10 Charter Panel.

11 MS. COFFMAN: Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: And so when we get the notice  
13 -- it is live-streamed. Correct?

14 MS. COFFMAN: Yes, it is live-streamed. The  
15 full agenda is posted in Boardbook. But I will ask  
16 Ms. Gina to send you all a notification as soon as it  
17 comes out so that you can start looking through. But  
18 if you have questions that you want the Panel to ask  
19 so that you'll know what the answer is, when you see  
20 that send them to Dorie, send them to Matthew, send  
21 them to me, send them to Shasta, whomever, and --  
22 send them to Gina and she'll forward them to us. But  
23 we'll be happy to ask those questions during that  
24 review.

25 MR. WOOD: I want to, if I could just --



1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

2 MR. WOOD: -- real quickly say I want to commend  
3 them for taking the time to ask more questions, to  
4 dig deeper, even if that messes up our timeline or  
5 whatever, it doesn't look perfect on the calendar.  
6 Because that's exactly what I want to see, that  
7 they're not just doing the minimum and --

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Doing the same thing again.

9 MR. WOOD: -- and rubber-stamping applications,  
10 that they're really digging in. So, good job --

11 MS. COFFMAN: Thank you.

12 MR. WOOD: -- to the Panel and I look forward to  
13 reading what they have.

14 MS. COFFMAN: So the additional -- I'm sorry --

15 DR. HILL: No.

16 MS. COFFMAN: -- the additional documents that  
17 were posted -- that were requested were school  
18 improvement plans, district support plans, the DESE  
19 plan of support, and the ESSER use of funds plans.

20 DR. SUTHERLIN: Geographic comparisons.

21 MS. COFFMAN: And geographic comparisons. So  
22 that's the additional data that was requested. It  
23 takes a little time to compile.

24 MR. WOOD: Sure.

25 MS. COFFMAN: And we'll have it ready for them

1 in February, early, as soon as possible. I think --

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Dr. Hill.

3 DR. HILL: No, I was just going to let Jeff know  
4 I've been involved in a few of those that -- from the  
5 Charter that have been here with those and we've  
6 called to the table, and for your comfort to know  
7 that there is a very thorough process going on, in  
8 detail. In fact, when there is a crisis the charter  
9 school will call you, you know. That part is what  
10 she's trying to say. That's what we're trying to  
11 help with, "Here are our struggles." And so there's  
12 no rubber-stamp.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Huh-uh.

14 DR. HILL: I think -- I think from a standpoint  
15 -- from a board oversight that we have to look at the  
16 D and F schools for these charter schools is really  
17 how the charter school is oftentimes intervening to  
18 improve a learning situation. And if we take that  
19 situation out, where does that child go, and I think  
20 that's the big picture. Because I always say, you  
21 know, if you close something you need to know where  
22 somebody is going, public or -- you know what I'm  
23 saying -- public or charter. I mean it's just that  
24 you have to have an alternative education system in  
25 place. There's a lot of things strategizing that

1 with the charter school folks, just like Elaine -- I  
2 mean what we're doing. But what's going to happen,  
3 you know, if you do that? It's one thing to close a  
4 place but are they going someplace better? I mean I  
5 just think we have to look at that holistically and  
6 not just say, okay, D/F, D/F. That's not good.  
7 Okay, what's the alternative?

8 MR. WOOD: Sure.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Dr. Moore.

10 DR. MOORE: Just really quick, we also do this  
11 process with Act 1240 waivers in that we give waivers  
12 to districts, and we very rarely have that  
13 conversation and we give waivers to D and F schools  
14 all the time. So I think it's important for us to  
15 think about when we are giving those waivers in the  
16 future that we are having that level of screening as  
17 well.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

19 DR. MOORE: I mean some of them might need the  
20 waiver to perform better, you know. But I think we  
21 need to keep in mind we're having these conversations  
22 with them as well, because we're seeing,  
23 unfortunately, districts that aren't maybe using  
24 those to push that. And so I think we want to have  
25 that across-the-board with all those districts that

1 we can.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes. All right. Okay.

3 MS. FRENO: Ms. Newton, I just wanted to make  
4 one comment about -- you know, you all are welcome,  
5 as was pointed out, to send questions to anybody at  
6 the Department. But just as an FOI reminder, don't  
7 ever copy each other on any of the emails that you  
8 send because you're not to be communicating with one  
9 another outside the board meeting. I know you know  
10 that, but I just -- it's just a reminder.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you, Ms. Freno.

12 So we as adults need often reminders, so that's  
13 why they make these.

14 b) PREMIER HIGH SCHOOLS OF ARKANSAS

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We're ready to  
16 move on now to Premier High Schools of Arkansas.

17 MS. SUMMONS: Before we get started with  
18 Premier, I will say that the transcripts from the  
19 13th and the 14th are posted on the Charter  
20 Authorizing Panel page. So it's the full transcript  
21 and the video from those meetings.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Thank you.

23 MS. SUMMONS: Uh-huh.

24 Okay. Premier High School, the district is  
25 requesting renewal for a five-year period. The

1 campuses serve grades 9-12. The current enrollment  
2 cap is 600 students. The charter will continue to  
3 follow a blend of alternative learning environment  
4 and a credit recovery educational model.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Are there any  
6 questions or discussion about Premier?

