

ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

DECEMBER 8, 2022

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:

MR. JOHNNY KEY, Secretary of Education
MS. JESSICA SAUM, Arkansas Teacher of the Year

DESE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. LORI FRENO, General Counsel
MS. WHITNEY JAMES, Attorney

LOCATION:

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

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E X H I B I T S

1(f) - MARVELL-ELAINE SCHOOL DISTRICT

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

Marvell-Elaine School District's PowerPoint Presentation

P R O C E E D I N G S

1) CONSIDERATIONS OF PETITIONS FOR MINIMUM SCHOOL DISTRICT
SIZE WAIVERS

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So we'll move on to the action agenda then. Ms. Freno. Considerations of Petitions for Minimum School District Size Waivers.

MS. FRENO: Thank you, Ms. Newton. Lori Freno -- is this working?

Lori Freno, Arkansas Department of Education. Act 60 of 2004 requires that all school districts with an average daily minimum -- an average daily membership of fewer than 350 students for the last two consecutive years must administratively consolidate or annex to another school district. By January 1st the Department has to put out a list of all those school districts, which we did on November 22nd, and six school districts appeared on that list. They were Augusta, Guy-Perkins, Marvell-Elaine, Shirley, Strong-Huttig, and Western Yell.

The Arkansas code, however, in 6-13-1613, allows school districts appearing on the consolidation list to apply for a minimum school district size waiver, which all six of those school districts have done.

The State Board in considering these petitions must grant the petition if all the criteria are met

1 as set forth in 6-13-6 -- 6-13-1613(b), specifically
2 that the school district is not classified as being
3 in Level 5-In Need of Intensive Support, fiscal -- is
4 not classified as being in fiscal distress or in
5 facilities distress; is not on probationary violation
6 of the Standards for Accreditation; that the academic
7 facilities are adequate as evidenced by the
8 district's Facilities Master Plan; and that the local
9 board of education of each school district supports
10 the waiver as being in the best interest of the
11 students of the district due to the traveling time
12 that it would otherwise cause if there was
13 consolidation or annexation.

14 If the school district meets all these criteria,
15 then the board must grant the petition. If the
16 school district does not grant -- does not meet all
17 these criteria, then the State Board has the option
18 of granting the petition or denying the petition.

19 And at this point, unless there are any
20 questions from any board members, I would be happy to
21 just start with the first one which is Guy-Perkins.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Let me see if anyone --
23 does anyone on the Board have a question about the
24 criteria for granting the waiver? Is everyone clear
25 on that? Everybody okay?

1 All right. Go ahead, Ms. Freno.

2 MS. FRENO: Thank you.

3 a) GUY-PERKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: The first petition filed was
5 by Guy-Perkins School District. And we have -- I can
6 see Tim Barnes on Zoom; he's the principal -- a
7 principal at Guy-Perkins.

8 And we -- before we bring these petitions to all
9 of you, we do a bunch of legwork so that we are able
10 to tell you whether or not these criteria are met for
11 all the school districts. And in this case Guy-
12 Perkins is not classified in Level 5-In Need of
13 Intensive Support, fiscal distress, or facilities
14 distress; it's not on probationary status for
15 violation of the Standards for Accreditation; the
16 district's academic facilities are adequate as
17 evidenced by the district's master plan; and the
18 district's local board of directors supports the
19 waiver as being in the best interest of the students.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Let's see
21 if we have any questions for Ms. Freno.

22 MS. FRENO: Oh. And if there are any questions
23 for either the Division or for Mr. Barnes at Guy-
24 Perkins --

25 DR. HILL: I do have a question.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right.

2 DR. HILL: Did I hear you say initially that if
3 they met all of those we were required to grant it?
4 Is that -- did you say that?

5 MS. FRENO: Yes, Dr. Hill. That's what the law
6 reads, that if all of those criteria are met that the
7 Board must grant the petition.

8 DR. HILL: So if they've met those, why would
9 they come to us?

10 MS. FRENO: Because the law requires that it
11 come to you.

12 DR. HILL: Even if they met it?

13 MS. FRENO: Even if they met them. And I guess,
14 like I said earlier, that might sound like it doesn't
15 make sense. But like I said earlier, we do all the
16 legwork before we bring this to you. I mean there
17 might be -- for example, if we just had a hearing and
18 let everybody talk there might be question as to
19 whether, you know, the facilities were adequate as
20 shown on the master plan.

21 DR. HILL: Okay.

22 MS. FRENO: And that -- the Board might've had
23 to have made a decision as to whether they met all
24 the criteria.

25 DR. HILL: So --

1 MS. FRENO: But in this case we can say --

2 DR. HILL: They have met it.

3 MS. FRENO: -- they did; they have met them all.

4 DR. HILL: Okay, I see.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good question, Dr. Hill. I
6 said that was a good question.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Mr. Wood.

8 MR. WOOD: I have one general question. What's
9 that last criteria that you mentioned?

10 MS. FRENO: The last one is that the local board
11 supports the waiver as being in the best interest of
12 the students due to the length of potential time
13 spent on the bus by a student traveling to and from
14 school.

15 MR. WOOD: So that criteria is not even a
16 question for this department or this board; that's a
17 question for the local board?

18 MS. FRENO: That is correct. That is a question
19 for the local --

20 MR. WOOD: If they've made that decision, that's
21 completely within their purview to decide one way or
22 another on that?

23 MS. FRENO: That is correct, Mr. Wood. And
24 there is in the packet, the board packet a resolution
25 from the state -- from the boards --

1 MR. WOOD: Okay.

2 MS. FRENO: -- on that point.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions? Dr.
4 Moore.

5 DR. MOORE: Can you tell us how many years
6 they've received this waiver?

7 MS. FRENO: Guy-Perkins, this is their third --
8 this would be their third year.

9 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

10 MS. HUNTER: Another question. What is Guy-
11 Perkins' enrollment over these last three years?
12 Does it continue to decline?

13 MS. FRENO: Mr. Barnes probably can answer that.

14 MS. WOODS: It was in the packet that you --

15 MS. HUNTER: Oh.

16 MS. WOODS: It's in the packet. So I think
17 their current one, I just had it up, was like 292 and
18 it's gone down steadily every year since.

19 MS. HUNTER: Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Any other questions?
21 Mr. Sutton, did you have a question?

22 MR. SUTTON: No, ma'am.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: No. Okay. All right.

24 MS. WOODS: Excuse me. I'm sorry. 297 is their
25 current -- so it looks like it was 332, 330, 292, and

1 then 297; so it's gone up five students this year.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Mr. Wood.

3 MR. WOOD: It seems like the Board's hands are
4 very tied in most of these situations, so for the
5 most part this is kind of an academic exercise. But
6 I'm curious as to how this is impacting student
7 learning in these school districts. So maybe could
8 the Superintendents of each one just weigh in on what
9 achievement is being accomplished in reading and math
10 and all that, to see if there's a trend among
11 extremely small school districts or --

12 MS. FRENO: That is certainly something you may
13 ask Mr. --

14 MR. WOOD: Right.

15 MS. FRENO: -- Mr. Barnes.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Mr. Barnes, can you speak to
17 academics?

18 MR. BARNES: Yes. Can you hear me?

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

20 MR. BARNES: Okay. Thank you. [Zoom audio
21 distortion] I'm been working with it this morning, so
22 you may hear an echo or something.

23 On the academic performance, I can tell you that
24 based on our ESSA scores that what we've done is --
25 things at our elementary school and high school is

1 implemented classroom reading. We have definitely
2 seen some growth in all of the areas. [Zoom audio
3 distortion] pretty much treaded water. We did not
4 see an expected decrease [Zoom audio distortion] and
5 that worked through a lot of [Zoom audio distortion],
6 basically with math that they've gone through, doing
7 the hard work that they've done in the last school
8 year. So we are very proud. We're confident that we
9 are on the right path and we look forward to seeing
10 what our students accomplish this spring.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Mr. Wood, did that
12 answer your questions on that one?

13 MR. WOOD: Maybe.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I think we --

15 MR. WOOD: I couldn't hear all that well.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right. Yeah.

17 MR. WOOD: But --

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I think every district is
19 different when you go and look at the performance of
20 each one. I don't know that you can lump all small
21 schools together.

22 MR. WOOD: Right.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I think that you're going to
24 have to look at each individual district and look at
25 their performance.

1 MR. WOOD: I would agree.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

3 SECRETARY KEY: Ms. Newton?

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

5 MR. BARNES: [Zoom audio distortion] the Board
6 that we were on [Zoom audio distortion] for some of
7 our [Zoom audio distortion]. But we were able to
8 [Zoom audio distortion] from DESE and from Arch Ford
9 Co-op. We implemented some strategies last year
10 based on our scores. This past year we were able to
11 move from that [Zoom audio distortion].

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Thank you.

13 Secretary Key.

14 SECRETARY KEY: Yeah. I just want the Board to
15 know, since we're kind of talking about the process,
16 we have been having internal conversations about how
17 we need to approach the growing list of school
18 districts that are under 350. We do know your hands
19 are tied; the Legislature, the change in the statute
20 in 2015, I think, made that very clear. But we also
21 -- in working with many districts we know that 350 is
22 an indicator of simply one thing, and that's the
23 enrollment. But we also know that behind that there
24 are other issues that sometimes make it difficult --
25 financial issues, academic issues, standards issues.

1 And we are working to improve our protocols for how
2 we monitor the schools, especially those that are
3 coming and asking for waivers. So if you're on the
4 -- if you're below 350 for one year, you're not on
5 the consolidation list. You have to be on there two
6 consecutive years. And we have had districts that
7 might go below one year and then their enrollment
8 goes up. I mean that is not an uncommon situation.
9 So for those the clock resets, and if they stay above
10 350, then -- you know, they have to go below 350
11 again two consecutive years before they wind up on
12 the consolidation list. But as I mentioned earlier,
13 the list is growing and we have more districts --
14 every couple, three years there seems to be another
15 district that falls below 350 for that second year in
16 a row. So we're -- we will be happy to, as we refine
17 our protocols for how we monitor those districts, to
18 bring that back to you and give you a report on that
19 so that before you have to make this decision again
20 next year you will have a better idea of what we are
21 looking at in identifying your areas of support or as
22 a deficiency that really can impact students and
23 student learning.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you.

25 Dr. Moore, did you have a question?

1 DR. MOORE: Yes. I was going to ask about that
2 too. Was it 2015 when legislation was passed?

3 SECRETARY KEY: I believe that's correct.

4 DR. MOORE: Okay. And prior to that time these
5 districts would have all automatically been closed
6 because of -- until that law was passed?

7 SECRETARY KEY: Been consolidated or annexed --

8 DR. MOORE: Do we know --

9 SECRETARY KEY: -- would've been the
10 requirement.

11 DR. MOORE: -- how many districts we've seen
12 since 2015?

13 SECRETARY KEY: We can get that for you.

14 DR. MOORE: That would be interesting to see. I
15 mean, and --

16 SECRETARY KEY: I mean, I know -- and I know --
17 I think there's some folks from Strong-Huttig here.
18 I think they have been on that list probably longer
19 than any of the other districts.

20 MS. FRENO: Seven years. This is their seventh
21 year.

22 SECRETARY KEY: Okay.

23 DR. MOORE: So that would be great.

24 MS. WOODS: I have a quick question specifically
25 related to their enrollment, which probably the

1 Department can answer. So in the '18-19 school year
2 they went down by two, but then during Covid they
3 lost 37 students. Do we know what happened to those
4 students? And then they've gone back up between '21
5 -- the '20-21 school year and this year they went
6 plus five. That's a large number. So I was just
7 curious do we know what happened? Because we didn't
8 grant that many appeals.

9 SECRETARY KEY: No. Mr. Barnes might be able to
10 speak specifically to Guy-Perkins. I know that
11 districts in general found that their incoming
12 kindergarten classes were much lower --

13 MS. WOODS: Okay.

14 SECRETARY KEY: -- during Covid, and so they
15 weren't replacing their graduates.

16 MS. WOODS: That's a great point.

17 SECRETARY KEY: And that is -- the last couple
18 of years now is leveling back out --

19 MS. WOODS: Okay.

20 SECRETARY KEY: -- and it's -- but we also had
21 statewide a number of -- you know, over 10,000
22 students that chose home-school option. We went from
23 20,000 or so to about 30,000.

24 MS. WOODS: Okay.

25 SECRETARY KEY: So that's leveling out as well.

1 But not all of those students statewide have returned
2 to the public school system.

3 MS. WOODS: Okay.

4 SECRETARY KEY: So if you want to hear directly
5 from the district, they can probably answer their
6 particular issue in more detail.

7 MS. WOODS: Right. And I know it's kind of hard
8 to hear on there. I was just curious. That's a
9 great explanation. I just want to -- that was just
10 such a significant drop and obviously Covid
11 participated a lot.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Sure.

13 MS. WOODS: But they've been on the list several
14 years and it's usually two to five, not 37.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: We are, I think, ready for a
16 motion for Guy-Perkins.

17 MS. WOODS: I'll make the motion to approve the
18 waiver.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion by Ms.
20 Woods.

21 MR. WOOD: Motion by Ms. Woods --

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Sorry?

23 MR. WOOD: -- and seconded by Mr. Wood.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: By Mr. Wood. So it's like
25 take you to take it the principal's office if y'all

1 didn't catch that. So, yes.

2 All right. So we have a motion and second. All
3 in favor?

4 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

6 All right.

7 b) SHIRLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So we're to Shirley School
9 District.

10 MS. FRENO: Thank you. Shirley School District
11 has met all the criteria in 6-13-1613(b)(2), A
12 through D. They're not classified in Level 5-In Need
13 of Intensive Support, in fiscal or facilities
14 distress; they're not on probationary status for
15 Standards for Accreditation; their academic
16 facilities are adequate as evidenced by the
17 district's master plan; and the district's local
18 board of directors supports the waiver as being in
19 the best interest of the students.

20 And we have today with us, I believe in person,
21 Superintendent Aaron Wiggins in case anyone has any
22 questions for the Division or for the Superintendent.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Mr. Wiggins?

24 Okay. Maybe he'll join us in a minute.

25 All right. And I've got a question on this one

1 and it's -- I think it may be from -- someone from
2 the Department maybe could help us out a little bit.
3 I know that the academic part is they have to be in
4 Level 5. Okay. But looking at some of the
5 performance, in particular at Shirley, in elementary,
6 and thinking about academics and thinking about
7 growth, you know, when is that cut-off that's going
8 to trigger that "hey, we've got a problem in
9 academics?" You know, they may not be in Level 5 --
10 I know the law says Level 5. But what's that trigger
11 that is going to get us to say are these kids getting
12 an adequate education academically?

13 So I don't know who wants to answer that. I see
14 Ms. Coffman.

15 MS. COFFMAN: Debbie Coffman, Department of Ed.

16 So, you know, we did away with that one cut
17 score --

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right.

19 MS. COFFMAN: -- for academic distress. So what
20 we try to look at is look at the school more
21 holistically. So we are watching Shirley to see what
22 their progress looks like and they did have
23 previously a big dip in '21. We are seeing a rebound
24 in '22. We're seeing them start to come back up.
25 But the data just sends us to dig deeper. And so we

1 sent a team out to observe in classrooms, to make
2 sure what are we seeing going on, are we encouraged
3 by what we're seeing, are we discouraged. So we try
4 to take all of those factors in.

5 The other thing that I would say is they do have
6 a new superintendent. He has reached out, he's asked
7 for help. We talk to him quite often. And they
8 qualified for Level 3 support based on their
9 percentage of students in need of support in reading.
10 But he requested Level 4 support. So he's being very
11 proactive to try to make this turn and we're trying
12 to work along beside him to see if we can get that
13 done.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. This was
15 the one that I know it didn't meet the criteria, but
16 I was concerned on academics.

17 MS. COFFMAN: We have our eye on them.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right.

19 MS. COFFMAN: But we also have our hands on
20 them, trying to help them.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah. Okay. All right.

22 Any other questions from board members on
23 Shirley?

24 Okay. Mr. Sutton, I'm going to trust you to
25 speak up when you have a question.

1 MR. SUTTON: I will.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. All right. So
3 we're ready for a motion on Shirley.

4 MS. McFETRIDGE: I'll make the motion that we
5 approve the waiver for Shirley School District.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion by Ms.
7 McFetridge.

8 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Henderson.
10 All in favor?

11 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?
13 Motion passes.

14 c) AUGUSTA SCHOOL DISTRICT

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Augusta.

16 MS. FRENO: Thank you. The Augusta School
17 District, likewise, meets all the criteria in 6-13-
18 1613(b)(2). Superintendent Cathy Tanner -- I can see
19 that she is on the Zoom, if there would be any
20 questions for her or for Division personnel.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Ms. Tanner,
22 I did look at your academic performance in that, and
23 so I saw some growth. I know that you are very, very
24 happy about that because that shows that you're going
25 in the right direction. So I just wanted to point

1 out that -- congratulations on that. We'll see if
2 any board members have any questions for Ms. Tanner.

3 SUPT. TANNER: I would like to say today we're
4 at 352.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Oh.

6 SUPT. TANNER: So tomorrow we may be at 348.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

8 SUPT. TANNER: But, you know, we started out
9 with 344 this school year and right now we're up to
10 352. And we had projected that we would be above 350
11 the next school year, but we are seeing an increase
12 in enrollment especially in the lower grades. And so
13 that is -- that's helping keep our number right there
14 at that number.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

16 SUPT. TANNER: But we're hoping for it to be
17 much better. We also have got 28 in pre-K, so we
18 have quite a few.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Oh, good. Good. That's
20 wonderful news.

21 Any questions?

22 DR. MOORE: I do.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Dr. Moore.

24 DR. MOORE: Has Augusta received this waiver
25 before?

1 SUPT. TANNER: Yes. Yes.

2 DR. MOORE: How many years?

3 MS. FRENO: This is the second year, right,
4 Superintendent?

5 SUPT. TANNER: Yes.

6 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Any other questions on
8 Augusta?

9 Okay. We're ready for a motion.

10 MR. SUTTON: Motion to approve.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: We have a motion by Mr.
12 Sutton.

13 DR. MOORE: I'll second that.

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

16 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

18 Motion passes. All right.

19 SUPT. TANNER: Thank you so much.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you for joining us.
21 Okay. Our next one is Strong-Huttig.
22 Yes?

23 MS. SAUM: Can I just ask a quick question?

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Sure. Absolutely.

25 MS. SAUM: Pre-k numbers do not count for the

1 total enrollment --

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right.

3 MS. SAUM: -- numbers?

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

5 MS. SAUM: That's what I wanted to make sure.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

7 MS. SAUM: Thank you.

8 d) STRONG-HUTTIG SCHOOL DISTRICT

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Strong-Huttig.

10 MS. FRENO: Strong-Huttig has met all the
11 criteria set forth in 6-13-1613(b)(2). As we
12 discussed previously, this would be the seventh
13 petition that Strong-Huttig has been -- has filed and
14 would be granted. Superintendent Kimberly Thomas is
15 here today in the audience if anyone has questions of
16 her --

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

18 MS. FRENO: -- or the Division.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Thomas, okay.

20 Ms. Coffman, I'm going to get you to come back,
21 if you don't mind, on Strong-Huttig. And kind of
22 tell me where they're at as far -- this was another
23 one that I was concerned about the academics.

24 MS. COFFMAN: Debbie Coffman. Strong-Huttig
25 does not have any standards exceptions at this time.

1 Of course, you know, we look at that daily --

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right.

3 MS. COFFMAN: -- so we're always attuned to
4 that. In 2022, they were identified for Level 4-
5 Directed Support for literacy with 70.41% of their
6 students in need of support in reading. And our team
7 has been working with them on a plan of support.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So they are in Level 4 right
9 now?

10 MS. COFFMAN: Correct.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. And so you
12 are working with them?

13 MS. COFFMAN: Yes. We speak -- Superintendent
14 and I have each other on speed dial when we need each
15 other.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right.

17 DR. MOORE: May I ask a question?

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Sure.

19 DR. MOORE: I noticed that there's -- when I
20 went to look at their school report card they're
21 classified as a K-12 school. Is that --

22 MS. COFFMAN: Yes.

23 DR. MOORE: Is that the case, and what was -- I
24 don't know what their indications are either way, but
25 I just had --

1 MS. COFFMAN: So it's very often that a school
2 district that is small in numbers would move to that
3 level of configuration because it makes smart -- it
4 makes smart sense standards-wise and accountability-
5 wise.

6 DR. MOORE: So in that case do y'all have one
7 building and principal? How does that work, if you
8 don't mind sharing?

9 SUPT. THOMAS: So we actually have two campuses,
10 although we're considered one building.

11 DR. MOORE: Okay.

12 SUPT. THOMAS: So we're one building, one
13 district, but two campuses. And we share -- we
14 currently -- we do have one K-12 principal.
15 Previously, because we were below 300, I served as
16 the principal and the superintendent. But this is
17 our first year with a building level principal for K-
18 12.

19 DR. MOORE: That's great. I'm glad you have
20 that support in that work.

21 MS. COFFMAN: And the other thing I'd like to
22 say about them is they previously qualified for
23 comprehensive support and improvement under our
24 federal accountability and met the criteria to exit.

25 DR. MOORE: Okay.

1 MS. COFFMAN: During the pandemic, I might add.

2 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right.

4 Any questions from the Board on Strong-Huttig?

5 Okay. I think we're ready for a motion.

6 MS. WOODS: Do we -- is this your first year or
7 second year?

8 SUPT. THOMAS: Our seventh.

9 MS. WOODS: Your seventh.

10 SUPT. THOMAS: Yes, ma'am. We've applied every
11 year that this waiver has been available to apply
12 for.

13 DR. MOORE: And I guess I'll ask have your
14 kindergarten classes been about the same every year?
15 Have you seen up and down?

16 SUPT. THOMAS: They really kind of fluctuate.
17 Last year we only had one kindergarten class, but
18 this year we have two kindergarten classes. So
19 that's promising.

20 DR. MOORE: That is promising. I imagine that's
21 difficult staffing-wise though.

22 SUPT. THOMAS: Yes, ma'am. It does create some
23 difficulties. No matter what grade level you teach
24 this year be prepared for something different next
25 year based on enrollment.

1 DR. MOORE: Do you all have a number of virtual
2 courses offered for students?

3 SUPT. THOMAS: We do have some that we offer
4 through Virtual Arkansas.

5 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

6 MR. HENDERSON: How long have there been two
7 campuses?

8 SUPT. THOMAS: We've always had two buildings in
9 Strong-Huttig. Prior to consolidation we had two
10 buildings, an elementary building and a high school
11 building, in Strong, and Huttig had their own campus.
12 And so once the school districts were consolidated we
13 maintained the elementary building and then the high
14 school building.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Any other questions?

16 We are ready for a motion on Strong-Huttig.

17 MS. McFETRIDGE: I'll make the motion to approve
18 the waiver for Strong-Huttig.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion by Ms.
20 McFetridge to approve the waiver.

21 MR. SUTTON: I'll second.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Sutton.

23 All in favor?

24 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

1 Okay. Motion passes.

2 Thanks for being here, Ms. Thomas, today.

3 e) WESTERN YELL COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Western Yell
5 County.

6 MS. FRENO: This would be the third time that
7 Western Yell County is before the State Board seeking
8 a waiver. They do meet all the criteria set forth in
9 6-13-1613(b)(2). And the Superintendent is on via
10 Zoom in case there are any questions for the
11 Superintendent, or for Division staff.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. We'll see
13 if we have any questions. Any questions about
14 Western Yell?

15 DR. MOORE: Yeah. I believe we've had Western
16 Yell here before. How many years, do we know?

17 MS. FRENO: Yes. This would be the third time
18 that the district was -- is filing a petition for a
19 waiver.

20 DR. MOORE: Okay. And Western Yell, in my
21 memory, they're on a four-day week right now. Is
22 that correct?

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I think they're on a four-day.

24 MS. COFFMAN: We'll look it up.

25 DR. MOORE: Okay. If the Superintendent is on,

1 I'd like to hear a little bit about that.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I don't see her. I'm not sure
3 she's on.

4 SECRETARY KEY: I would say -- and I see Ms.
5 Coffman making her way to the front -- but y'all will
6 remember Western Yell was one of the districts that
7 we featured in November, on November 9th, with the
8 ESSA -- Arkansas ESSA Student Committee and State
9 Board joint meeting as having made significant
10 progress. So your questions about the academics in
11 some of these schools, we certainly don't want to
12 paint the picture that it's dire in every situation
13 or that additional support is needed. There is
14 actually growth.

15 So Ms. Coffman may have been coming up to talk
16 to you about that. But --

17 MS. COFFMAN: I was.

18 SECRETARY: -- if not, now she will.

19 MS. COFFMAN: Stealing my thunder.

20 So Western Yell County School District exited
21 Level 4-Directed Support. They moved from 4 a long
22 way back up to 1 --

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

24 MS. COFFMAN: -- General Support in one year.
25 That's pretty awesome. They were recognized, as

1 Secretary Key said, as School on the Move for
2 increasing their letter grade between 2019 and '22,
3 for increasing their overall ESSA School Index score
4 by 9.64 points between '21 and '22, and by increasing
5 their weighted achievement by 15.74 points between
6 '21 and '22. That's the elementary. The high school
7 was recognized as a School on the Move because their
8 overall index score increased 6.64 points. And,
9 remember, we're coming off a pandemic, so making
10 these types of increases, and especially in those
11 amounts, are really exciting. They also had a
12 weighted achievement increase of 12.7 points and they
13 have no Standards for Accreditation exceptions.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Those are the ones we like to
15 hear. That is wonderful. And congratulations to
16 Western Yell. And I think this -- go ahead.

17 MS. COFFMAN: Yes, they are on a four-day week.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. This is what we were
19 discussing, you know, it's just like having
20 individual students in a classroom; no two are alike.
21 It's the same way with districts -- you know, small
22 districts, large districts -- there are some that are
23 doing a really good job and some that need to get
24 better. And so I don't know if you can put size as a
25 reason for that.

1 MR. WOOD: And I'd like to speak to what my
2 question was a few minutes ago. It almost sounded as
3 though I was suspicious that small school districts
4 must be struggling academically. And that absolutely
5 is not my point.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

7 MR. WOOD: I'm very proud of what's going on in
8 Western Yell County, and I actually wrote about them
9 in a column a couple of weeks ago because I was so
10 impressed with what the Superintendent said at that
11 accountability report day. She said -- and I hope
12 that every school district in Arkansas hears this and
13 takes it to heart and applies it to your mentality of
14 leading your school district. She said, "We stopped
15 arguing with the test, we quit denying where we were,
16 and we made changes that led to our improvement."
17 That's remarkable, you know, to stop arguing with "it
18 doesn't test the standards" or, you know, whatever --
19 whatever you're saying that the test doesn't do.
20 Here's a school district of 325 kids that stopped
21 arguing about the test and just fixed what was going
22 on in their district and they moved from D's in their
23 schools to C's in their schools during a pandemic --

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

25 MR. WOOD: -- with 325 kids. So I'm very

1 impressed with Western Yell County. I hope more
2 people will call the superintendent and the
3 principals at Western Yell County and ask, "How can
4 y'all help us do the same for our kids?"

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah. Excellent.
6 All right.

7 MR. WOOD: And so I'll move to approve the
8 waiver.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Good. All right.
10 Thank you, Mr. Wood. We appreciate that.

11 All right. And then, do we have a second?

12 MS. HUNTER: Second.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Ms. Hunter.

14 All right. All in favor?

15 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

17 All right. Motion passes.

18 f) MARVELL-ELAINE SCHOOL DISTRICT

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Ms. Freno.

20 MS. FRENO: Thank you. The last is Marvell-
21 Elaine. This is the second year that it has come
22 before the Board seeking a waiver. And they have met
23 -- this one is different than the others because in
24 the others all the criteria had been met by the
25 school district. In this one, Marvell-Elaine has met

1 all the criteria with the exception of they are in
2 Level 5-In Need of Intensive Support. Consequently,
3 it is not a given that the school district has -- the
4 petition has to be granted but rather, it's solely
5 within the discretion of the Board whether or not to
6 grant this petition.

7 And we have with us today Dr. Katina Ray --
8 Superintendent Katina Ray from the school district.
9 And I know also that Division staff would like to
10 speak to this. So I would give up the floor to
11 Division staff to speak to this.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Ms. Smith.

13 MS. SMITH: Good morning.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good morning.

15 MS. SMITH: Stacy Smith, Deputy Commissioner.

16 So since the last board meeting when we
17 classified, we've had lots of staff in the district
18 starting the initial analysis of the district. And
19 so today I'm going to present some findings. It's
20 tough; it's a tough situation.

21 And as I start this presentation I want to say
22 that I consider Dr. Katina Ray my friend, and so
23 everything I'm going to say today is not a reflection
24 of the work that she's doing or her as a
25 superintendent. Okay? It is an uphill battle and it

1 would be probably far worse, especially on the
2 Standards for Accreditation side, if she were not as
3 resourceful and had as many connections in the state
4 as she has -- as she said, "foothold." Right?
5 Footholds. And, Mr. Williams, you show up every
6 time. So I'm going to be talking some hard things
7 today, but know that hopefully we all can walk out
8 afterwards and we're still going to hug; right?

9 SUPT. RAY: (Nodding head up and down.)

10 MS. SMITH: Okay. Marvell-Elaine School
11 District, the analysis, findings, I actually visited
12 the school district this week. I was there on Monday
13 -- I believe it was Monday. Everything is running
14 together at this point, y'all. Findings, I want to
15 start out with, and then I'm going to go through a
16 presentation to kind of support why I say that these
17 are the findings. One, that the students are not
18 receiving the education that is adequate or
19 equitable; the challenges of recruitment and
20 retention in the district are insurmountable for the
21 region and for the district at the size that it is;
22 the use of contracted purchase services to fill those
23 holes is not sustainable; the district will continue
24 each month to have Standards for Accreditation
25 violations that they fix, but they're just going to

1 continue to pop; and the concern that ongoing Level 5
2 support from DESE will not address the underlying
3 deficiencies that are occurring there. No matter how
4 much support we put out there, I'm just not confident
5 that we can fix it.

6 Okay. We're going to start off with Human
7 Capital. And I've actually asked Dr. Pfeffer -- this
8 is her area of specialty -- to kind of go over some
9 human capital pieces with you to think about. And
10 then I'll get back up and talk about some of the
11 outcomes in the district and some other areas that we
12 saw. Okay. So, Dr. Pfeffer.

13 DR. PFEFFER: Good morning. And as I was
14 sitting there listening to the questions you had with
15 the prior schools it made me think about being at a
16 meeting a few weeks ago. And the incoming chair of
17 the Chief Counsel of State School Officers began her
18 platform with a story about a tribe in Africa, where
19 the warriors in the tribe had a traditional greeting.
20 And the greeting was, "And how are the children?"
21 And the response if things were well -- and they took
22 it as their role to protect the young and the
23 powerless, to make that their priority. And their
24 response would be, "All the children are well." And
25 I couldn't help but think about you all today and in

1 your role thinking, you know, you are those warriors.
2 We need to be those warriors and we need to be
3 approaching every decision we make with that
4 question, "And how are the children?" And if we're
5 having to say "some of the children are well" or "the
6 children are well but," then we have to stop and say,
7 okay, we've got to peel this back further.

8 And so, and I'm not saying that to say that
9 there aren't improvements to make. And Secretary Key
10 started off by saying we are making improvements in
11 how we're addressing those schools early-on; so that
12 as they're coming to you when their enrollment
13 continues to decline and when the challenges look to
14 be insurmountable that we're bringing those to you
15 early-on so you have had that opportunity to really
16 know and to understand what's going on with these
17 districts. Because these are big decisions, they are
18 hard decision, and we realize that that is the
19 position you are in as those warriors making sure our
20 children are well.

21 So I'm going to go through the human capital
22 part of this system and the reason why this is such
23 an integral part, because this is about the children.
24 However, teachers matter more to student achievement
25 than any other aspect of schooling. That has been

1 proven over and over with research. When it comes to
2 student performance on reading and math tests,
3 teachers are estimated to have two to three times the
4 effect of any other school factor, including
5 services, facilities, and even leadership. And in
6 our human capital system we have divided up the
7 supports into three areas or the criteria -- the
8 healthy human capital system into three areas: the
9 recruitment, support and development of staff, and
10 retention. And in every case a healthy school will
11 have a systematic approach. Okay? And that
12 systematic approach is in each one of those criteria.
13 And so when we go in and we look we want to see what
14 is the system approach for recruiting and attracting
15 effective educators and staff members. And we have
16 an effective teacher definition as part of our ESSA
17 plan and that was crafted several years ago. And an
18 effective teacher is one who has the experience, who
19 has training, who has the background, who has
20 demonstrated that; they are teaching those content
21 standards at a level of mastery that impacts student
22 performance. Okay? So we have that definition of an
23 effective teacher. We know it's been a struggle for
24 many schools to retain effective teachers. We're
25 putting a lot of things in place. But a district

1 that has a systematic approach will be bringing in
2 people and then setting up the support and
3 development and the retention strategies in order to
4 keep those people in place. But as we look at the
5 situation right now in the district, we can see in
6 those bullet points that are kind of outlined, the
7 highlights. I'm going to show you some detail on in a
8 minute. But the secondary staff is comprised
9 primarily of virtual teachers. And if you want to
10 look at the teachers who are mostly licensed in the
11 district, it is those virtual teachers. So the heavy
12 reliance on virtual teachers for core instruction is
13 a concern in terms of a lack of a systematic approach
14 for attracting the staff that's needed.