7 Dr. Moore.

8 DR. MOORE: Yes. Will Premier also be having  
9 that review?

10 MS. SUMMONS: Yes. Well, they don't receive a  
11 letter grade because theirs is a little bit  
12 different.

13 DR. MOORE: Okay.

14 MS. SUMMONS: They don't receive a letter grade.  
15 But we did --

16 DR. MOORE: Can you talk to us a little bit  
17 about that?

18 MS. SUMMONS: We have been meeting with them  
19 often.

20 DR. MOORE: Okay.

21 MS. COFFMAN: So under law, they meet the  
22 criteria to be exempt from letter grades because they  
23 are a credit recovery school -- a credit recovery  
24 high school.

25 DR. MOORE: Meaning ALE? Is that credit

1 recovery different from an ALE or what -- is that one  
2 and the same?

3 MS. COFFMAN: I don't have the wording of that  
4 law in front of me, but it's kind of that all-  
5 encompassing -- if you are bringing back in kids that  
6 otherwise would've just dropped out -- so if you're  
7 bringing them back in, then you are exempt. We  
8 exempt School for the Blind, School for the Deaf, DYS  
9 schools, and then it gives the definition for high  
10 schools.

11 DR. HILL: I'm familiar with this school,  
12 Premier, based on this kind of dropout prevention,  
13 because of them being on the campus of Arkansas  
14 Baptist College. And this is what I was talking  
15 about is that if you didn't have this school, then  
16 your graduates -- your high school completions would  
17 be even lower. So it's important -- this is a last  
18 chance safety-net that -- I came in and made a  
19 presentation to the Board in 2009 and '10, to have  
20 this institution on the campus of Arkansas Baptist  
21 College as one of their campuses. So it's really  
22 what we're trying to do to address the violence issue  
23 in our city, to specifically recruit, retain, and  
24 graduate a specific population who has not  
25 matriculated in the normal classroom setting. And

1 so, you know, it's either that or a GED in which we  
2 try to do that. And so that's what I was actually  
3 talking about having this type of place available as  
4 a last-chance instead of the streets or the prison.

5 MS. COFFMAN: And typically these students  
6 wouldn't go on their own to get a GED. They need a  
7 layer of support, and that's why schools like  
8 Premier, Graduate Arkansas -- that's why they work;  
9 they just work differently. They're working with  
10 students that have been through great trauma; they  
11 have been trafficked; they have been abused; they are  
12 in situations where one day they're homeless and the  
13 next day they're not, and the third day they are;  
14 they move around; they have their own children.

15 DR. HILL: All of that.

16 MS. COFFMAN: Plus, and above. And things that  
17 we don't even know about and/or can discuss. So  
18 that's who these children are. And these schools,  
19 like Premier, they're reaching out to them. And when  
20 we work with them we're strategizing how do we get to  
21 these kids -- oh, we can't get them -- we can't get  
22 them to come to school; can we provide school to  
23 them? And that's what we're working on is just  
24 trying to keep them engaged and give them this  
25 chance.

1 MS. HUNTER: So I think that -- I was unaware  
2 that this charter, this particular purpose was out  
3 there, and I applaud all the work that you've done to  
4 bring it forward. But how do -- so what is the  
5 measure of success for these schools? I mean absent  
6 a letter grade -- and I understand why there's not a  
7 letter grade -- but how do we measure one against the  
8 other and make sure that they are doing what their  
9 stated purpose is?

10 MS. COFFMAN: So we do follow the same federal  
11 accountability with them; we do not have an alternate  
12 accountability at the federal -- in the federal level  
13 of ESSA at this time. We study that in other states  
14 to see how anybody else is doing it, to see if  
15 anybody ever gets one approved at the federal level.  
16 But, certainly, at the state level our kind of  
17 specialization or the way we look at them  
18 differently, one, is we do not provide a letter grade  
19 -- that's one part of that; but looking at them  
20 through the lens of what is their mission, letting  
21 their mission be the guide to see if they're  
22 accomplishing their mission.

23 So with -- particularly with Premier what we've  
24 been looking at is what is your graduation rate,  
25 we're looking to see how you're graduating kids, but



1 then the data from our ESSA School Index stands out  
2 that they're having attendance problems; and so, when  
3 we're onsite we're seeing attendance problems. And  
4 so we've been working with them to -- how do we  
5 insure that, whether a student is onsite attendance  
6 or they're wherever they are, based on their  
7 situation, that they're engaged there. So you have  
8 to look at them -- you have to differentiate your  
9 accountability for each one of them individually. So  
10 the new campus that opened in Fort Smith, they're  
11 having great attendance. The one at Baptist College,  
12 it's kind of iffy on some days. And they have  
13 students that they know how to play the game; they  
14 know I only have to show up every 10 days to keep you  
15 from dropping me. Right? So how do we appeal to  
16 them through the social-emotional supports, the  
17 mental health supports, the wraparound services, and  
18 so that's -- those are the things that we're talking  
19 to the districts about is do you have those things in  
20 place because these are the hardest to reach kids.

21 So there's not always a numeric number that  
22 represents that, but those are certainly the things  
23 that we're having conversations and reaching out to  
24 and they can talk about so eloquently.

25 MS. HUNTER: Thank you.

1 DR. HILL: And I just want to -- I just want to  
2 say it's -- if you looked at the data nationwide  
3 there is a specific reason for these type of charter  
4 schools, when you look at the fact that today 52% of  
5 African American males do not complete high school in  
6 a normal setting. So you can't keep -- we cannot  
7 continue doing things the same way and we don't have  
8 a specific solution for a specific problem in  
9 education. And that's why we had 119 murders in  
10 Pulaski County last year; it's disengagement in the  
11 education process. So I'm supportive of these type  
12 efforts and I'm glad that we're able to have the  
13 ability to know what the mission is, because if  
14 they're not in school -- in somebody's school feeding  
15 them and teaching them and having relationship with  
16 the teacher, which we've seen there is the most  
17 important thing, then our city is dangerous.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes. All right.

19 MS. McFETRIDGE: I had a chance to visit the  
20 Springdale campus this week and I was really  
21 impressed with the work that they're doing. They've  
22 got community partners, real strong community  
23 partners out, they've got mentors for these students,  
24 and they've got five or six students right now in a  
25 really strong CTE program at the Northwest Arkansas

1 Technical Institute. I was really impressed. So  
2 hopefully they'll continue the good work.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. So I think, with  
4 no more discussion, we are ready for a motion to  
5 either review or not review Premier High School.

6 MR. SUTTON: Motion to not review.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I have a motion by Mr. Sutton  
8 not to review.

9 DR. HILL: Second.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Second by Dr. Hill.

11 All in favor?

12 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

14 Okay. All right.

15 c) SCHOLARMADE ACHIEVEMENT PLACE OF ARKANSAS

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Scholarmade Achievement.

17 MS. SUMMONS: Scholarmade Achievement Place of  
18 Arkansas -- the district is requesting renewal of the  
19 charter for a seven-year period. The campus serves  
20 grades K-8. The current enrollment cap is 520. The  
21 charter will continue to follow a hybrid educational  
22 model. And they submitted an amendment request to  
23 drop grade 9, which was approved.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I have one question on these  
25 renewals -- I noticed on eStem they're coming back

1 for a three-year review, but then we had some others  
2 that were not coming back -- why some are coming back  
3 and why some are not?

4 MS. COFFMAN: So on eStem, in particular, they  
5 were asking for a DLP, and also they're having a  
6 major change. Their director had left December 30th  
7 and they're changing over. And so they,  
8 historically, have been a pretty high-performing --

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

10 MS. COFFMAN: -- charter and they had some dips  
11 at one of their campuses. And so they've put things  
12 in place and the Panel really wanted to see how  
13 things had progressed. They were also going to make  
14 a nationwide search for a director in the future,  
15 they told us, and so we felt that timeline would be  
16 appropriate to kind of see where they're going to be  
17 going forward.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So the others that had the  
19 extended periods, you were comfortable without having  
20 automatic review then?

21 MS. COFFMAN: So say that to me again.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: There was one -- this would  
23 have a seven-year, and then there was another ten-  
24 year. So you were okay with them not coming back  
25 before that 10-year, unless it was needful?

1 MS. COFFMAN: Right. Because we do an annual  
2 review --

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Sure.

4 MS. COFFMAN: -- as we have said, and we have  
5 the option to pull them in at any time.

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

7 MS. COFFMAN: So may I just add that the reason  
8 most of these charters come, as has been said  
9 previously, for some extended period of time usually  
10 has something to do with their facility or they get a  
11 little lower rent if they can commit for a little  
12 longer. So they're just trying to be the best  
13 stewards of the money --

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right.

15 MS. COFFMAN: -- with their expenses.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Sure. Okay. And these are  
17 usually well established charters also.

18 MS. COFFMAN: Correct.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. So we're looking  
20 at Scholarmade. And do we have questions over here?

21 MS. McFETRIDGE: I was curious as to why they  
22 were dropping the 9th grade. Do they want to answer  
23 to that?

24 MS. SUMMONS: And Dr. Anderson is on the Zoom.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

1 DR. ANDERSON: Good morning. Good morning,  
2 everyone. I'm Dr. Anderson, the CEO and Founder of  
3 Scholarmade Achievement Place.

4 We originally had the mindset to have a junior  
5 high concept of 7-9, and we have found that most  
6 children want to participate in a lot of activities  
7 that we are not able to offer once they get into 9th  
8 grade. And so that's why we have decided to put a  
9 stronger emphasis on trying to build the school from  
10 the ground up, and so -- and to go with a K-8 model.

11 MS. McFETRIDGE: Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions?

13 Okay. We are ready for a motion to review or  
14 not review.

15 MS. McFETRIDGE: I'll make the motion not to  
16 review.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: We have a motion by Ms.  
18 McFetridge not to review.

19 MR. SUTTON: I'll second.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Sutton.  
21 All in favor?

22 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

24 Motion passes.

25 d) eSTEM PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. eStem.

2 MS. SUMMONS: eStem Public Charter School -- the  
3 district is requesting renewal of the charter for 10  
4 years, with a report to the Panel in 3 years; digital  
5 learning plan and waivers approved for 3 years. The  
6 campuses serve grades K-12. The current enrollment  
7 cap is 3,844 students. And the charter will continue  
8 to follow a traditional educational model.

9 We do have the new superintendent of eStem  
10 online.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Is there someone online  
12 for eStem?

13 SUPT. MILHOLLEN: Yes, ma'am. Mark Milhollen,  
14 Interim Superintendent.

15 MS. HOWARD: Johnecia Howard, Chief Operating  
16 Officer.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Welcome.