15 The majority of elementary teachers are taught
16 by unlicensed teachers. Only two teachers assigned
17 to the K-6 grades are licensed. So when you start
18 thinking about those very young learners and they're
19 having to be taught foundational fundamental skills,
20 even to the point of how to hold a pencil to write, a
21 teacher who has not been taught to teach children how
22 to do even those basic fundamental things is going to
23 struggle and, therefore, those children are as well.

24 There's a lot of lack of clarity, even yesterday
25 we were still trying to go back and unpack some of

1 the data. Having an Act 1240 waiver district-wide
2 makes it harder for us to determine what's going on
3 at that district. So being able to be onsite and do
4 some follow-up has helped us unpeel -- peel back some
5 of the layers and I think we can give you a picture
6 of what their staff look like. We did not have ALPs
7 on file last week, so there were some questions about
8 some teachers who maybe are licensed but just
9 teaching out of their area.

10 This supporting development piece -- again, that
11 systematic approach, we find -- we're finding that
12 they have a lot of people contracted to come in and
13 do mentoring and support in development of teachers.
14 But you'll see here that there's no evidence in their
15 educator effectiveness system to show that teachers
16 have even developed a professional growth plan. And
17 there's no evidence that observations are taking
18 place and that teachers are receiving feedback.

19 On the retention aspect, they do have a high
20 rate of turnover. It's been over 25% for the past
21 two years. And the district waited until just last
22 week to begin enrolling their Act 1240 teachers in
23 the ARPEP program. I believe that was starting to
24 happen last week. So that lack of systematic
25 approach, saying, okay, here are the people that we

1 have and waiting that long to get them on a licensure
2 pathway.

3 It's also a concern, that last bullet there,
4 enrollment in career centers, that kind of gets into
5 the student supports and academic piece. But I
6 wanted to mention it here because, in a moment when
7 we look at their staff for their career education
8 programs, they are not able to provide a robust
9 career and technical education experience for
10 students with three programs and three courses in
11 those program areas. However, there are at least two
12 career centers that would be available to students
13 and that's where students could be going to get that
14 really robust career education experience. And,
15 according to our records, there are no students
16 enrolled in either of those centers.

17 And so we pulled together just a sheet here to
18 show you their teachers. So this is their elementary
19 -- and I've color-coded it green, yellow and red. So
20 green Go means they are fully licensed for that grade
21 level that they're teaching; red would mean they're
22 not; yellow means that they may be licensed but just
23 not for that area. So you can see in their
24 kindergarten and 1st grade their teachers are not
25 licensed. They don't meet the -- the ETP is

1 emergency teaching permit; so that would be someone
2 who would've had some qualifications, would've had a
3 background -- that they're not meeting that criteria
4 and they're not a long-term sub. And that's the
5 result of having an Act 1240 waiver; you really don't
6 have to have any of that.

7 So the middle school with the math and science,
8 you can see that they do have a middle school math
9 certified teacher, but that teacher is also teaching
10 science. So if that teacher were on an ALP adding to
11 their license that would've, you know, made that
12 person appropriately accepted to be able to teach
13 that position. But you can see here at a glance the
14 majority of the staff in the elementary school are
15 not licensed.

16 When we go to the secondary, these are the ones
17 -- these are the teachers -- face-to-face onsite
18 teachers. Again, you've got some who are licensed
19 for those areas that they're teaching, but then you
20 have several that are not. Two of those there are
21 virtual. I think we left a question-mark beside one
22 of them. We think that is also a contracted person.
23 So I guess when I say they're onsite, they may not
24 actually be; they may just be a contracted person not
25 tied to like Virtual Arkansas.

1 This next group is where you have your Virtual
2 Arkansas contracted teachers teaching several of
3 those core areas. And then there's one there that we
4 had a question about; we're not sure what that person
5 -- they weren't showing up in the system. So -- and
6 somebody may be able to answer that question as well.
7 But just in general, again, that systematic approach
8 to when you recruit your staff, when you have them
9 there it's going to be very hard to retain teachers
10 that are not part of the pathway, not getting the
11 support that really matches what they're doing.

12 This next part, the special education, two of
13 those are licensed but one of them is a contracted
14 person -- so someone from outside the district. Some
15 of those more general area courses there you can see.
16 You know, you have someone with an early childhood
17 background that is assigned to teach art. You know,
18 in thinking about a systematic process there are
19 times that districts move teachers to teach in a
20 different area. But it's also a concern though when
21 you've got someone licensed for an area and they're
22 not being assigned. Again, there are reasons locally
23 why decisions are made on placement but overall, it
24 -- when you think about stability in the workforce
25 that raises some questions and concerns.

1 So if you put this data together in terms of
2 charts, on the elementary side the blue would
3 indicate how many are licensed, the red and yellow
4 are either unlicensed and out-of-area. So you can
5 see kind of the ratios there. For the high school,
6 you can see what those ratios look like. The
7 majority of those that are licensed are virtual
8 teachers. And then the district-wide percentages are
9 there, so you have that to kind of give you a
10 perspective.

11 Virtual versus face-to-face, in terms of the
12 number of staff for the core instruction there -- so
13 34% are virtual teachers, a pretty large percentage
14 there when you think about that and the experience
15 students are getting.

16 We pulled their data on the teacher attrition.
17 So the district is in that black line, the blue line
18 is the co-op, and then the green dotted line would be
19 state data. So you can see what their data had been
20 the last couple of years -- well, you can see all the
21 way back. So the data, you know, have been kind of
22 fluctuating back from -- 2018 looks like it was when
23 they had the least amount of attrition in the
24 district.

25 This piece of data here I think is important.

1 This would be the evidence if you had principals who
2 are in the classrooms doing the observations. But I
3 think the one that's probably more compelling to me
4 -- because knowing they've had trouble staffing at a
5 principal level -- the one that's probably more
6 compelling is the fact of the professional growth
7 plans as a teacher. And the system has been designed
8 to be there intuitive and for the teachers to be able
9 to take ownership over the type of professional
10 growth opportunities that they need in order to get
11 better. And teachers who are coming in -- we have
12 other districts that -- where teachers who are
13 unlicensed but they're coming in and they're being
14 treated like professionals so that they're being
15 invested in and they're being asked what is it that
16 you need to do to get better and there's that
17 professional conversation. You know, the teacher
18 that talked to us a while ago, who's getting to go
19 and have that professional experience through the
20 Fulbright award, I mean what greater investment in a
21 professional and being treated that way. And these
22 professional growth plans, that's what they're
23 designed to do. They're designed to be the -- that
24 what I get to count on to help me grow and get
25 better.

1 So those are the data we have on the human
2 capital pieces. I don't know if you want to do
3 questions now or Ms. Smith can go on.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Anyone have a question
5 on that portion?

6 MR. WOOD: I might have a question about that.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

8 MR. WOOD: But feel free to tell me to move that
9 to the end of this. The ultimate question that's
10 probably headed towards us, what are the prospects in
11 surrounding districts to improve those human capital
12 concerns?

13 SECRETARY KEY: Yeah. I would respectfully
14 suggest we hold that to later in the discussion.

15 MR. WOOD: Okay.

16 MS. SMITH: So I can tell you just from being
17 there this week that even some of those -- again,
18 this is how resourceful Dr. Ray is. So, even this
19 week they were hiring a special ed. teacher as a
20 long-term sub to come in and start impacting by
21 providing services to the high school. You know,
22 even this week she's readjusted her purchase service
23 contract because she's not satisfied with some of the
24 services. So this constantly changes. Staffing is
25 changing. Okay? And she's trying to address where

1 the hole is and trying to plug. So we know that.

2 We'll talk about student outcomes. So I pulled
3 -- we had -- this is Marvell-Elaine math for grade K-
4 2. Okay. And so they use NWEA. All right. So you
5 can see fall and you can see spring. And I went back
6 and asked for previous years of testing so we can see
7 trends. Okay. What you want to see -- on the right-
8 hand side on the spring column is you want to see
9 green. Okay. Light green means there wasn't a
10 significant -- non-significant increase, but they
11 either increased or they maintained what they were
12 expecting kind of for that -- where they were. Okay.
13 So if they were below to begin with, you want to see
14 a higher number because you want to see the growth.
15 All right. So dark green are good areas, reds are
16 areas in which they actually lost ground that year in
17 math. Okay. So you can see, depending on the grade
18 levels, where we're losing some ground and in some
19 grade levels where we're maintaining or even growing.
20 I will say in observations in classrooms for math I
21 did see math materials. I believe you have Go Math?

22 SUPT. RAY: Uh-huh.

23 MS. SMITH: Go Math district-wide. So they do
24 have curriculum materials for that. They have hired
25 mentors to come in and assist and coach. In one of

1 the classrooms I actually saw there was a mentor in
2 the room with a teacher teaching math. Okay. So I
3 observed that, I saw that happening.

4 This is for literacy.

5 DR. MOORE: Stacy, can you tell us what
6 assessment is this?

7 MS. SMITH: NWEA.

8 DR. MOORE: Okay.

9 MS. SMITH: NWEA.

10 This is for literacy K-2 and this is the area
11 that I have to say I have the most concerns about,
12 not only in their test data but in classroom
13 observations. This is their NWEA data back from
14 2017, all the way up to 21-22. Again, red indicates
15 that the students have lost ground from the previous
16 test at the beginning of the year.

17 MS. SAUM: Stacy, can I ask a quick question?
18 For the 2nd graders, are they taking the K-2 test or
19 the 2-5 test, do you know?

20 MS. SMITH: Where does that fall for NWEA,
21 Sherry?

22 MS. BAIRD: The 2-5 is the default.

23 MS. SMITH: 2-5, so it's the 2-5.

24 MS. SAUM: Okay. Thank you.

25 MR. HENDERSON: Ms. Stacy, I have a question as

1 well. On the green, what segregates the differences
2 between dark green and light green as far as
3 percentile?

4 MS. SMITH: What's the -- when you went from
5 light green to dark green -- come up here, Sheree.
6 When you guys were deciding like on this slide right
7 here, when you said non-significant increase and
8 significant increase, how did you determine when it
9 clicked to --

10 MS. BAIRD: Right.

11 MS. SMITH: -- dark green?

12 MS. BAIRD: So NWEA has an algorithm --

13 MS. SMITH: Tell them who you are.

14 MS. BAIRD: Oh. Sherry Baird, Program Manager
15 for Assessment.

16 So using NWEA's numbers, when you test in the
17 fall versus in the spring you're going to have what's
18 called expected growth because you're getting
19 instruction over the year. And if you're meeting or
20 maintaining, that would be your light green; so I
21 would have to look at what that percentile number
22 was. But then, of course, you know, in order to
23 close the gap we're looking for what we call stretch
24 growth. And so -- but then when we see the red from
25 fall to spring, we actually saw a decline with those

1 scores. They didn't make growth.

2 MR. HENDERSON: Thank you.

3 MS. SAUM: I was going to ask too, switching to
4 the 2-5, I know it's a lot more difficult. I see it
5 in my own children and my school how children do tend
6 to have a decline. Is there a reason they aren't --
7 I know schools sometimes have that option of doing
8 the K-2 or the 2-5 for the 2nd graders. Is there a
9 reason?

10 MS. BAIRD: So for students that are using -- if
11 they have been identified as an IRI, where they need
12 intensive reading instruction, they are allowed to
13 take the K-2. That's a local decision. But for most
14 students -- and so this district might have probably
15 more students who've been identified as an IRI, so
16 they may have many more on K-2 than a typical school.
17 But the 2-5 is the default for the state.

18 MS. SAUM: Okay. Thank you.

19 MR. WOOD: I have a question. And this might be
20 kind of a silly question. I'm sorry. But what does
21 the number mean? What is the number?

22 MS. BAIRD: The percentile?

23 MR. WOOD: Yes.

24 MS. BAIRD: So a percentile is how you compare
25 with other students. So if you're like say in the

1 90th percentile that means you are 90% -- or scoring
2 higher than your typical --

3 MR. WOOD: Right.

4 MS. BAIRD: -- 1st grade student, 2nd grade
5 student.

6 MR. WOOD: So this means the average -- so this
7 means the average kindergartner in this school
8 district in 2017-18, in the fall, was better than
9 30.6% of students who took the test?

10 MS. HUNTER: Across the state?

11 MR. WOOD: Across the state? I just --

12 MS. BAIRD: I'm just trying to see if I follow
13 your question. So like looking at kindergarten,
14 okay, so they're in the -- so the 50th percentile --
15 like when we think of a bell curve those would be
16 like your -- what a typical student looks like.

17 MR. WOOD: 50 is average?

18 MS. BAIRD: 50 is average. So if you're in the
19 30th percentile, you're on the bottom slope of that
20 bell curve; you're on that tail.

21 MR. WOOD: And so this is a summation -- this
22 number is the average --

23 MS. BAIRD: These numbers are just Marvell-
24 Elaine numbers.

25 MR. WOOD: Right. The average student in

1 Marvell-Elaine scored 30.6?

2 MS. BAIRD: Yes.

3 MR. WOOD: Okay. Okay. Thank you.

4 MS. BAIRD: Uh-huh.

5 MS. HUNTER: Yeah, that was the question, like
6 how -- what is the

7 MS. BAIRD: National comparison.

8 MS. HUNTER: It's a national score?

9 MS. BAIRD: Yes.

10 MS. HUNTER: Another -- I'm sorry; another
11 question. In the previous -- when we were talking
12 about the human capital, did we see that 2nd graders
13 in this district are taught by --

14 MS. BAIRD: Licensed teachers.

15 MS. HUNTER: -- licensed teachers. Thank you.

16 MS. SMITH: Okay. So this is the Aspire math
17 scores. Again, we kind of talked about this before.
18 This is in comparison to the state average. So this
19 is last year's scores in comparison with the state
20 score for the elementary school. Okay. So you can
21 see that from 2017, up to '22. I wanted you to see
22 the decline over the years. Now, again, we did have
23 Covid; we didn't test in 2020. In 2022, we saw most
24 schools actually rebounding. Okay. Not significant
25 rebounding, but we saw them rebounding, where here

1 they actually declined. This is their math -- their
2 ELA -- I'm sorry -- this is math, this is ELA.

3 Again, when we talk about their teachers,
4 licensed and non-licensed, you can kind of see again
5 kindergarten not licensed. But this is -- it's over
6 time too. Okay. So in classroom observations
7 yesterday, especially in the area of literacy -- I
8 spend quite a bit of time in schools and I spend a
9 lot of my time in schools that are in state authority
10 doing observations. And so I am used to seeing
11 schools who are struggling, I'm used to seeing
12 teachers who are on 1240 waivers, I'm used to seeing
13 teachers who are novice teachers. This is the --
14 consistently through literacy instruction, classroom
15 to classroom, this is the poorest instruction I've
16 seen. And it wasn't because people weren't trying.
17 I saw mispronunciations, I saw misspelling of words
18 in kindergarten that weren't even words, I saw -- my
19 staff on multiple attempts kept trying to go back and
20 see literacy instruction. But now they have adopted
21 curriculum aligned to the Science of Reading and they
22 are using it, especially with the phonemic awareness.
23 But we had a really difficult time seeing them using
24 the phonics instruction or seeing them use their Wit
25 and Wisdom program for comprehension, things like

1 that. And we kept circling back in their schedule
2 trying to catch that; kept seeing lots of brain
3 breaks when we would go in the room, trying to get up
4 and move, or they would pull out the Heggerty
5 curriculum, which is very scripted. That is supposed
6 to be about 10 minutes and it would get stretched
7 out. And so we had a very hard -- difficult time
8 catching that. Observations in the 2nd grade class
9 -- and I don't -- I'm not going to say the scores for
10 the 2nd is because of the 2nd grade teachers; that's
11 not what I'm saying. This is over time. Okay. But
12 I saw students who could not form their letters, and
13 then I saw students who could write. Okay. But I
14 saw a large group of kids that were not anywhere
15 close to where they need to be at the point they're
16 supposed to be in, and I didn't see any instruction
17 that was going to close that gap.