18 SUPT. MILHOLLEN: Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Do we have any questions?

20 I'm not seeing any. So do we have a motion to  
21 review or not review?

22 DR. MOORE: I do have a question.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay, Dr. Moore.

24 DR. MOORE: The digital learning plan waivers  
25 for three years, you all operate as a separate online

1 school in that sense?

2 MS. HOWARD: No, we don't. So originally when  
3 the Ready for Learning plans were put out we adopted  
4 that in the learning plan. And what we found is that  
5 it actually was super helpful, not on a holistic  
6 level but as needed, for students that may had to be  
7 out for an extended period of time. And so our  
8 request for that was just to have that flexibility to  
9 be able to continue to do that until this all kind of  
10 goes away.

11 DR. MOORE: Okay. So do you have any students  
12 fully online?

13 MS. HOWARD: A very small number. So, I mean,  
14 out of our total enrollment we might have less than  
15 20 that actually participate on that platform.

16 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions?

18 All right. We're ready for a motion to review  
19 or not review.

20 MR. HENDERSON: I make a motion to not review.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I have a motion by Mr.  
22 Henderson not to review.

23 MR. SUTTON: I'll second.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Sutton.

25 All in favor?



(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

All right.

e) FRIENDSHIP ASPIRE ACADEMIES OF ARKANSAS

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Friendship Aspire.

MS. SUMMONS: Friendship Aspire Academies of Arkansas -- the district is requesting a renewal for a 10-year period. The campuses serve grades K-12. The current enrollment is 2,285 students. And the charter will continue to follow a college prep educational model.

And we do have Dr. Tran and Ms. Perry on for Friendship.

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Dr. Tran, Ms. Perry, we haven't seen you in a while. Welcome.

DR. TRAN: Nice to see you again.

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

MS. PERRY: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good morning.

Do we have any questions?

MR. SUTTON: So this was a 5-year original license?

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: And the renewal is for 10 years.

MR. SUTTON: And I'm looking, the authorization

1 was back in '18?

2 MS. COFFMAN: In the first year of any charter  
3 they're only renewed for -- they're only approved for  
4 5 years; so in the initial. After the initial, if  
5 they've shown that they are sustainable then you can  
6 give a longer period of approval.

7 MR. SUTTON: Right. Okay.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Anything else?

9 Dr. Moore.

10 DR. MOORE: Can you share with us currently what  
11 grades are being served at the different campuses?

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: At the different campuses what  
13 grades are being served, Ms. Perry or Dr. Tran?

14 DR. TRAN: Sure. Sure. At our Little Rock  
15 campus we serve, you know, K-5. And then we have a  
16 middle school that's serving 6-8. Then we have our  
17 Pine Bluff being Hazel Street; we serve K-5. And  
18 then we have another campus downtown that's a slow-  
19 growth that we're serving K-1 now. And then we have  
20 a high school that's serving 12th grade now.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Did that answer your  
22 questions?

23 DR. MOORE: Yes.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Anything else on  
25 Friendship Aspire?

1 DR. MOORE: This would be for the Department.  
2 Will these -- will any of these schools be reviewed  
3 at that next meeting as well?

4 MS. SUMMONS: Yes, ma'am.

5 DR. MOORE: Okay. And so if we have questions  
6 specific for any of these we can send them to y'all?

7 MS. SUMMONS: Yes.

8 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. We're ready  
10 for a motion, review or not review.

11 MS. McFETRIDGE: I make the motion not to  
12 review.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion by Ms.  
14 McFetridge not to review.

15 MS. HUNTER: Second.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Ms. Hunter.  
17 All in favor?

18 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

20 Okay. Motion passes.

21 4) CONSIDERATION OF CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL DISTRICT  
22 CONVERSION CHARTER RENEWALS

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Now we're moving on to  
24 the district conversion renewals. Mr. Coy.

25 MR. COY: Thomas Coy, Charter Office.

1                   We had the same Authorizing Panel meetings,  
2                   December 13th and 14th. We reviewed and considered  
3                   applications for two open enrollments.

4           a) BAUXITE MINER ACADEMY

5                   MR. COY: Our first one is Bauxite Miner  
6                   Academy. The district is requesting a renewal of the  
7                   charter for five years. The campus served --  
8                   currently serves grades K-6 in a virtual platform  
9                   only through the Dawson Co-op; grades 7-12 virtual,  
10                  and 6-12 onsite. The current enrollment cap is 200  
11                  students and will blend an alternative learning  
12                  environment, traditional, virtual only, and credit  
13                  recovery educational models. So they're blending  
14                  multiple different models. The amendment -- there  
15                  was an amendment request to remove the K-6 virtual  
16                  students from the charter.

17                  So Ms. Webb, I believe, is online.

18                  MS. WEBB: Yes.

19                  MR. COY: I see her up there for Bauxite School  
20                  District, if you have any questions.

21                  CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

22                  MR. COY: And, again, same with these, your  
23                  choice is either to review or not review.

24                  CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Welcome, Ms. Webb.  
25                  We'll see if we have any questions for you.

1           Anyone have a question about the Bauxite Miner  
2 Academy?

3           MR. SUTTON: Yeah, if I might ask a question?

4           CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Sure.

5           MR. SUTTON: The removal of K-6, K through 6  
6 virtual students, is that just because it's not --  
7 the program is not successful or you don't have any  
8 students, or both?