18 So I say all that, and I'm going to -- in a
19 little bit I'm going to show you the amount of
20 support we've provided them in literacy professional
21 development and support to teachers over several
22 years in a minute. Okay? So we should be a lot
23 further along in the amount of support that's been
24 poured in. All right. And then even -- and even Dr.
25 Ray this year -- she went a different direction. She

1 didn't use our folks; she went and got her own folks,
2 trying to pull in people for support, and listening
3 to her people saying, "That didn't work for us; we
4 want something different." So I'm going to talk a
5 little bit about that. Lots of support has been
6 provided.

7 So moving to high school, so AP exams. Each
8 year you can -- the state provides AP. There is a
9 requirement to provide AP classes. In 2018, '19,
10 '20, '21, you can see the number of exams taken at
11 the school. Not a single student has ever earned
12 college credit in these years from their AP courses
13 or classes. I did observe a student with an AP
14 class; it was a virtual class. In talking to the
15 student, he only gets the virtual teacher about twice
16 a week for 15 minutes; the rest of the time is
17 independent work.

18 ACT composite scores -- the average ACT score at
19 Marvell-Elaine is 14. And you can see it over time
20 -- 15, 15, 16, 13; 2021, 14 -- and that's in
21 comparison to the state average at 18.3.

22 This is their graduation rate. Last year it was
23 93%. Their college attendance rate is 31%. Their
24 college remediation rate is 100% of their students
25 from this last year.

1 In classroom observations, again, I saw an
2 Algebra II class yesterday that was a virtual class.
3 It has -- was supposed to have 24 kids; I think it
4 had like 17. There wasn't enough Chromebooks for the
5 kids that were in there; they were short like two or
6 three, and kids were having to pair up. The teacher
7 was actually teaching. But in interviews with the
8 students for Algebra II content, and in discussion
9 with the para that was supervising, they get direct
10 instruction from their virtual teacher about twice a
11 week for 15 minutes, and the rest of the time is
12 independent work, watching videos, doing the work. I
13 was told the class is doing great, 80% of the kids
14 have -- or not 80% of the kids -- almost all the kids
15 but two have an 80% or better in the class as a
16 grade. I would -- I'm making the assumption that
17 when they're doing their independent work they're
18 working together and they're turning in their
19 assignments and they're getting the grade. But I
20 would not bet that they would pass an Algebra II or
21 show any type of progress for higher level math. And
22 that is an observation of me being there, walking in
23 classrooms, and my staff being there walking in
24 classrooms.

25 So, again, kind of laying over -- I chunked this

1 graph in content area. So when you look at ELA, they
2 have two ELA teachers onsite for 7th through 12th
3 grade. So that one teacher is licensed in 7/8, not
4 licensed in 10/11, but she's been teaching those
5 courses. Second teacher, not licensed in any of
6 those classes; so that's critical reading -- critical
7 reading, oral communication, journalism, transitional
8 literacy. That third is a virtual teacher, and so
9 that would be a virtual program. Okay. And, again,
10 having that instruction by a virtual teacher is very
11 limited. It's not like they're in first period every
12 day getting taught by a virtual teacher and there's a
13 para in there. It's very limited.

14 When you look at math -- math, that teacher is
15 actually certified. But the reason they're graded
16 out is she's on leave, and that's actually common.
17 They have actually had teachers in there last year
18 that were -- and people are allowed to have leave;
19 you're allowed to have medical leave; you're allowed
20 to have -- but she's not there right now, and so
21 that's being filled by I believe a sub. Second
22 teacher, not licensed in pre-calculus. I think
23 they're a tech coordinator for the district and
24 they're teaching the pre-calculus class. And then
25 the virtual class was Algebra II, and, again, I

1 observed that.

2 Social studies, they have two teachers there and
3 they are licensed in all those areas, 7th through
4 12th grade.

5 Science, all virtual for chemistry and physical
6 science, and then virtual asynchronous -- I have that
7 in a different color, because this is a program that
8 doesn't actually use a live teacher; it's all
9 recorded. There is a teacher with a program that is
10 checking the work; that is a certified teacher. So
11 when you look at how many certified teachers they
12 have it looks like a lot sometimes, but that is not
13 direct contact with kids.

14 Am I right about that?

15 SUPT. RAY: (Nodding head up and down.)

16 MS. SMITH: Yeah, it's not direct contact. So
17 you're already talking about a group of kids who are
18 struggling, who -- they don't have a direct teacher
19 teaching them. It is self-paced going through. They
20 do have paras; she has brought in mentors galore.
21 But the sustainability of it and the instruction for
22 kids is suffering.

23 Specialty areas, they have a special education
24 teacher. The high school, they just hired that
25 person this week; that's a long-term sub, not

1 licensed -- but a long-term sub that's going to start
2 servicing kids. Again, those are specialty areas.
3 You see licensed and non-licensed there.

4 So I'm going to pause for a second because I
5 know that was a lot. Any questions on those pieces?
6 And then I'm going to kind of hit some of these other
7 areas.

8 I am going to make this comment: so I know we've
9 talked a lot about licensed teachers. There were
10 licensed teachers in this school that I observed,
11 that I would, if I were a principal, probably have
12 them on an action plan or not have them in my school.
13 The quality was very low. So just because you have a
14 license doesn't mean you're great.

15 DR. MOORE: May I ask a question?

16 MS. SMITH: Yeah.

17 DR. MOORE: How long have they had Act 1240
18 waivers in the district?

19 MS. SMITH: How long have they had Act 1240
20 waivers? For several years.

21 MS. FRENO: From our records, they've had an Act
22 1240 waiver for Teacher Licensure since 2019. They
23 currently have it running through the 24-25 school
24 year. And this board just granted them that
25 extension in April of this year.

1 DR. MOORE: Okay. And has the district relied
2 on Act 1240 waivers -- I mean obviously since 2019.
3 Do we have any data going back to before then, if
4 there was a lot of long-term subs or what staffing
5 looked like at that point in time?

6 MS. SMITH: So that was some of the data that
7 Ivy was showing you over time, the turnover rate and
8 the 1240 teachers. So it has been -- in fact, this
9 year we really tried to work with Marvell-Elaine too
10 when they were coming for their waiver, trying to
11 identify where licensed teachers could be. So it has
12 been an ongoing issue. We've been working with the
13 district since 2018-19, as far as the Office of
14 Coordinated Support and Service, and working
15 specifically on principal leadership and supporting
16 teachers in curriculum content. I can give you the
17 exact numbers, but I don't have them at this minute.

18 DR. MOORE: Okay, that's helpful.

19 MS. SMITH: Okay. The last time when we were
20 here I think it was Mr. Wood -- no S -- asked about
21 have they been identified before, and I said, "No,
22 they're not." But that was not an act -- that wasn't
23 exactly correct. So right now they are Level 4 for
24 directed support, and then they would classify for
25 Level 5. They do have a Standards for Accreditation

1 like -- finding right now for the principal, but
2 they're going to resolve that and fix it for the next
3 one. They have some current employees with
4 background checks, but I'm going to move through
5 that.

6 We're going to talk a little bit about federal
7 accountability. So they are a district that, in
8 2018, were identified for comprehensive support and
9 improvement, so CSI. That's our federal
10 accountability and that's how we identify schools who
11 are the lowest performing schools in the past -- or
12 in the state. Normally, in the past that's where you
13 heard academic distress; they're now comprehensive
14 support and improvement. The district did not exit
15 that this year, and now they're in what's considered
16 more rigorous interventions, comprehensive support
17 and improvement. So since 2018, they have been
18 classified as a low-performing school receiving
19 additional funding and support in those areas.

20 So that's kind of a big overview of that. We
21 can dive deeper in that with Deb. I can bring them
22 up here if we need to. But I just wanted to put out
23 that this isn't something that just happened. Okay.

24 Facilities and transportation, I don't have any
25 concerns. Their facilities were clean; their

1 facilities have classrooms, they have actually
2 expanded them; they're open, large, nice rooms, clean
3 rooms. Materials, supplies were available.
4 Curriculum was available, posted -- I mean they had
5 the materials needed to teach. Their facilities were
6 nice. When I pulled up, Dr. Ray -- what's she doing?
7 She's out front greeting people, she's picking up
8 trash, she's working. Okay. I saw other people
9 working doing the same thing. I saw both principals
10 in their building working. So I don't want to say
11 that they weren't working and doing their jobs.
12 They're facing insurmountable tasks.

13 Student supports -- ALE, they have five students
14 that are assigned to an ALE. It is a purchase
15 service, so they're off-campus elsewhere. I
16 attempted to visit the campus several times and
17 students were not there. When we did contact the
18 supervisor, they let students go for work programs,
19 and they didn't have a teacher, so kids were out
20 because they didn't have a sub for the room. We did
21 finally get there this week and did see some kids on
22 the campus. The only students in this consortium are
23 from Marvell-Elaine. So there's more support that
24 needs to be done there right now. I'm showing all
25 the kids are filling their classes.

1 Special education -- they've hired a long-term
2 sub for high school. But at this point I don't think
3 high school kids have been served their special
4 education minutes for this year at all. I could be
5 wrong, they may have had some other things; but at
6 this point my special ed. staff that went out found
7 that as a concern and something that needed to be
8 addressed.

9 Related services are provided through a purchase
10 service contract. That is not atypical. A lot of
11 school districts hire extra speech teachers, OT and
12 PT. They're having to do all of that through that,
13 but they're also having to hire just their direct
14 instruction teacher through those kind of contracts
15 as well.

16 The academics, the curriculum -- they have Wit
17 and Wisdom; they have Foundations; they have Heggerty;
18 they have Go Math. That's good. That's good. The
19 outside person they hired to do pacing materials --
20 when you look at it, it looks very good. Okay. It
21 looks like a good curriculum. I mean, Dr. Ray has
22 some really good contacts and resources and people
23 who have been supporting her to get them to the point
24 they're at at this moment. We do have some concerns
25 about some of the pacing following the fidelity of

1 those pieces. But the bigger concern for me was
2 seeing implementation in the classroom; it didn't
3 necessarily match.

4 Literacy -- the literacy instruction was poor
5 throughout the school. And even in the high school,
6 in classroom instruction, I saw students sleeping,
7 heads down, just not engaged. And the virtual
8 classroom that I observed the teacher who -- as she
9 was teaching, when I first walked in and did an
10 observation all the kids got quiet. I left. When I
11 came back they were all talking, the teacher was
12 still teaching. They're not even -- I mean, I think
13 I had one or two kids in the back of the room that
14 had their headphones on and were really listening;
15 everybody else was muted and they were having a good
16 time.

17 Dyslexia -- they have 46 students identified.
18 ADE and the co-op actually assisted in screening and
19 identifying kids. And we do have services being
20 provided through Barton, the Barton program, in 2nd,
21 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th. You saw that. That was
22 going. The district has not completed level 2
23 screeners. I actually visited with the person about
24 that. That should be getting done. So, students in
25 those other grades are not being served at this time.

1 And that person is Take Flight trained, which is a
2 really good program for dyslexia. But, again, we're
3 right at -- now almost to January and we haven't even
4 started serving those students.

5 Counseling plan -- they do have a counselor.
6 She's a novice. Their comprehensive school
7 counseling plan, it needs assistance.

8 Support previously provided in literacy -- so
9 going back to 2018-19 is the first notes that I found
10 where it shows that staff from the Office of
11 Coordinated State Support was going in and directly
12 working with the school district on a regular basis.
13 So Rocky Malone, who many of you may know, she was
14 the principal support; Sheila Whitlow, who's on my
15 team, was going in and supporting the superintendent
16 -- that was Dr. Cottoms at the time, then that
17 changed over to Dr. Anderson, and now we've got Dr.
18 -- and then we had Ms. Williams for that -- the one
19 year, and now we've got Ms. Ray.

20 Back in 2021, this is my first year as OCSS, so
21 this is where I did more detail because this is where
22 I'm -- I come in. So I can tell you that, in 2021,
23 we sent -- I sent my best. Sandy Shepard is the lead
24 of RISE Arkansas in the state. I talked to Dr. Pride
25 and I said, "No more do the ADE specialists -- no

1 more going to northwest Arkansas, no more going over
2 here; I want all of the people who are the best of
3 the best to have trained everybody else assigned to
4 this region. So I made her shift the entire
5 organization and where people were assigned. So
6 these are high-quality thorough, good, solid
7 trainers. In 2021, the specialist did the full-day
8 RISE training for K-2. We actually hosted it on
9 Marvell-Elaine campus; other schools were coming
10 there. We did the 3-6 right down the street at Lee
11 County. Jennifer Barbaree is also literacy
12 background; she was the specialist, Assistant
13 Superintendent -- State Superintendent assigned
14 there. She was onsite weekly and she was assisting.
15 We had literacy specialists going in to Atwood, going
16 into kindergarten and pre-K classrooms. Alisha
17 Atwood worked for me when I was principal -- one of
18 the best kindergarten teachers I've ever seen. She
19 was going in and modeling lessons. ADE dyslexia
20 support provided by Vicki King, that was happening in
21 2021. In 21-22, we had the co-op folks were going
22 in; so they were going in regularly to provide
23 support. We had pushback from the teachers and the
24 principal on our expectations and what we were
25 expecting from teachers and we actually reassigned

1 folks. Were my folks culturally responsive enough
2 was questioned, so we switched who our specialist was
3 going there. We tried to adjust as needed to provide
4 support. We even had people from Public School
5 Accountability that were assisting. In 22-23, we
6 were asked to pull back. Dr. Ray hired some folks
7 who did have Science of Reading training and they've
8 been coming in trying to support. But there has been
9 a lot of support in reading instruction poured into
10 that elementary campus. And the observations that I
11 had -- and I was there on Tuesday, not Monday -- I'm
12 going to call that cold medicine error, okay --
13 Tuesday, it was sorely lacking.

14 So lack of concerns about the teachers, lack of
15 progress over the last three years, with intensive
16 literacy support, and resistance to the direction
17 from the Department staff. I'm not saying that Dr.
18 Ray is resisting me, so don't take that. Okay. She
19 and I have had some very good conversations and she's
20 called me to say, "Come back, come help us."

21 Curriculums -- I talked about that a minute ago.

22 Purchase service contracts -- again, these are
23 things that she's had to go outside of the district
24 to hire extra people to come in. They're not
25 employed by the district. Everything from mentors to

1 her high school principal is not an employee of the
2 district. For her curriculum, for related SPED
3 services, her LEA supervisor, for ALE services, the
4 GT teachers, the virtual instructions for required
5 courses -- you know, it goes on and on. If she
6 didn't have the ability to do this and the
7 connections to do this, they would have so many
8 Standards for Accreditation violations. Okay.
9 Again, this is her resources and her ability to pull
10 people in, but that's not sustainable and it's not a
11 person that's consistently at the school.

12 The budget summary -- I did want to put the
13 updated one on there. We do not have a concern about
14 the budget that we had last month. Okay. If you'll
15 look at this one, this shows the difference on the
16 '23 budget. The last time it showed like \$900,000.
17 It's at \$161,000. So that's okay. Dr. Saunders is
18 here, but he does not have any huge concerns right
19 now about the budget. We did look about the purchase
20 service contracts; they have been coming through the
21 debt request. So, again, they're trying to keep
22 their things there organized. But our team did go in
23 and support helping them get their budget.

24 Conclusion --

25 DR. MOORE: May I ask a question --

1 MS. SMITH: Yes.

2 DR. MOORE: -- on the budget fiscal-wise? Have
3 they ever been in fiscal distress?

4 MS. SMITH: Yes.

5 DR. MOORE: Okay. I think I looked back at some
6 news articles. When did they exit fiscal distress?

7 MS. SMITH: We exited the fiscal distress last
8 year.

9 DR. MOORE: Oh. It was just last year?

10 MS. SMITH: Uh-huh.

11 DR. MOORE: Okay. And when I read it, it was
12 something like misuse of funds in the district. But
13 all that was resolved with the return of fiscal --

14 MS. SMITH: Yes. And just to recall, that was
15 one of those -- that was right before the
16 superintendent passed away --

17 DR. MOORE: Okay.

18 MS. SMITH: -- and the interim superintendent
19 came. We clapped, we -- I mean, it was -- Mr.
20 Williams was here. And we talked about the fiscal
21 distress and that was last year.

22 DR. MOORE: Okay. But since then, I mean --

23 MS. SMITH: So last year -- our office still
24 monitors and assists.

25 DR. MOORE: Okay.

1 MS. SMITH: So we don't have huge concerns about
2 the fiscal.

3 DR. MOORE: Okay.

4 MR. WOOD: Can I ask a question --

5 MS. SMITH: Yes.

6 MR. WOOD: -- before we get too far from the
7 human capital stuff there? I don't think I saw a
8 discussion about staff turnover in the district. Is
9 that an issue that's causing ineffectiveness? So
10 when we talk about the history of interventions going
11 back to 17-18, 18-19, whatever, if they're constantly
12 hiring new teachers then you're losing the training.