9           CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Webb, did you hear that  
10 question?

11          MS. WEBB: Yes. They follow -- they would just  
12 follow the digital learning plan for any virtual  
13 students wanting to be virtual instead of going  
14 through the charter school. And it's been  
15 successful, but I think there's four students at this  
16 time that are K-6 who are virtual.

17          MR. COY: Right. So the district has an  
18 overarching digital learning plan.

19          MR. SUTTON: I gotcha. Thank you.

20          CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions?

21          Okay. We need a motion to review or not review.

22          MR. SUTTON: I'll make the motion not to review.

23          CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I have a motion by Mr. Sutton  
24 not to review.

25          DR. HILL: Second.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Dr. Hill.  
2 All in favor?

3 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

5 Motion passes. Thank you, Ms. Webb.

6 MS. WEBB: Thank y'all.

7 b) POLK COUNTY VIRTUAL ACADEMY (MENA)

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Polk County Virtual.

9 MR. COY: Okay. Polk County Virtual Academy in  
10 Mena is requesting a renewal of the charter for five  
11 years. The campus serves grades K-12. Current  
12 enrollment cap is 200 students. And this charter  
13 will follow the virtual only educational model.

14 And I believe we've got representatives from  
15 Polk County online, as well.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Do we have someone online from  
17 Polk County?

18 MR. COY: I see them up there, but I -- well, I  
19 see their name; I don't --

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We'll see if we have  
21 any questions and then we'll --

22 MS. BUCKLEY: Yes. Yes, I'm here.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Welcome. We'll  
24 see if we have any questions.

25 Anyone have a question or discussion on Polk

1 County Virtual Academy?

2 DR. MOORE: I do.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Dr. Moore.

4 DR. MOORE: So being a district conversion  
5 online school, can they draw students from other  
6 districts in the state or is it only within --

7 MR. COY: I believe it can only draw from their  
8 attendance zones, within their boundaries for the  
9 district.

10 DR. MOORE: And the benefit of doing this versus  
11 a digital learning plan -- I mean, I know they had  
12 this school before digital learning plans were --

13 MR. COY: I'll let the Assistant Superintendent  
14 speak to the benefits. She spoke about that in the  
15 --

16 DR. MOORE: Okay.

17 MR. COY: -- authorizing meeting. So, would you  
18 like to --

19 MS. BUCKLEY: We just --

20 MR. COY: There you go.

21 MS. BUCKLEY: We feel like the benefits of  
22 having the virtual -- the charter, the conversion  
23 charter gives us more flexibility than the digital  
24 learning plan provides. We have students that are  
25 doing both the virtual academy and some in-person

1 classes on our campuses. And then we also have the  
2 ability to utilize our staff, as well as using the  
3 online academy online staff as well. There's just  
4 some more flexibility that we feel like it provides  
5 for us.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

7 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions on Polk  
9 County?

10 Okay. This motion is to review or not review.

11 MR. WOOD: I move to not review.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. I have a motion by Mr.  
13 Wood not to review.

14 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Henderson.

16 All in favor?

17 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

19 All right. Thank you, Mr. Coy.

20 MS. BUCKLEY: Thank you.

21 5) EDUCATIONAL SERVICE COOPERATIVE EVALUATIONS

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We are to the  
23 Educational Service Cooperative Evaluations. Ms.  
24 Smith.

25 MS. SMITH: Stacy Smith.



1           So we've conducted another four evaluations of  
2           our co-ops and you -- I attached the summaries for  
3           you and the overall evaluations. And I do see some  
4           of the co-op directors online, if you have any  
5           questions.

6           CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Do we have any  
7           questions about a specific co-op or co-ops in  
8           general? I know some of you new on the Board don't  
9           realize maybe the value of co-ops and how much that  
10          they do. So I don't know -- if they wanted to speak  
11          for just a minute about some of the programs that  
12          they have and what they're most proud of, that might  
13          be appropriate to kind of give our Board a little bit  
14          better idea of what co-ops do.

15          MS. SMITH: So I see Pam Castor online and I see  
16          Daryl Blaxton online. So, Daryl, Pam, one of you  
17          want to chime in?

18          MR. WOOD: Could I interrupt for just a second?

19          CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Sure.

20          MR. WOOD: Are we being asked of anything here  
21          or is this --

22          MS. SMITH: You're being asked to approve the  
23          evaluation.

24          MR. WOOD: Approve the evaluation.

25          MS. SMITH: Uh-huh.

1 MR. WOOD: Okay.

2 MS. SMITH: Uh-huh.

3 MS. WOODS: Can I just say I thought these were  
4 excellent summary reports. So thank you for  
5 providing them, because I know these took a lot of  
6 work.

7 MS. SMITH: Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Castor, I see you.

9 MS. CASTOR: Yeah. So Crowley's Ridge Co-op is  
10 involved in certainly a lot of programs, including  
11 pre-K for special education students, pre-K through  
12 ABC programs.

13 One of the things that we're proudest of among  
14 the things that we do is our reading outreach. We  
15 have trained teachers, at no cost to the district or  
16 the teacher, in the Shelton System of Reading so that  
17 they're qualified at the end of the training to take  
18 an exam that would make them a -- what's called a  
19 CALT or a CAL Language Specialist. And we feel that  
20 doing so helps our schools embed those people in the  
21 system and gives them a broader ability to improve  
22 reading proficiency among their students. So we're  
23 very proud of that.

24 We're proud of our partnerships that we've  
25 formed in order to better assist our schools.

1                   And so those are some of the things we have  
2 going on and we're glad to explore those with you or  
3 tell you more about them.

4                   MS. SMITH: Yeah. I will say that Crowley's  
5 Ridge was one of the leading cooperatives in the  
6 state to embrace the dyslexia and start providing  
7 intensive professional development for their teachers  
8 to become those certified academic language  
9 therapists, which is a higher degree of expertise and  
10 training. You can only teacher certain programs and  
11 be a CALT. I mean, so they kind of took the lead on  
12 that and brought them in on their own before the  
13 State even had a list of programs or trainings or  
14 anything like that.

15                  CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

16                  MS. SMITH: And, Mr. Blaxton?

17                  MR. BLAXTON: I would just echo some of the same  
18 things that Ms. Castor did. We're obviously involved  
19 in early childhood support to our districts as well,  
20 both through ABC programs and then the early  
21 childhood special education services that we provide  
22 for a number of our districts. We also partnered  
23 this -- as the Board is aware, we also partnered with  
24 Ms. Castor's co-op and North Central in developing  
25 the Tri-Region Virtual during Covid that supported

1 districts that needed that option, again, as K-6 --  
2 and now there is a K-8.

3 We support the new teachers in our districts  
4 through the mentoring program, as other co-ops do.

5 And I guess the other thing that I would just  
6 mention that we were very proud of is our staff I  
7 think was flexible and nimble in being able to adjust  
8 to support pieces that our districts needed  
9 throughout Covid. And we did a number of things  
10 during that time that benefitted our districts and  
11 our kids.

12 MS. SMITH: One thing Mr. Blaxton's co-op did  
13 during their evaluation -- I do six interview groups,  
14 and some of them I say that you have to have these  
15 types of people in the interview and then I give them  
16 one thing they can highlight. And most of the co-ops  
17 select people that work in their co-op to highlight a  
18 program. They selected parents from their HIPPIY  
19 program.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Oh, wow.

21 MS. SMITH: And so I had these young mothers --  
22 so the HIPPIY program is the outreach for home-based,  
23 you know, parenting on lessons for 3 and 4 year olds.  
24 And so we interviewed these mothers who are part of  
25 that program, you know, without anybody in the room.

1 It was really remarkable to hear the things and to  
2 hear the impact that the HIPPIY coordinators have on  
3 these young mothers, pushing into their house helping  
4 them with instruction for their students. So that  
5 was pretty powerful.

6 MR. WOOD: If I may ask, what's HIPPIY?

7 MS. SMITH: What does the HIPPIY acronym stand  
8 for, Daryl? Do you know it off the top of your head?

9 MR. BLAXTON: Ms. Castor probably knows. It's  
10 -- I should, but I can't tell you off the top --

11 MS. SMITH: So generally what it is, it's  
12 parents -- so they have coordinators who literally go  
13 to the house with lessons and they teach the parent,  
14 like here's the lesson for the week for your 4-year  
15 old to get them ready for school. And they sit down  
16 and they instruct you how to do that, and then you do  
17 those lessons. They also -- and so they come every  
18 week. And then they even have -- you're bringing up  
19 the acronym, aren't you -- yeah, Home Instruction for  
20 Parents and Preschool Youngsters program. And so  
21 it's a 30-week program. That's all the materials,  
22 supplies, books, everything.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah. I've had several  
24 grandkids go through that and it's a great program.  
25 And, you know, the instruction is great, but then the

1 materials, the books that they bring in are  
2 fantastic, getting that early literacy into every  
3 home and then teaching the parents how to interact  
4 with the child in a productive way. It's really --  
5 it's more instruction for the parent than it is for  
6 the child. But the relationships are still built  
7 because they'll bring the children in together and --

8 MS. SMITH: And it --

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: -- have some programs for them  
10 also.

11 MS. SMITH: Yeah. And several of the -- in the  
12 parent interviews it was noticeable that early  
13 identification for early intervening services,  
14 whether it was speech or additional resources, that  
15 students were being identified through that means as  
16 well.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

18 MS. SMITH: So --

19 MR. SUTTON: Mr. Wood, check with me later and  
20 I'll be glad to go over all these acronyms with you.

21 [LAUGHTER]

22 MR. WOOD: I appreciate that.

23 MS. SMITH: Mr. Sutton is an expert; is that  
24 right?

25 MR. WOODS: They have a book.

1           CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah, there -- yeah, it is a  
2 book.

3           MS. SMITH: I do want to highlight the Great  
4 Rivers Co-op on here. I don't see Willie on the --  
5 there she is, Willie, right there. Willie was our  
6 superintendent last year in Lee County and did a  
7 phenomenal job for us and she transitioned to the  
8 Great Rivers Co-op this year. Great Rivers  
9 Cooperative scored a 3 at meeting standards. They  
10 did have an area of alert for procedures on  
11 evaluations at their co-op, but I'm confident -- Ms.  
12 Murdock and I had a lengthy conversation about that  
13 and the organization, and she's already got timelines  
14 in place to take care of that.