13 MS. SMITH: Yeah. So earlier, I believe when
14 Dr. Pfeffer was up here, she said 25% of their staff
15 has turned over. And we do have other staff that has
16 turned over, and then you have other staff that's
17 within there that's not been licensed. And so it
18 does -- it is an impact.

19 MR. WOOD: Yes.

20 MS. SMITH: And, again -- and so for the
21 recommendation of not giving them the waiver, when we
22 say it's not that people aren't there working hard or
23 trying; it's they are going to have constant
24 turnover, they are constantly going to be in this
25 thing of I'm hiring a licensed teacher but it's

1 either a novice teacher or it's a licensed teacher
2 that is struggling, or a non-licensed teacher that
3 we're then trying to get them through a pathway. It
4 is a constant -- it's a constant. And so that is --
5 I think it's almost insurmountable for the district
6 to even be able to address it.

7 So the conclusion here, basically, this is how I
8 started. Okay. I started by saying that the
9 students were not receiving adequate or equitable --
10 and I can say that confidently through observation.
11 I think the challenge of retention and recruitment in
12 the district is something that at their site, at
13 their competitive pay, at just the way everything is
14 set up, I just don't think they can compete. I think
15 they're going to constantly be facing that. In fact,
16 I had teachers who were in Lee County and other
17 districts that we work with closely that have come
18 from Marvell. You know, their superintendent has
19 changed frequently, not that -- you know, we're not
20 committed now, but it's an ongoing thing. The
21 district will continue to have violations that we're
22 going to continue to have to find creative ways to
23 solve, and that doesn't necessarily mean that's the
24 best thing for kids. And we have been providing
25 support. I know this is -- you know, for you guys

1 trying to make this decision this feels very recent,
2 but we have been supporting for several years.

3 DR. HILL: What have you been able to -- since
4 your time there, from a community support standpoint
5 -- I mean, that's -- I mean, do we know, you know,
6 from a transformation --

7 MS. SMITH: Yeah.

8 DR. HILL: -- vision of what you're trying --

9 MS. SMITH: Yeah.

10 DR. HILL: -- to do with that and how integral
11 that is?

12 MS. SMITH: Yes. So I visited with Katina, or
13 Dr. Ray, about that this week when I was there. It's
14 not that the alumni and the folks that live in that
15 community don't love their school and aren't
16 connected to it; most -- a lot of those people,
17 that's the school they went to. The area though
18 around as far as the community and businesses, it's
19 just not -- it's mainly farmland, there's not a lot
20 of community action. They do have folks who come and
21 support the sports and the basketball team and, you
22 know, those types of things. But as far as the
23 community being able to come in -- a lot of the
24 people who work there that are not licensed live in
25 the community, so you have that type of engagement.

1 They want to be involved and they don't want to see
2 their school close; it's just providing the quality
3 education that kids need. Did that help?

4 DR. HILL: Yes. The desire is there.

5 MS. SMITH: The desire is there. The desire is
6 there.

7 Okay. I'm done with my presentation, if you
8 guys want to talk to Dr. Ray or if you have any other
9 questions for me.

10 SECRETARY KEY: So I just -- I want to give -- I
11 want to give a little context to the Board, because
12 since the day after y'all met on the 28th and
13 considered Level 5 we've had folks there I think
14 every day or almost every day. I mean, but it's been
15 a regular occurrence that we've had teams onsite
16 assessing, as we told y'all we would. You know,
17 every day I would get a report on, you know, what
18 they find and it was always their -- folks in the
19 schools are working hard; that's not an issue. The
20 capacity simply isn't there -- I mean the capacity
21 all the way around. That's why we said we would look
22 at the six systems to see, and I think gave a very
23 clear picture of the conditions that we observed.
24 And this is emotional. I mean, you know, in those
25 phone calls, sometimes we would have to hang up

1 because of the -- we couldn't have a conversation for
2 the emotions that were coming in in reporting of what
3 we've seen or, you know, what they had seen when they
4 were there.

5 But I put this reference to Arkansas code 10-3-
6 2101. It was there at the top of the Conclusion,
7 that ultimately it is the responsibility of the
8 State. It was made very clear in the Lake View
9 decision. And I think we've done a very good job of
10 holding to that commitment. It's been up and down.
11 You know, we work with districts all the time that
12 are -- they struggle. I don't think we have seen the
13 level of struggle like we're seeing here. And that's
14 not -- I mean, you see Mr. Williams here every time
15 that Marvell-Elaine -- on good days and bad days Mr.
16 Williams is here. He's there on -- in town; you
17 know, he's -- Sundays, Wednesday nights probably,
18 whenever the church doors are open I know he's there
19 talking about the school and the kids.

20 Ultimately, the General Assembly has left that
21 to us as the Department and the Board to make
22 sometimes what is very, very, very difficult
23 decisions. It is never an easy decision and we bear
24 the weight of the magnitude of that decision. And
25 when we bring presentations like this to y'all and

1 bring recommendations -- because we know -- we
2 understand the importance of this school to its
3 community. Bottom line though, they're at 300 or so
4 students that their futures and any students that
5 come after them, their futures, are absolutely at
6 stake and it is our responsibility to make sure.

7 Now I'm going to address your question, Mr.
8 Wood, that you brought earlier. The capacity of
9 other districts in that area, you all know those --
10 there are districts in that area that have struggled,
11 and two of them we work with and have for years. The
12 Helena-West Helena district has been in and out of
13 state authority; we all know that. Lee County, in
14 and out of state authority. But to your --
15 specifically to your question, I believe it was Dr.
16 McGee -- no, it was with Lee County -- I think Stacy
17 did make a report this year, it was the first year
18 they've started school fully staffed.

19 MS. SMITH: Yes.

20 SECRETARY KEY: And that was a report that we
21 were able to bring --

22 MS. SMITH: Yeah.

23 SECRETARY KEY: -- after school started back in
24 August, September.

25 MS. SMITH: And even in Helena-West Helena, the

1 support --

2 SECRETARY KEY: Yes.

3 MS. SMITH: -- we've provided them in putting --
4 you know, looking at where teachers were licensed,
5 assigning people, re-doing their schedules. We were
6 able to get them to participate with core teachers
7 that they had onsite in-person.

8 SECRETARY KEY: Yeah. So to address that
9 question, is it -- it is better. And the work that
10 we have done in those districts has helped create a
11 better -- you know, a better situation in those
12 districts. Barton, which is right next-door, you
13 know, we've not worked as much with them, but, you
14 know, we still have worked with them in the past.

15 So that's -- you know, that's what we would be
16 looking at next. And as y'all get through your
17 questions, if you want to have a brief conversation
18 about what next steps would be we can do that. But I
19 don't want to get that confused with this decision
20 that you all have to make regarding this waiver
21 request.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Dr. Pfeffer, did you have
23 something?

24 DR. PFEFFER: To what Secretary Key was going to
25 say, it really becomes about workforce stability.

1 And in a district that is so small the number of
2 staff that are needed to provide basic education
3 services, it gets very hard to be able to do that.
4 And when you look at the other districts in the
5 region, there's more capacity there to provide not
6 only the basic education but those support services
7 and add to the stability. That's really what -- one
8 difference that it would be.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Does anyone
10 have a question maybe for Dr. Ray or the district
11 that you wanted to ask them?

12 I know -- and I think this would be a good time
13 to remind you as a board, whether we like it or not
14 we have responsibilities. Okay? And some of those
15 responsibilities are personal that we feel and some
16 of them are obligations by law that we are required
17 to make sure of. And one of them -- you saw it on
18 the screen where Stacy put it up while ago -- I want
19 to read it to make sure that we are clear what our
20 responsibility is: Therefore, because the state of
21 Arkansas has an absolute duty to provide the school
22 children of the state of Arkansas with an adequate
23 education, the General Assembly finds that insuring
24 that an adequate and equitable system of public
25 education is available in the state of Arkansas and

1 shall be the ongoing priority for the state of
2 Arkansas. That's our responsibility, is to make sure
3 that those children, each and every one, have an
4 adequate education.

5 And so that's the charge that I guess I'm going
6 to lead with you today and then we can have
7 discussions on that as we go forward.

8 Questions, comments, feelings?

9 Ms. Freno.

10 MS. FRENO: Ms. Newton, just for clarification,
11 I know you asked if anyone has questions of the
12 district. But the district has an opportunity to get
13 up --

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

15 MS. FRENO: -- and make any comments that it
16 wishes to make.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. So, Dr.
18 Ray, we'll -- we didn't necessarily have a question,
19 but we know that you probably would like to speak.
20 Welcome.

21 SUPT. RAY: Thank you. Thank you for this
22 opportunity.

23 When I met with Stacy this week she shared with
24 me that this would be a tough experience, and it has
25 been that. Let me say to my board members that are

1 here, Mr. Williams and Mr. Cox, thank you for your
2 support, for always being here and supporting us.
3 And we also have Mr. English that's online, and we
4 may have others that are online. Thank you all for
5 being here and always supporting the district.

6 Ten days ago, we stood in front of you and we
7 shared that we have lots of challenges in the
8 Marvell-Elaine School District. Ten days ago, we
9 stood before you and we said that we welcome any
10 support that the State was willing to give us. And
11 so as the presentation has been shared, those --
12 there's already been some supports in place, but we
13 have never been in Level 5. Last school year our
14 district lost its leader. So some of that -- I
15 wasn't there, but I'm going to say I know that some
16 of this is due to just the grief and hardship that
17 came along with that. We know that over the years,
18 like I said, there's been some supports. But I would
19 also ask during the time that the State was offering
20 those supports why didn't test scores go up? I mean,
21 they've proved today that they have put a lot of work
22 into Marvell-Elaine School District. So I'm going to
23 again ask what will Level 5 look like? Why is it --
24 what is the difference? We just got moved in there
25 10 days ago. So we are asking for -- to be given the

1 opportunity to receive that intensive support that
2 was shared 10 days ago, that it would be different.
3 We haven't received that extra support for the Level
4 5. So, again, we are again asking to receive those
5 additional supports. We're asking for more time to
6 prove that we can do this, that we can make the
7 turnarounds. We know that we cannot do this by
8 ourselves. We need your support. We need the
9 support of the State. We need the support of the --
10 anyone that's willing to come in to assist us in this
11 effort. But, again, we were just placed into Level 5
12 ten days ago. And so we again ask that you would
13 consider giving us the waiver, and then at the end of
14 the year if we do not make the gains and the progress
15 that's needed in an effort to adequately educate our
16 students in our area, then we're willing to come back
17 before you. But we're again asking to have that
18 opportunity because we were just moved into Level 5
19 ten days ago.

20 I will offer [sic] any questions that you may
21 have for me.

22 We're going to continue to do the work. That's
23 the bottom line. This is about the kids and we want
24 the very best for them. We want them to be educated.
25 We're going to continue to call in all of the favors

1 that we can muster up in an effort to insure that our
2 kids are being -- their needs are being met. We know
3 that there's a lot of challenges and the area of
4 retention and recruitment is very, very -- it's
5 difficult. You know, it's a rural community. We
6 have people that -- you know, they like the urban
7 cities of Little Rock and the areas around here. So
8 we definitely understand that. So we are looking for
9 the support from the State. You know, are there
10 people -- are there some things that we can do
11 differently in an effort to attract teachers to our
12 area that will want to stay and be invested in the
13 community?

14 So, again, you know, we're willing to continue
15 to do the work and that's what we ask for today.
16 Give our board, give our staff and our new
17 administration an opportunity to learn and grow, but
18 to -- also to work with our students and to give
19 those students in our community a school, because
20 they want a school in their area that they can go to
21 every day and feel real good about, but also be
22 educated.

23 Any questions for me?

24 DR. MOORE: I do.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Dr. Moore.

1 DR. MOORE: Thanks for all the hard work you're
2 doing and it's very challenging. I noticed when
3 Stacy was going over the data one positive light was
4 you had a higher than the state average graduation
5 rate. I believe it was 93%. But the college-going
6 rate was very low and it sounds like there's no
7 students participating in a career and technical
8 program. Do y'all see that changing? I mean, so
9 there's a large group of students who aren't going to
10 college and not receiving any career/tech training --
11 career and technical or any sort of training. Is
12 that changing? Is that something that is going to be
13 worked on?

14 SUPT. RAY: It is. We do have some -- we've
15 been talking with our students and seeing those areas
16 that they want to be educated in, so we have put some
17 new areas in place. And so some of that is our
18 students don't know that they don't want to go to
19 college. You know, they -- you know, we have to make
20 sure that we're exposing them to those opportunities.
21 In communities like Marvell-Elaine -- communities of
22 Marvell-Elaine, some of it is the students -- they
23 don't know what's available to them, and so that's
24 what we're trying to do. We're trying to bring in
25 opportunities so that they can see that this is --

1 these are the possibilities for them outside of just
2 in the Marvell area where they see a lot of
3 agriculture.

4 DR. MOORE: Absolutely. All kids deserve that
5 opportunity.

6 Does the district have a college and career
7 coach?

8 SUPT. RAY: No, we do not have.

9 DR. MOORE: And does the counselor serve in that
10 role?

11 SUPT. RAY: Yes. And, again, we do have a new
12 counselor this year, so she's also being provided
13 training because she's a novice. But we're working
14 with her, we're bringing people in in an effort to
15 help support those efforts of getting, you know, her
16 trained so that she can best work with the students
17 on those opportunities.

18 DR. MOORE: My next just questions revolve
19 around the capacity of the community to build a long-
20 term educator workforce. We're looking at, you know,
21 a lot of unlicensed teachers, which is allowable by
22 the Act 1240 waivers.

23 SUPT. RAY: Right.

24 DR. MOORE: I know this is your first year. But
25 in previous years do you know if there were efforts

1 to get those unlicensed teachers on a pathway to
2 licensure?

3 SUPT. RAY: Yes.

4 DR. MOORE: And have those people left and
5 there's new people, or what does that cycle look like
6 and why aren't the current ones on any sort of
7 pathway? Because the way I see it if you're on a
8 pathway, whether in school or otherwise, you're
9 getting that additional layer of support from outside
10 the district to help you.

11 SUPT. RAY: Right. So we have worked very
12 closely with our Great Rivers Co-op in an effort to
13 put those teachers on a pathway. Some of that is
14 just we didn't push the button. We had a new
15 registrar this year and so we are aware -- and like I
16 said, we've been working very closely. So we have
17 talked with those teachers, and so starting in
18 January we have teachers already that are on 1240
19 that are already signed up to participate in those
20 programs. So we do have that pathway. And, again,
21 we have that documentation to show that we do have
22 teachers who will be going through a pathway in an
23 effort to be licensed.

24 DR. MOORE: Okay. And do you see those teachers
25 staying in your community? Teacher salary-wise, have

1 y'all been able to increase? Because I know that's a
2 challenge certainly --

3 SUPT. RAY: Yeah.

4 DR. MOORE: -- if you can retain teachers or
5 not.

6 SUPT. RAY: It's definitely a challenge. So we
7 do have the minimum license -- minimum amount for
8 salaries, but we do need to increase it. And I think
9 that's something that's going to be important for the
10 entire delta area because, you know, those areas --
11 because they are very challenging those teachers need
12 to be making more money and having more incentives in
13 an effort to remain there. But to answer your
14 question about the teachers, if they will remain, I
15 would say yes because a lot of those teachers are
16 from that community. They're new. With the
17 turnover, they've not been fully trained yet and so
18 we're still in the process.

19 The things that I've shared with the community
20 is that -- you know, I often share that we're in a
21 state of emergency, so we're having to work harder,
22 work faster. But our teachers are learning as
23 they're teaching our students. And so we just feel
24 like if we give them the adequate amount of time to
25 be able to be invested in, then we will see -- once

1 we go into classrooms and observations are being made
2 that there will be a change. But, again, our
3 teachers are in a learning curve because they are
4 new.

5 DR. MOORE: It's hard. I think my last
6 questions revolve around sort of the community
7 support. I fully believe that we can't do this from
8 8:00 to 2:00 every day. There needs to be wraparound
9 supports for students --

10 SUPT. RAY: Right.

11 DR. MOORE: -- summer or afterschool programs,
12 weekends. What capacity does the community have to
13 provide more supports for your students?

14 SUPT. RAY: Well, I am going to say since our
15 last State Board meeting on the 28th I've had a lot
16 of community members to reach out to me wanting to
17 know what can we do to help. So I think now because
18 we have this sense of urgency -- you know, it's been
19 there. But now, coming in front of the State Board
20 and going into the Level 5, our community is --
21 they're feeling it and they're wanting to be able to
22 do more. So I do feel like those opportunities will
23 be available for our students, again, just given the
24 opportunity.