15          CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Murdock, is there  
16 something you would like to highlight?

17          MS. MURDOCK: Good morning, everyone. I'm just  
18 excited about being the new co-op director here.  
19 We're going to do great things in Great Rivers to  
20 build bridges for students of the Delta. I always  
21 say if you can help the Delta students, you can help  
22 anybody. And our students need as much support as  
23 possible.

24          And we thank Stacy and her team for working with  
25 us and we're going to get better and better every

1 day. Thank you, all.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

3 MS. SMITH: So I'd ask the Board to accept the  
4 evaluations.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

6 MR. WOOD: Can I --

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

8 MR. WOOD: Can I ask questions?

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Uh-huh.

10 MR. WOOD: I would like to ask Ms. Murdock about  
11 Eudora Elementary School and your role in supporting  
12 them. How are they doing so well?

13 MS. MURDOCK: Eudora is not in our co-op though.

14 MR. WOOD: Oh, they're not. Okay.

15 MS. MURDOCK: No.

16 MR. WOOD: I apologize. Well, is there a co-op

17 --

18 MS. SMITH: Probably Southeast.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

20 MR. WOOD: Yeah.

21 MS. SMITH: I don't see Southeast on here.

22 MR. WOOD: Okay. Well, then never-mind.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

24 MS. WOODS: I'll move to accept the report.

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



1 Woods to accept the report.

2 Do we have a second?

3 MS. HUNTER: Second.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Ms. Hunter.

5 All in favor?

6 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

8 Okay. We're going to take about a 15-minute  
9 break. We'll be back at 10:45.

10 (OFF THE RECORD - 10:35 A.M.)

11 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: During this time off  
12 the record a report was heard on Professional  
13 Learning Communities, presented by Dr. Missy Walley.  
14 It may be viewed on the DESE website.)

15 (BACK ON THE RECORD - 11:21 A.M.)

16 CONSIDERATION OF JACOB OLIVA AS COMMISSIONER OF ELEMENTARY AND  
17 SECONDARY EDUCATION

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: We are going to move around a  
19 little bit on our agenda, and we're going to go back  
20 to one of the first items that we had on the agenda  
21 was the consideration of employment of Commissioner  
22 of Education. And to do that, we are going to go  
23 into executive session for the purpose of considering  
24 this matter. While we're in there, we will discuss  
25 with Mr. Oliva and we'll invite him to join us for an

1 interview. There will be no decisions made in the  
2 executive session and there will be no votes taken in  
3 the session. And then we will come back out and make  
4 our decision in the open normal session.

5 And so with that, we're going to move to Room  
6 201-A. And we will probably be -- I would say at  
7 least -- Ms. Freno is going to give me some more  
8 instructions --

9 MS. FRENO: No. Ms. Newton, we would need a  
10 motion to adjourn to executive session --

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

12 MS. FRENO: -- please, and a vote.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. So I will  
14 need a motion to adjourn to executive session.

15 MR. SUTTON: Motion to adjourn to executive  
16 session.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion by Mr.  
18 Sutton.

19 MR. WOOD: I'll second that.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Wood.

21 MR. WOOD: Could I say something --

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

23 MR. WOOD: -- before we go --

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

25 MR. WOOD: -- Ms. Newton? And I know I briefly

1 talked with you about it before, but -- and we could  
2 probably spend an hour on the next thing, so I'll try  
3 not to do that at all. But I do want to say --  
4 before we go into this process, I want to say  
5 publicly -- and I hope that he'll eventually hear  
6 this -- my admiration for Mr. Key and the work he did  
7 for this Department for the last eight years. Very  
8 thankful for a lot of hard work, a lot of unseen hard  
9 work moving the Department in the correct direction.  
10 And he has laid a significant foundation for us to  
11 continue to build upon for the next Commissioner,  
12 Secretary Oliva, to build upon. And -- but he took  
13 on some very difficult tasks, and did them quite  
14 well. And the direction on RISE and the Science of  
15 Reading was a fundamental transformation in Arkansas  
16 education and he should be given tremendous credit  
17 for that one day.

18 So, Mr. Key, thank you very much for all your  
19 hard work.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Very well said. And I think  
21 it's echoed by this entire Board how much we  
22 appreciate the hard work and the difference that he  
23 made in education in Arkansas. And you're very  
24 correct, he has laid a foundation for us to move  
25 forward. And so --

1 [APPLAUSE]

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Whenever we come back, the  
3 vote will be in this room. And we will -- I'm going  
4 to give you a chance to go to lunch. And so I would  
5 say we probably would not be back any earlier than  
6 12:30, at the earliest. Would that be -- that would  
7 give everybody time to go and get lunch too. Okay?

8 DR. PFEFFER: We need to vote.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: And we didn't vote, did we?

10 DR. PFEFFER: We didn't vote.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So we had a motion and  
12 a second. And now we need to vote. All in favor?

13 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

15 All right. So we are going to move to Room 201-  
16 A for an executive session, and we will be back in  
17 about an hour or so.

18 (EXECUTIVE SESSION: 11:24 A.M. - 1:25 P.M.)

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Dan says that we  
20 are ready and ready to come back. And I apologize, I  
21 was only -- well, not quite an hour; I said 12:30, so  
22 just 55 minutes off. So I apologize, but we  
23 appreciate your patience with us today. We've had to  
24 play a lot of things by ear, but we've had a good  
25 day. So --

1                   So we are coming back out of executive session  
2                   and we are ready to consider a motion on the  
3                   employment of Mr. Oliva as Commissioner of Education.

4                   Do I have a motion?

5                   MR. WOOD: Can I make the motion since y'all  
6                   made me make the ugly motions?

7                   CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Go right ahead.

8                   MR. WOOD: Madam Chair, I move that we hire Mr.  
9                   Jacob Oliva as Commissioner of K-12 education for the  
10                  State of Arkansas.

11                  CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We have a motion  
12                  by Mr. Wood. Is there a second?

13                  MS. WOODS: I'll second.

14                  DR. MOORE: I'll second.

15                  CHAIRMAN NEWTON: We have lots of seconds, so I  
16                  think it may be a unanimous vote here in a minute.  
17                  We have -- we'll say Ms. Woods got that one as a  
18                  second.

19                  All right. All in favor?

20                                 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

21                  CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

22                  Congratulations.

23   [APPLAUSE]

24                  CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Welcome, Mr. Oliva. Come, and  
25                  we'll give you an opportunity to make some comments.

1 I know there's a lot of superintendents and  
2 principals and teachers that are watching and that  
3 want to hear you speak to them.

4 SECRETARY OLIVA: Sure. So, first and foremost,  
5 thank you for this opportunity. It's truly an  
6 exciting and humbling experience that I've gone  
7 through the last couple of days, and for you to  
8 solidify today's motion and unanimously support this  
9 decision is something that I take in high regard and  
10 truly appreciate. I look forward to supporting the  
11 schools throughout the State of Arkansas. I've  
12 actually been able to meet with some of the  
13 legislative delegation, some school superintendents;  
14 I've actually even talked to some parents and  
15 teachers already to hear about some of the wonderful  
16 work that's happening already, which is very  
17 exciting. I've been really fortunate to be welcomed  
18 by an incredible staff here at the Department that is  
19 very talented and has been delightful in insuring a  
20 smooth and easy transition. But I think there's also  
21 opportunities that we can work collaboratively on  
22 improving.

23 And most of us saw some early executive orders  
24 that were signed into place by Governor Huckabee  
25 Sanders. She is proclaimed in her inauguration

1 speech that she's going to be known as the education  
2 governor and has really outlined a bold vision and  
3 blueprint for our state, for the LEARNS initiative  
4 which really focuses on literacy, empowerment,  
5 accountability, readiness, networking and safety.  
6 And in this executive order that was recently signed  
7 around the LEARNS initiative it tasks our agency to  
8 do some immediate work, to roll-up our sleeves to  
9 start pulling together some data and information that  
10 we can get, because this blueprint, this vision for  
11 improving learning throughout the state I think is  
12 spot-on, it's right, and we're excited to solidify  
13 that today by being able to move forward. And I look  
14 forward to collaborating with the Board on our role  
15 on how we can help implement this vision as well.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Well, we appreciate you and  
17 your experience and we are looking forward to working  
18 side-by-side and working with you. So, thank you for  
19 being here.

20 SECRETARY OLIVA: It's my pleasure. Thank you.

21 [APPLAUSE]

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Wait, don't go away. Don't go  
23 away. You've got to come back up here. I know you  
24 have someone with you that you would like to  
25 introduce to us today.

1 SECRETARY OLIVA: Yes. So in the audience here  
2 with me today is my wife Rebecca Oliva, and we're --

3 [APPLAUSE]

4 SECRETARY OLIVA: We're working on a little  
5 transition timeline. This has been quite the  
6 whirlwind the last few weeks, so -- we also have two  
7 children. We have a daughter who's a freshman at the  
8 university level; we also have a son in 8th grade.  
9 So we're looking forward to bringing our son here to  
10 Arkansas, and enrolling him in one of our local  
11 schools and being an active participant in the  
12 community, not only as kind of a practitioner lens  
13 but also as a parent. So this is something that  
14 we're really excited to do.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Well, we want to say thank you  
16 for sharing your husband and your family with us here  
17 in Arkansas. We're very appreciative. And as a wife  
18 of a man that's going to be very busy the next few  
19 weeks, I know he appreciates your support.

20 MRS. OLIVA: Thank you so much. We're excited.

21 MR. WOOD: I too have an 8th grade son, and so I  
22 would love for my son to be your son's first friend  
23 here in Arkansas.

24 SECRETARY OLIVA: That would be great.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. All right.



1 SECRETARY OLIVA: Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

3 SECRETARY OLIVA: But he's a little nervous, I'm  
4 not going to lie.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah. Yeah.

6 MR. WOOD: He's welcome any time.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah. So -- and so we want to  
8 get a picture --

9 SECRETARY OLIVA: Okay.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: -- with the Board and you, and  
11 so -- and this is everybody.

12

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14 (The Action Agenda was concluded at 1:30 p.m.)

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## C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS     )  
                                   ) ss.  
 COUNTY OF SALINE     )

I, SHARON K. HILL, CCR, a Certified Stenomask Reporter and Notary Public before whom the foregoing proceedings was taken, do hereby certify that the same is a true and correct transcription before the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, State Board of Education, in Little Rock, Arkansas, on January 12, 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.

WITNESS, MY HAND AND SEAL, THIS DATE: January 20, 2023.

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