25 Now, like I said, there's a larger investment.

1 No community wants to lose their school district,
2 they don't. And so those that have ways that they
3 can help support us they are reaching out and saying,
4 "Hey, you know, what else can we do or what can we do
5 in an effort to support this district, because we
6 want this district to remain open in our community."

7 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Mr. Wood.

9 MR. WOOD: When it comes to the question that
10 faces us today though, rather than "we want to do,"
11 what -- do you have a specific plan to address the
12 recruitment of high-quality instruction?

13 SUPT. RAY: The plan that I have in an effort to
14 recruit high-quality -- again, we've been looking all
15 over. We've looked not just in Arkansas, we've been
16 looking out-of-state in an effort of trying to find
17 people that are willing to come and make an
18 investment, to stay here in this community. So we've
19 been open to that. But, additionally, we've been
20 working with local -- with colleges in the state,
21 working with them in terms of trying to lead them
22 from the college to come in directly to work in our
23 schools. We actually have a recent college graduate
24 that lived in that community. We said, "Hey, we want
25 you here; you know, we'll continue to work with you."

1 She is on a 1240 waiver. But, again, she's from the
2 community; she's a recent college graduate. She did
3 go through the education program, there's some tests
4 that she needs to take. So we're going to continue
5 those opportunities in an effort of bringing the
6 members of the community -- because I have people
7 reach out to me a lot, they'll say, "You know, I'm
8 from Marvell" or, you know, "I'm teaching in another
9 area." And we want you to come back, you know,
10 especially those effective highly-qualified persons
11 that are willing to come back to our district to see
12 some things that are different. But I think it will
13 also start with there's some changes that we're going
14 to have to make in terms of some of our processes.
15 The way we pay, I was sharing with my board just the
16 other night in terms of being equal and what's
17 equitable. Because we have a lot of deficits in our
18 district we have to make sure that everything is not
19 equal because it's harder to hire a chemistry teacher
20 in our area. So we're going to have to do more
21 incentives for those people. So making those --
22 having those conversations -- and I really feel like
23 the board is onboard with seeing that these changes
24 must happen, because we have to be equitable; we have
25 to make sure that everyone is receiving what they

1 need, even if it's not the same but it's equitable.
2 It's supply-and-demand at this point, and that's a
3 statewide concern.

4 So we do have a plan. We will continue, again,
5 to work with the local colleges in an effort to
6 insure that we're bringing in those highly-qualified
7 people in an effort to, you know, to teach our kids.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any questions over here?

9 Mr. Sutton, did you have a question?

10 MR. SUTTON: Huh-uh.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

12 MR. HENDERSON: I do have one.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Mr. Henderson.

14 MR. HENDERSON: Dr. Ray, thank you for your
15 comments and your time. You did mention that from
16 the community now you have overwhelming support. Are
17 there any community or business members here
18 representing you today?

19 SUPT. RAY: We did ask for some to be online. I
20 don't know if they were -- we do have the support --
21 and I'm not sure if they are on or not -- the support
22 of our -- both of the mayors are highly supportive of
23 keeping the districts open. Again, we shared at our
24 last board meeting -- this last board meeting that,
25 in 2006, the consolidation took place with Marvell

1 and Elaine. So, again, we -- you know, they are in
2 much support of keeping the districts open so that we
3 don't have this transition again for our students.
4 But, again, we don't have a lot of industry in the
5 Marvell-Elaine area; a lot of it is agricultural.
6 But, again, we do have the support of some of the
7 programs. Some of the local programs, they have
8 reached out to us, and, again, I'm not sure if
9 they're on but we did invite them to participate in
10 this process so that they could hear what's going on
11 to see how they can also best support this. But
12 there are some that are out there that's willing, so
13 -- but I don't know if they're here or if they're
14 online or not.

15 MR. HENDERSON: Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions or
17 discussion from the Board?

18 The item before you on Marvell-Elaine is
19 different than the first five we went through. This
20 one, we will have to vote to either grant the waiver
21 or deny the waiver.

22 MR. WOOD: I did have another question --

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

24 MR. WOOD: -- going back to neighboring things.
25 I don't want to get too far down into that process; I

1 appreciate what Secretary Key said there. But what
2 is the burden going to be on students at this -- at
3 these schools if they are reassigned to Lee County or
4 Helena-West Helena? How much -- what are we looking
5 at as far as the burden on those students?

6 SECRETARY KEY: So depending on your action on
7 this question today, the -- it sets forth -- it sets
8 in motion another timeline. And under the law,
9 without a waiver a district that is below 350 for two
10 consecutive years first has the opportunity to find a
11 partner to consolidate with. That would have to be
12 done by March 1st of the year -- March 1st -- the
13 first -- well, let's see, how was the law -- so March
14 1st following the publication of the list. Right?
15 So in this case, March 1st of '23. If the district
16 is not successful in doing that, then it becomes the
17 State's responsibility by May 1st. Either way, this
18 decision has to be done by May 1st of '23, in
19 preparation for the 23-24 school year. We have maps
20 that we've been working with Arkansas GIS to see what
21 the impact would be. And Stacy -- you know, I know
22 we didn't bring any of the maps with us, but it was
23 -- it was a range of distances and times, depending
24 on the district that might take in. And I can't
25 recall exactly what those were.

1 MS. SMITH: Yeah.

2 SECRETARY KEY: But 30 minutes, 45 minutes were
3 some of the times --

4 MS. SMITH: Yeah.

5 SECRETARY KEY: -- that we were judging from
6 Arkansas GIS mapping.

7 MS. SMITH: Yeah. And in no way I want to take
8 away from the local board's ability to be able to sit
9 down and look at that and determine, you know, who
10 they want to talk to, what's the best move to go
11 forward. So I mean we would assist them with every
12 -- all the information that they would need to be
13 able to start reaching out and making some decisions
14 and having some conversations and figuring out. But
15 we can plot to the point of an address where someone
16 is on a map for the students in the district. So
17 there would be lots of decisions to be made.

18 MS. WOODS: I was just going to follow-up. So I
19 look at some of the maps. One of the -- so Marvell-
20 Elaine is a consolidated district. One of the school
21 districts is driving through another school district
22 to get to Marvell-Elaine, correct, is my
23 understanding?

24 MS. SMITH: Yeah.

25 MS. WOODS: Okay. Because I think Barton and a

1 couple of those are around there, and so they're
2 driving through that district to get to their school.

3 MS. SMITH: So, again, in this scenario that
4 we're talking about today, the district would get to
5 try to create a partnership or a consolidation on
6 their own, so they could reach out to different
7 districts. And so I think in the case -- I don't
8 want to go back and talk about what happened, but I
9 would figure that that probably was the Elaine
10 district and Marvell agreeing to that at some point.

11 MS. WOODS: And to your point, Jeff, as I
12 started looking at, well, is a kid going to be stuck
13 on a bus for an hour, there's already a district
14 that's going through -- not that that's the district
15 they would partner with, if that's the decision of
16 the Board. But it looks like there's options that
17 are actually closer for some, from my view of that.

18 MS. SMITH: Well, I don't want to mislead -- I
19 don't want to mislead to say that there could be --
20 when you're looking at a map the roads -- it's an
21 isolated area. There are road issues, there are
22 bridge issues, there are river issues. This is not
23 -- this will be difficult. But, again, I think the
24 board -- the local community and the board -- being
25 able to provide them with the different maps and

1 different scenarios, letting them ask us for
2 different things so that they can go back and try to
3 come up with some options. And we will most
4 definitely sit elbow-to-elbow and assist. If a
5 consolidation were to occur with one of the districts
6 that we work with closely, we would work with
7 transition plans for students. We could start that
8 immediately, having kids -- I mean, there's so many
9 things.

10 MS. WOODS: Okay. Thank you.

11 MS. SMITH: But it's going to be really
12 difficult and --

13 SECRETARY KEY: And the other component of this
14 too that is much different now than it was in 2006,
15 mid-2000's when these other rounds of consolidation
16 were happening, is with respect to school choice and
17 public school choice. So parents -- you know, if
18 whatever plan was adopted by local boards and this
19 board, and if that didn't fit with the needs of those
20 individual students in that area, then they also have
21 the opportunity to school-choice. So we would have
22 to work through those timelines. But obviously, you
23 know, we've always been very flexible with parents
24 and try to assist them if they have to bring things
25 to this board to say, "Hey, we need to ask, you know,

1 for some dispensation to do something different than
2 where we are zoned."

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Stacy, are there funds
4 available for if they did decide to go with another
5 district to help both districts during the transition
6 --

7 MS. SMITH: Yes, they --

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: -- as far as consolidation
9 funds?

10 MS. SMITH: Yeah, they would qualify for the
11 consolidation funds.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Do you know how much that
13 would be?

14 MS. SMITH: I think in total, over two years,
15 it's about \$3,000,000, I think.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

17 MS. SMITH: I would have to get the exact
18 number, but I think that's about right.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

20 SECRETARY KEY: Yeah. Mr. Rogers is shaking his
21 head that that's in the ballpark.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Ms. McFetridge.

23 MS. McFETRIDGE: Yea. Ms. Smith, this district
24 is still at Level 5 and will continue to be
25 regardless of our decision this morning. Right?

1 MS. SMITH: Yes.

2 MS. McFETRIDGE: And the Department will be in
3 there --

4 MS. SMITH: Yes.

5 MS. McFETRIDGE: -- full -- okay.

6 MS. SMITH: Yes. I told the team on Tuesday
7 when I was there, as far as what we do past today,
8 we'll be there either way. And that -- even based on
9 my observations from the week that we -- we've got to
10 come up with some other plans to address issues that
11 are going on right now and figure out some of those
12 things. But we were trying to get past this decision
13 today.

14 MS. McFETRIDGE: Okay. Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other -- Dr. Hill.

16 DR. HILL: It was -- you know, how do I say
17 this. So we're going to be supporting -- whatever
18 decision, you're going to be there to help kind of in
19 Level 5 create support systems strategically for
20 whatever is needed for the best interest of the
21 students. Is that -- I'm just --

22 MS. SMITH: Yeah.

23 DR. HILL: -- trying to -- I mean --

24 MS. SMITH: If the decision today is not to
25 grant the waiver and we're looking at -- we still

1 have to go in --

2 DR. HILL: Yeah.

3 MS. SMITH: -- and address some of the issues
4 that we saw going on and try to figure out what that
5 is. If it's -- we're going to still address -- if
6 it's a consolidation piece, we're going to assist
7 them with that and try to create transition plans for
8 those students.

9 DR. HILL: But I heard you mention if it's
10 consolidation you're allowing the board to decide
11 what they want to do, who they want to proceed to
12 move forward --

13 MS. SMITH: Which district they want to --

14 DR. HILL: Not us.

15 MS. SMITH: Not us.

16 DR. HILL: Then they would bring that back to
17 you-all --

18 MS. SMITH: Yes.

19 DR. HILL: -- and say hey --

20 MS. SMITH: They --

21 DR. HILL: -- and you will work with them and
22 say, "Okay, logistically this is what we --

23 MS. SMITH: Yes.

24 DR. HILL: "-- recommend that takes place that's
25 going to deliver us of our responsibility of

1 education to the community?"

2 MS. SMITH: Yes. Logistically -- go ahead,
3 Commissioner.

4 SECRETARY KEY: Yes. So as far as the
5 consolidation -- and it's -- it won't be -- just
6 reminding you, two of those districts in that area
7 are already receiving Level 5 support. But whatever
8 consolidation agreement would take place, that would
9 simply say, you know, we -- the Marvell-Elaine School
10 District agrees to annex or consolidate to, you know,
11 whatever that school district would be. And that
12 would be discussions, negotiations, whatever between
13 the boards, up until the point of -- you know, if
14 they don't get that done by March 1, then we have to
15 step in and -- but ultimately, by May 1 this board
16 will have to approve whatever plan moving forward
17 that comes out of that process.

18 DR. HILL: So if there's not -- if there's not a
19 consolidation plan, you continue to do that. But if
20 there is a consolidation and we approve that that's
21 the way -- direction for the best of the children,
22 then we work to support following what they decide to
23 do within their board? I mean, therefore, you're
24 following their lead?

25 SECRETARY KEY: If -- yes.

1 MS. SMITH: Yes. On the -- on where -- where,
2 yes.

3 SECRETARY KEY: Well, if it's a voluntary
4 consolidation --

5 DR. HILL: Yeah.

6 MS. SMITH: Yeah.

7 SECRETARY KEY: -- then it would --

8 MS. SMITH: Yeah.

9 SECRETARY KEY: Yes. The board -- the boards
10 control that. We provide -- we'll continue to
11 provide the support, including that transition.

12 DR. HILL: Yeah.

13 SECRETARY KEY: Okay. If the waiver is granted,
14 then they're still Level -- receiving Level 5
15 support. And, you know, so it's -- our commitment
16 doesn't change.

17 DR. HILL: Right.

18 SECRETARY KEY: I think what we're saying is
19 based on what we've seen; you know, even with Level 5
20 support we could go another year or two years. It is
21 highly unlikely to change for that 300-student
22 population. We think there's a better chance -- even
23 to the point that if a child has to sit on a bus for
24 30 to 45 minutes, they're going to get a better
25 opportunity than what we're currently seeing them get

1 right now.

2 DR. HILL: And then at that point we work with
3 those just to make -- if we have to start school at
4 8:30 rather than 8:00, or whatever, that we're
5 looking strategically to have a plan for the level of
6 education in that community based on what's best for
7 them.

8 SECRETARY KEY: And I will point out, too, a
9 consolidation does not necessarily mean school
10 closure. We have examples all over the state where,
11 you know, there is a consolidation but a -- let's say
12 an elementary school is maintained in the community
13 and high school kids or junior high and high school
14 kids then go to another campus somewhere. So that's
15 part of that conversation that the local boards will
16 have between now and March 1st. And so I don't want
17 the community to think that it's a foregone
18 conclusion that those buildings will be empty.
19 Because there is still that option available that
20 with, you know, a consolidated district or an annexed
21 district you're gaining some economies of scale where
22 the possibility of teachers, you know, coming from --
23 into a building that are licensed teachers or, you
24 know, better, capable, whatever it might be in that
25 school and keeping it open. That is something we

1 can't give you right now because the local board
2 would be engaged in that conversation.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other discussion?

4 Ms. Hunter.

5 MS. HUNTER: I just want a reminder for myself.
6 In the meeting in November, Dr. Ray, did you say that
7 your students were already spending -- was it about
8 45 minutes on a bus ride?

9 SUPT. RAY: Uh-huh.

10 MS. HUNTER: And then -- okay. Thank you for
11 that.

12 And then, Stacy, as we talk about, you know, if
13 we move to a consolidation conversation, is it a
14 requirement that they partner with a single school
15 district or could they find multiple partners
16 depending on the geography?

17 MS. SMITH: They can find multiple partners. I
18 mean, the board has the ability during this timeline
19 to be able to talk to their local folks and decide
20 what to do. So, yes.

21 SECRETARY KEY: Yeah. We refer to that as
22 "starburst," and there have been examples where
23 districts would starburst. I don't know why we
24 called it that. But I think it was one district that
25 looked -- when they did it, it looked like spokes

1 from a wheel and it went out to -- and they --
2 different sections of the spokes from that wheel went
3 to different districts in the surrounding area.

4 So, thank you for bringing that up because it is
5 an option as well.

6 MS. HUNTER: Thank you.

7 MR. WOOD: I have a question --

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

9 MR. WOOD: -- about what was just talked about.
10 Do we have any level of engagement or approval of
11 what the local board comes up with as far as
12 cooperation with other districts?

13 SECRETARY KEY: Yes. I mean, that -- ultimately
14 that plan, if they are able to put together a plan by
15 March 1st, by May 1st whatever plan, whether it's a
16 state plan or local plan, you all must give the final
17 approval of that consolidation plan.

18 MR. WOOD: Okay. Very good.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Anything else?

20 Mr. Sutton, did you have anything that you
21 wanted to discuss?

22 MR. SUTTON: Well, I was just going to echo what
23 Secretary Key had said earlier, that I think is very
24 important for the board, the school -- local school
25 board there, as well as the community, in that you

1 can -- there are ways to still maintain a presence or
2 a school. As Secretary Key said, whether it's K-6 or
3 some -- I mean, consolidation doesn't necessarily
4 mean that, you know, those buildings, as he said,
5 would be empty and there would be no presence. I'm a
6 big supporter of small districts. I am from the
7 delta. This is happening, unfortunately, very often
8 with farming communities. I would love to see there
9 remain some presence of a school system in Marvell
10 and Elaine. At the same time, as we've all said and
11 echoed, I mean first and foremost our concern is with
12 the students. But I just want Ms. Ray to understand
13 and her board to understand that the State or this
14 board and some of the members of the board are very
15 much in support of small districts. We understand
16 the importance that it means to the city. So we've
17 got to work it out. It's got to be figured out. And
18 if it can be, then it will be. I don't think it's
19 anybody's fault, but we've just seen this way too
20 often. And just take that message back, you know, to
21 your board. There are ways to work it out as far as
22 keeping a presence there in the community.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you, Mr. Sutton.

24 MR. SUTTON: Yes, ma'am.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Mr. Williams, would you like

1 to speak? Thank you for being here, Mr. Williams.
2 We know how deeply you care about the students at
3 Marvell-Elaine and we just really appreciate you so
4 much.

5 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you. I'd like to say hello
6 to the Board and Secretary Key. I had a question.
7 If -- I know you have to make a decision on what
8 you've got to do [clearing throat] -- excuse me --
9 and I know you are doing what you need to do. But
10 just like we came last year and got off academic
11 distress and did real well, from now on till March if
12 we do the same and you see improvement can this
13 decision be reversed?

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Freno, question.

15 SECRETARY KEY: It's a legal question.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay, Ms. Freno.

17 MR. WILLIAMS: Ma'am?

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I'm getting Ms. Freno.

19 MR. WILLIAMS: Oh, okay.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: She's our -- I wouldn't want
21 to speak in any legal terms. That's out of my --

22 MS. FRENO: And what was the question?

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: If they showed improvement
24 between now and March, could this decision be
25 reversed?

1 MS. FRENO: If the petition today for the waiver
2 is denied, no.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

4 MS. FRENO: It could not.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right.

6 MR. WILLIAMS: Because of the waiver, that's the
7 reason?

8 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Ms. Freno is walking
9 back to her seat.)

10 MR. WILLIAMS: Ma'am?

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Freno --

12 MS. FRENO: Oh, I'll just stay here.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

14 MS. WOODS: I think it's because of the
15 timeline.

16 MR. WILLIAMS: Because of the waiver, that's the
17 reason?

18 MS. FRENO: Because of the law, the way the law
19 reads for the petition.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. But because if we deny
21 the waiver then the timeline gets set in motion and
22 there's no mechanism to stop that timeline?

23 MS. FRENO: Correct. Once the petition -- if
24 the petition is denied, then there would be -- then
25 the time -- the timeline would be set in motion.

1 And, you know, January 1st is the date by which we
2 have to issue the letter. We try to issue it earlier
3 just to give more opportunity in case any school
4 district ever has to think about annexing to or
5 consolidating with another district. But it's --
6 once the -- if it would be -- if the petition would
7 be denied, then it would be set in motion.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

9 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

10 MS. FRENO: Thank you, sir.

11 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank the Board for allowing me
12 to speak. And just like Secretary Key said, it's
13 heartbreaking. And we have gone through the whole
14 school and whole district from the standards from
15 past, they were the downfall for everything because
16 we were really climbing. And I'm not saying that you
17 didn't help us, or Dr. Ray or our interim
18 superintendent. But the way things are going, it's
19 just gone and the kids really suffer. Some of the
20 teachers should've gone on to therapy or some kind of
21 counseling when he passed, the impact that he had
22 upon the school and what he'd done for the school in
23 such a short time. That's why I was asking the
24 question if we did come up to the standards that we
25 need to did we have to still abide by the May 1st or

1 the March 1st. But I just thank you all -- and we
2 will do our best if you keep supporting us.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes, sir.

4 MR. WILLIAMS: So whatever happens, happens.
5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes. Thank you.

7 Dr. Hill.

8 DR. HILL: Well, I think that kind of speaks to
9 what you were saying about how involved that school
10 could be as we continue on. I mean, I think there's
11 -- to what you were saying, Secretary Key, as we look
12 and evaluate what's going on, we can always be
13 inclusive of that school to the growth plan to what
14 you have. So it's not a demolish; it's not -- I
15 mean, it's not -- is that correct? I mean, so I
16 think in a way it may have to move on from whatever
17 decision is made. But because of how we move forward
18 it can be as inclusive as we say it's going to be for
19 delivery of the education program for the students.
20 Is that correct?

21 SECRETARY KEY: Yeah, right, Dr. Hill. And, you
22 know, that's something that I really want to -- have
23 tried to emphasize through the years too, is, you
24 know, the section of the statute refers to
25 administrative consolidation. It never refers to

1 closure of buildings; it refers to administrative
2 consolidation, and the closure of buildings sometimes
3 becomes a necessary part of that. But it's not a
4 required part of that. So you're right. I mean,
5 there could continue to be a school presence in this
6 community. That's something that, you know, we would
7 hope -- and there are examples around the state in
8 other communities where that has been the case. And
9 we have -- we've talked about some of those in the
10 past that while it's a consolidated district there
11 are still campuses in the communities in -- within
12 that district. Again, that's not wanting to get in
13 the way of the conversations and creativity and
14 possibilities that this board and Dr. Ray could
15 engage in with their surrounding partners, but that
16 is something that we would certainly lend support to
17 and help and assist them in any way we could as this
18 moves forward.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other discussion from any
20 member?

21 Okay. I want to remind you once again the
22 motion would be to either grant the waiver or to deny
23 the waiver.

24 MR. WOOD: I make a motion to deny the waiver
25 request.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Mr. Wood has made a
2 motion to deny the waiver for Marvell-Elaine.

3 MS. WOODS: I will second.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Ms. Woods.

5 MR. WOOD: Can I speak to it --

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

7 MR. WOOD: -- just real -- very briefly. To Dr.
8 Ray and to Mr. Williams, I just want you to know you
9 have my personal utmost respect. And it sounds to me
10 from everything I've heard that you have the respect
11 of the Department of Education for the hard work and
12 the engagement y'all have in your community. Not a
13 single bit of this is about you. You seem like a
14 very talented individual, you're enthusiastic, and I
15 look forward to the great things you do. If it's to
16 continue in that community and affect these kids, I
17 believe in you. If it's somewhere else, I look
18 forward to seeing what you do. I just think that,
19 you know, the somberness we have in the room is about
20 the things we've heard today, about what's happening
21 for kids. And the heaviness we have about, you know,
22 going in a different direction and, you know, the way
23 you all will take that is scary. But when it comes
24 to our responsibility of the best interest of the
25 students in that community I think that that's what

1 compels me to make the motion and I hope the Board
2 will follow that.

3 I would want to highlight one thing about the
4 delta, because there's a lot of discussion about the
5 delta and the delta, and it's this -- it's almost
6 labeled with it's so hard. I would -- anyone who's
7 listening that finds yourself in a similar situation
8 I hope you'll call the principal at Eudora Elementary
9 School and ask what -- I don't even know that person
10 -- what he or she is doing at Eudora Elementary.
11 Probably the most southeast community in Arkansas,
12 and through the pandemic, with 91% low-income
13 families, low-income students in that school, they
14 maintained a C through the pandemic. So success can
15 happen in the delta. They can do good things. And I
16 know that there's improvement in other places, but
17 Eudora stood out to me as a beacon of hope, and I
18 hope other principals and superintendents will reach
19 out and learn from what they're doing in similarly
20 challenging areas.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Thank you.

22 All right. So we do have a motion and a second
23 to deny the waiver. And I think we probably need to
24 do a roll-call, please.

25 SECRETARY KEY: All right. On the motion to

1 deny the waiver --

2 Mr. Sutton.

3 MR. SUTTON: Yes.

4 SECRETARY KEY: Ms. Hunter.

5 MS. HUNTER: Yes.

6 SECRETARY KEY: Mr. Wood.

7 MR. WOOD: Yes.

8 SECRETARY KEY: Ms. McPetridge.

9 MS. McFETRIDGE: Yes.

10 SECRETARY KEY: Ms. Woods.

11 MS. WOODS: Yes.

12 SECRETARY KEY: Dr. Hill.

13 DR. HILL: Yes.

14 SECRETARY KEY: Mr. Henderson.

15 MR. HENDERSON: Yes.

16 SECRETARY KEY: Dr. Moore.

17 DR. MOORE: Yes.

18 SECRETARY KEY: Eight yes.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: The motion passes.

20 Again, Dr. Ray, Mr. Williams, thank you for
21 being here. I know this is a hard day -- a hard day.
22 My heart is for small schools. But my heart is also
23 for those babies and we want to make sure that they
24 are getting what they need to be able to go out in
25 the world and be successful. And so I know that I

1 can speak for the Department -- they will help you
2 any way that we can in these next few weeks. So you
3 just let us know what you need.

4 SUPT. RAY: Yes, ma'am.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you for being here.

6 All right. I know, Ms. Collins, that y'all are
7 here and y'all have sat so patiently all morning.
8 But I think we're going to have to take a break.
9 Will that be okay with y'all?

10 Okay. So we're going to take about a 15-minute
11 break. Okay. I'll give you a little bit more than
12 that. We're going to come back at 12:15. Okay?
13 We'll be back at 12:15.

14 (BREAK: 11:54 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.)

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Welcome back. Thank you for
16 letting us take a break. It had been a long morning
17 and we needed to move around and get some blood
18 circulating again. So, thank you for letting us take
19 that break.

20 We are -- since we -- Mr. Sutton is not back on
21 there. So he'll be back in just a minute.

22 2) PINE BLUFF SCHOOL DISTRICT

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: We are to the item agenda on
24 the Pine Bluff School District. Ms. Smith.

25 Oh, I'm sorry. Secretary Key.

1 MS. SMITH: My name is on there, but --

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

3 SECRETARY KEY: So I just distributed a paper,
4 and I'm going to try to get that to Mr. Sutton.
5 That's one thing we haven't figured out on the
6 members who Zoom, how to make sure --

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah, how to get the stuff --

8 SECRETARY KEY: -- in-meeting documentation that
9 we make sure we get it to them. So he has that in
10 his messages now.

11 When we last talked about this, we talked about
12 the process. And, Ms. Newton, I would certainly
13 welcome any comments that you might have regarding
14 this process. I want to -- first, I want to commend
15 the members of the Pine Bluff community who
16 volunteered and put their names forward.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

18 MS. SMITH: Over 30.

19 SECRETARY KEY: Over, yeah, 30.

20 MS. SMITH: Thirty.

21 SECRETARY KEY: Over 30 applications for seven
22 positions. And, you know, if you remember, just a
23 few years ago we were looking to start a Community
24 Advisory Board in the former Dollarway district and
25 we were having difficulty getting response. So, you

1 know, that community is stepping up --

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

3 SECRETARY KEY: -- those of you who are from the
4 community that have been attending these meetings on
5 a regular basis. And I know you all have been
6 involved in the recruiting of members, potential
7 members, and I want to commend you for what you all
8 have brought to us and those that stepped up.

9 It was a very -- it was a difficult decision,
10 but it was an encouraging process. The reports that
11 came back to me regarding the interviews -- of
12 course, I reviewed the resumes; impressive. And when
13 I read through this list, that would be my
14 recommendation for you to appoint for the limited
15 authority board. I hope that you are as impressed as
16 I was.

17 And, of course, Ms. Newton has led that
18 committee work. So I don't know if you want to --

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah, I would like to say a
20 couple of things. First of all, I want to say thank-
21 you for the -- to the people that served on the
22 committee. Ms. Mattie Collins was there with us and
23 Reverend Turner from the community, and then we had
24 Mr. John Hoy, and Mr. Dan Jordan from the School
25 Boards Association.

1 And just as a side comment, I want you to know
2 how loved Ms. Mattie is in Pine Bluff. Everybody
3 that came through the door gave her a hug. It was --
4 she is loved. And her input and Reverend Turner's
5 input was so vital to the process.

6 And we were -- I'll say it this way: I was blown
7 away by the high-quality of the applicants that you
8 had gathered up for us, and so we're very
9 appreciative. I think this is going to be a great
10 board -- professional, very knowledgeable, want
11 what's best for the students of Pine Bluff and the
12 community of Pine Bluff. I cannot say enough good
13 things about these applicants. They are top-notch.
14 And you in the Pine Bluff community can be proud of
15 this board, I promise you.

16 SECRETARY KEY: So with that, here's the list --
17 and I've distributed the list and some motions that
18 we'll need you to take under consideration. But my
19 recommendations to you today for appointment to the
20 Pine Bluff School District limited authority board
21 are Lozanne Calhoun, Dr. Stephen Broughton, Dr.
22 Charles Colen, Ms. Jomeka Edwards, Ms. Lori Guelache
23 -- get that right? Okay -- Dr. Sederick Rice, and
24 Mr. Ricky Whitmore.

25 After you've taken action on the appointment,

1 then it would be our recommendation that once those
2 board -- limited authority board members have
3 completed initial training, organized by OCSS, that
4 it would consider all matters and -- as would be
5 considered by an elected local, a locally elected
6 board of directors. And that the limited authority
7 board would then make recommendations based on that
8 action to me for final determination as the initial
9 process. Then, we would recommend that OCSS continue
10 to report quarterly to you all on the district
11 operations and that I would make recommendations to
12 you concerning transitioning more authority to --
13 full authority to the board. So it would be a system
14 of limited release -- limited authority release that
15 as training happens, as embedded training happens
16 after the initial training and as those operations
17 become more smooth, that the full authority in those
18 elements of school board governance be gradually
19 turned back over to the limited authority board.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

21 SECRETARY KEY: I'll be happy to take any
22 questions, and of course Stacy is also here to help
23 address some questions.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Let's see if we have
25 any questions over here. No, okay.

1 Any questions over here?

2 Mr. Sutton, did you have any questions that you
3 would like to ask?

4 MR. SUTTON: No questions.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: No. Okay.

6 SECRETARY KEY: So I think the first action we'd
7 ask the Board to take would be to accept the
8 recommendation of the candidates.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Oh, thank you. I was
10 about to forget -- Ms. Freno reminded me a while ago
11 and I forgot. We do have an individual signed up for
12 public comment on this particular item, and so we
13 would need a motion to accept public comment on the
14 public -- public comment on the Pine Bluff School
15 District agenda item, to accept that.

16 MS. HUNTER: So moved.

17 MS. McFETRIDGE: So moved.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So we've got several.
19 We'll say Ms. Hunter made the motion and Ms.
20 McFetridge seconded. All in favor?

21 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So we can accept public
23 comment on the Pine Bluff School District.

24 Ms. Mouser, welcome. We've been here a while,
25 but we're making progress.

1 MS. MOUSER: We are making great progress. And
2 thank you for this opportunity to speak. Ms. Mattie
3 and Ms. Erlene [ps] decided that of the three of us I
4 would be the one that should speak.

5 This is just the first step; right?

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right.

7 MS. MOUSER: As Chairman Key said, we're very
8 grateful that we were allowed to go with a limited
9 board. I know that, Mr. Wood, you expressed concern
10 about that, but I think that this was the right
11 decision. We are the unified stakeholders of the
12 Pine Bluff School District. It's just a volunteer
13 group of people that got together. So we're very
14 grateful for this day. We look forward to
15 participating. Hopefully some of those applicants
16 that were not chosen -- as I told Alfred Carroll at
17 Wal-Mart last night, I said, you know, "They're going
18 to make the announcement tomorrow." He goes, "Oh,
19 I'm not on it." I said, "Well, I'm sorry, but you
20 can still be involved." And I think that, when you
21 were talking with the gentleman and the
22 superintendent from Elaine, that the community
23 involvement in Pine Bluff has greatly increased.
24 That will continue. It will need to continue to
25 insure that the Pine Bluff School District becomes

1 more successful. So we're very grateful. Thank you
2 very much.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you. It's a day of
4 smiles, for sure. It's a great day for Pine Bluff,
5 and so we are very thankful for that.

6 So we are ready for -- the first motion would be
7 to accept the recommendation of the Commissioner of
8 these seven board members.

9 MR. HENDERSON: I will.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

11 MR. HENDERSON: I'd like to make a motion that
12 we accept the recommendation of the Commissioner --
13 from the Commissioner of Education to appoint the
14 following candidates.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Do you want to read
16 their names to make sure we get them in the record?

17 MR. HENDERSON: Lozanne Calhoun, Dr. Stephen
18 Broughton, Dr. Charles Colen, Ms. Jomeka Edwards, Ms.
19 Lori Guelache, Dr. Sederick Rice, and Mr. Ricky
20 Whitmore.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes. All right.

22 MS. HUNTER: I'll second that.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion by Mr.
24 Henderson and then we have a second by Ms. Hunter.

25 Do we need to roll-call this?

1 SECRETARY KEY: No.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All in favor?

3 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

5 MS. SMITH: I'm going to clap.

6 [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. The second motion
8 would be --

9 SECRETARY KEY: Second motion would be regarding
10 the recommendation that once all the members of the
11 limited authority board have completed initial
12 training that it would consider all matters that
13 would be considered by an elected board, and that
14 limited authority board make recommendations to the
15 Commissioner for final determination.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

17 MS. HUNTER: So moved.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Ms. Hunter is making
19 that motion. Do we have a second?

20 MR. WOOD: Second.

21 MR. SUTTON: I'll second.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. I think Mr. Wood beat
23 you to that one.

24 All in favor?

25 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

2 All right. That motion passes.

3 [TIMER BELL RINGS]

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: And we have one more.

5 SECRETARY KEY: All right.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: That was the three minutes was
7 up.

8 MS. MOUSER: I'm getting shorter.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah, you are.

10 SECRETARY KEY: All right. Then the last item
11 we would ask you to take action on would be the
12 recommendation that OCSS would continue to report
13 quarterly to the State Board concerning Pine Bluff
14 School District operations, and that the Commissioner
15 make recommendations to the State Board concerning
16 transitions of authority to the limited authority
17 board as appropriate.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Do we have a motion?

19 MS. HUNTER: So moved.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Motion by Ms. Hunter.

21 MR. WOOD: Second.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Wood. All in
23 favor?

24 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

1 Motion passes.

2 Congratulations, congratulations,
3 congratulations.

4 [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

5 MS. SMITH: I just wanted to make a quick note
6 to that.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

8 MS. SMITH: Ms. Warren and some of the Pine
9 Bluff School District board were going to be here,
10 but I told them that we wouldn't get to this till
11 after 1:00, for the lunch thing. And so I literally
12 just said, "Don't come, don't come." But they're
13 very excited to continue the process, so --

14 And thank you, Ms. Newton, for doing such an
15 outstanding job with the subcommittee, and Ms. Freno
16 and Quarnicia and everybody who helped organize. It
17 went very smooth, so thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: It was a great -- it was a
19 full few days, it was long days, but it was great.
20 We could not have asked for it to have gone any
21 better.

22 It was -- and, again, the quality of the
23 applicants -- and I am so glad Ms. Mouser brought up
24 that these are seven that are going to serve on the
25 board, but there are 23 others there that are

1 available to really make a difference in that
2 district.

3 And, Ladies, that doesn't mean you're off the
4 hook either.

5 Okay. All right. Okay. So, you know, we're
6 all working together for common good and that's these
7 kids. And so we're making progress and we're going
8 in the right direction. So, thank y'all. Thank
9 y'all for being here.

10 All right.

11 MS. MOUSER: And may we be excused?

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: You may be excused. My
13 teacher voice: you're dismissed.

14 MS. MOUSER: Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

16 (OFF THE RECORD FOR THE CONSENT AGENDA)

17 (BACK ON THE RECORD)

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. So we're going to
19 break for lunch, it is 12:28, and be back at 1:15.

20 Okay. We'll be back at 1:15.

21 (LUNCH BREAK: 12:28 p.m. - 1:19 p.m.)

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: We are back. Thank you for
23 letting us take a lunch break. It made us feel much
24 better. As you can hear from the chatter, we're all
25 revived and ready to go again.

1 3) EDUCATIONAL SERVICE COOPERATIVE (ESC) EVALUATIONS

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So we are going to take up now
3 -- Ms. Smith, you've just been front-and-center all
4 morning.

5 MS. SMITH: Well, they had to tell me I was on
6 the agenda. I said, "I don't have anything else on
7 the agenda." And they said co-op evaluations.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

9 MS. SMITH: I said, "Oh."

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

11 MS. SMITH: So, okay.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

13 MS. SMITH: So, yes, you have two more co-op
14 evaluations, one with OUR and the other was --

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: North Central.

16 MS. SMITH: -- Northeast --

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: North Central.

18 MS. SMITH: North Central. North Central.

19 Both are excellent co-ops, do a great job. The
20 reports are there. If you have any questions, I'm
21 happy to answer. But other than that, it's been a
22 great opportunity for me, so --

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Any questions?

24 Dr. Moore.

25 DR. MOORE: Can you remind me, this is new,

1 doing these evaluations? Or is it just new to come
2 to us?

3 MS. SMITH: It happens once every five years.

4 DR. MOORE: Okay. For all the co-ops?

5 MS. SMITH: For all the co-ops. So --

6 DR. MOORE: And are you doing one a month or two
7 a year, or how does that --

8 MS. SMITH: I've done three since the two I put
9 on there.

10 DR. MOORE: Okay.

11 MS. SMITH: So I'm doing all 15 this year.

12 DR. MOORE: Okay.

13 MS. SMITH: So we've completed -- I believe I've
14 completed eight and I've got two more next week. So
15 we're just knocking them out.

16 DR. MOORE: Yeah. This is a very positive one.

17 MS. SMITH: Very positive. I was blown away by
18 both of these co-ops. North Central is probably the
19 first -- it's been a long time since I've been up
20 there. But the work that they're doing -- even the
21 connections and the direct connections to students --
22 they have a whole room dedicated to gaming sports and
23 bring students in --

24 DR. MOORE: Yeah.

25 MS. SMITH: -- that computer science aspect. I

1 mean it was exciting stuff. And then just the
2 connections with the initiatives here at the
3 Department with professional learning communities and
4 literacy. So very -- it just cements how much work
5 they do for us at the Department, so --

6 DR. MOORE: That's great.

7 MS. SMITH: Any other questions?

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Do we need to make a motion to
9 approve the report?

10 MS. SMITH: Just to accept the reports, yes.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. So we need
12 a motion to accept this report.

13 DR. MOORE: I'll make a motion to accept the
14 report.

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

16 MS. HUNTER: Second.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: A second by Ms. Hunter. All
18 in favor?

19 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

21 Dr. Moore and Ms. Hunter.

22 4) REVISION OF ARKANSAS SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. So now, Dr. Pride,
24 Revision of the Arkansas Social Studies Standards.

25 DR. PRIDE: Good afternoon.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good afternoon.

2 DR. PRIDE: All right. So I've got a team here
3 with me. So Kiffany Pride, Assistant Commissioner of
4 Learning Services.

5 So we are standing -- I'm standing here before
6 you today for consideration of the Social Studies
7 standards. We respectfully submit those for State
8 Board of Education approval. Before -- we're going
9 to do a little bit of a review for you and then we're
10 going to ask you to -- for approval.

11 All right. So I have Amber Pirnique with me
12 here today; she's a Program Manager for Disciplinary
13 Literacy and she helps to lead this process around
14 revision of standards. And then I have Jeffery
15 Davidson; he's our Social Studies Specialist, and he
16 is also newly hired six months -- was it six months?
17 Something like that. But he has also come in and had
18 a great impact on facilitating this process of the
19 revision of the standards.

20 And so we're just going to talk a little bit
21 about who and what informed the work; changes that
22 were made along the line continuum; we're also going
23 to talk about how the standards are revised for the
24 benefit of our educators; and then we'll talk a
25 little bit about the implementation timeline.

1 All right. So when thinking about our standards
2 revision process we really thought about three
3 things: we wanted to make sure that we strengthened
4 the standards, provided clarity around the standards,
5 and we put the necessary supports in our standards
6 document.

7 And so you see there around strengthening the
8 standards we're really making sure that we have that
9 essential content, which is our knowledge and skills,
10 in our standards for our students in each grade
11 level. Also, making sure that there was continuity
12 around learning the eras in history was also a part
13 of that strengthening aspect of the standards.

14 And then in terms of clarifying the standards we
15 wanted to make sure that we had greater specificity
16 about what our students were learning in Social
17 Studies and what was essential. We wanted to make
18 sure that was clear and that we had provided the
19 clarity we need for the ease of reading for our
20 teachers, no matter the pathway, no matter if they
21 were new, experienced, had moved over content. So we
22 wanted to make sure we clarified the standards.

23 And then also making sure that essential piece
24 that makes the classroom teaching fun, making sure
25 you have the supports in place, the notes they need,

1 to make sure if there's anything that may be complex
2 that you fully understand the complexity around what
3 it is that you're teaching. And then making sure
4 that we had a very robust front matter that was an
5 introduction around how do you teach Social Studies
6 in the K-12 continuum in the state of Arkansas.

7 All right. So just to give you a visual around
8 representation in our committee -- so, a diverse
9 committee of educators from around the state, 60 give
10 or take. There were more take, given the day that we
11 were there, but we kept a consistent number of
12 educators and -- who we consider our experts across
13 Arkansas, and we made sure that we represented the
14 five regions of our state. And you see there
15 representation and support around the standards. We
16 also had national and state experts to provide us
17 with information and feedback around what students
18 should learn in different courses in areas of
19 history.

20 And so, again, just thinking about the surveys
21 that we sent out for all of our educators to
22 contribute, whether they were on a committee or if
23 they just provided written feedback through a survey,
24 they all wanted essential -- wanted to make sure we
25 had the essential content for all grade levels

1 evident in our documents and they wanted that clarity
2 around the standards. And so that's why we took that
3 three-pronged approach; we wanted to make sure we
4 clarified, strengthened, and provided support for our
5 teachers in terms of the standards for Social
6 Studies.

7 So what are the changes? So we have a handy-
8 dandy graphic here for you. So you can see there
9 wasn't an overhaul of the standards but what we did,
10 again, is we just wanted to create greater
11 continuity. And you'll see that geography was placed
12 in 5th grade to give our students a great start
13 around world geography, geography of the United
14 States, as well as geography of Arkansas. It gives
15 them a good foundation as they progress into the
16 middle grades and into high school. And so you'll
17 see geography was placed in 5th grade, U.S. History
18 was placed in 7th grade, and then you see a greater
19 continuity around learning history over two years in
20 7th and 8th grade without a break in eras. So you'll
21 see they'll learn eras 1 through 7 -- right?

22 MS. PIRNIQUE: Yes.

23 DR. PRIDE: And I think you're going to come and
24 talk a little bit more about that -- without
25 interruption. And so that was one of the biggest

1 changes that you saw or shifts you saw in the
2 continuum around what students learn.

3 So I'm going to turn it over to Amber. She's
4 going to give you a little bit greater specificity
5 around some of the changes in the standards.

6 MS. PIRNIQUE: Good afternoon. Amber Pirnique,
7 Disciplinary Literacy in the Office of Learning
8 Services.

9 So we adjusted the language to provide a greater
10 sense of clarity and to strengthen the K-12
11 progression. So we streamlined the organization of
12 the standards by consolidating the content standards
13 into disciplinary standards. Within civics,
14 economics, geography, and history we now have six K-
15 12 standards in each of those disciplines. Another
16 way we clarified the language in the standards is by
17 taking the student learning expectations and shifting
18 them into knowledge and skill performance
19 expectations so that we could signal through those
20 expectations what students should be able to know and
21 should be able to do.

22 All right. This is the work of the committee.
23 As we see here in K-6, we have a focus on the
24 foundational standards to provide students with a
25 wealth of content knowledge and skills. By shifting

1 grade 5 U.S. History to grade 7, and grade 7
2 Geography to grade 5, we are strengthening the 5th
3 grade students' foundational geography knowledge and
4 then providing continuity for students to build their
5 historical knowledge and better equip them for those
6 upper secondary courses.

7 And this is the overview of the revised
8 standards for 9-12. The work of the committee, they
9 decided that major shifts were not necessary and so
10 the progression really does stay the same here. The
11 only thing I might want to mention here is in U.S.
12 History since 1929, those eras did shift just a
13 little bit.

14 All right. There are several pieces of
15 legislation that affects Social Studies in schools.
16 The committee wanted to make sure that laws that
17 impact particular Social Studies classes were present
18 in the front matter to help guide educators in
19 planning their units, receiving any required
20 professional development, as well as assisting and
21 planning any kind of campus for district-wide events.
22 So here are some of the most common laws that we will
23 see placed in the front matter of the standards
24 document. So here we've got different holidays and
25 observances; laws that affect the personnel as far as

1 professional development; and then, finally, some of
2 the laws relating to curriculum and how that might
3 impact how a teacher designs their units.

4 So thank you very much. And at this time I'm
5 going to turn it over to Jeffery Davidson who is our
6 Social Studies content specialist. We are so happy
7 that he is here to help lead with this work. So
8 thank you very much.

9 MR. DAVIDSON: Good afternoon, everyone.
10 Jeffery Davidson, Social Studies Specialist, as Amber
11 just mentioned.

12 So there are going to be four major shifts that
13 I'm going to talk to us about -- is it this next
14 slide? Yes, there we go -- four major shifts that
15 we're looking at with these standards. The first one
16 was already shared with you by Dr. Pride, the placing
17 of the 5th grade U.S. History to the 7th grade, and
18 moving the 7th grade Geography to the 5th grade. The
19 second shift is in more content examples. Essential
20 content was the desire of the committee and that has
21 been embedded throughout the standards to provide
22 more specific guidance for teachers. And greater
23 clarity as well was also part of the will of the
24 committee. Standards that had substantially similar
25 content was consolidated and the content was

1 organized by topic and categorized for ease of
2 reading. Finally, the shift to incorporating a flag
3 etiquette was put in all required Social Studies
4 courses, which I want to spend that next slide just
5 reviewing.

6 Legislation guided the decision to add flag
7 etiquette to all the required courses. You can see
8 examples on this slide of that flag etiquette
9 standard. You see there a K-4 example, the grade 5
10 World Geography course example, and the 9-12 Civics
11 course example. But they are -- this standard is in
12 all of the required Social Studies courses. And as I
13 said, there's a lot of legislation that impacts this
14 decision. But by including glad etiquette it further
15 builds that civics component throughout all of the
16 standards, which is something that we wanted to do.

17 Dr. Pride.

18 DR. PRIDE: Thank you to Amber and Jeffery.
19 They've done an excellent job making sure that the
20 committee -- the will of the committee, those things
21 that were really important to our teachers through
22 surveys, through the committee time that they were
23 together, that they have those incorporated into the
24 Social Studies standards. And we're just elated to
25 be here today to be able to bring them forward to

1 you. There are a lot of people out there waiting for
2 these because, you know, history is really important,
3 right, and engaging. And so everybody is ready and
4 so we're excited to be here today.

5 And so that's what we have as our review and
6 we're here, again, respectfully asking for approval
7 of the Social Studies standards.

8 SECRETARY KEY: Dr. Pride --

9 DR. PRIDE: Oh, I'm sorry.

10 SECRETARY KEY: Okay.

11 DR. PRIDE: One more thing. I'm sorry,
12 Secretary Key. We did want to just share with you,
13 in case you got these questions around
14 implementation, as soon as the standards are approved
15 there is an initial implementation. Schools may
16 begin at their -- whenever they're ready. But then,
17 by 24-25 there's full implementation. And we know
18 that there was a placing of Geography in 5th grade in
19 the continuity built around history in 7th and 8th.
20 So we do have some review units so that none of our
21 students will miss any of the essential content
22 that's necessary as they matriculate along their K-12
23 journey and they're learning about important history.

24 So, and then, in 25-26, full implementation with
25 no need for review units and we think we set a good

1 course and path to support our teachers based on
2 their feedback.

3 SECRETARY KEY: So, Dr. Pride --

4 DR. PRIDE: Yes, sir.

5 SECRETARY KEY: -- you mentioned that there are
6 a lot of educators out there waiting and educators
7 out there listening. A seven-year cycle for academic
8 standards -- I mean, we're a little behind that
9 schedule.

10 DR. PRIDE: Yes, we are.

11 SECRETARY KEY: Our seven years, we probably hit
12 that a couple of years ago.

13 DR. PRIDE: Yes.

14 SECRETARY KEY: And -- but they've been working
15 really hard. And what I had encouraged, mainly
16 talking to Stacy about this process, is I wanted to
17 get it right versus getting it done according to
18 schedule. And if we had to be a little late to get
19 it right, that was -- I was willing to take that
20 risk. And I think the team has done a fantastic job.
21 We -- you know, like everything else, we get compared
22 to other states. So there were organizations that
23 would compare, you know, our Social Studies standards
24 to other states, and we took that and we learned from
25 that, or the team did, and I appreciate the work they

1 did there. And there are some things that we as
2 Arkansans and as Americans we need to teach our
3 students to appreciate, and they did a really good
4 job of embedding those things, such as flag
5 etiquette. Because how many times do you -- are you
6 at an event and you see that maybe that's not
7 something that we really pay as much attention to as
8 a society as we once did. And to me, that's
9 something that is very important to honor our
10 veterans and honor all those sacrifices that came
11 before, because that flag does represent all of those
12 things and the history of our nation we just
13 celebrated or commemorated -- we didn't celebrate,
14 but commemorated the Pearl Harbor Day yesterday. You
15 know, there are -- as time goes on, society -- the
16 memories of society fades over some of those things
17 and we want to make sure -- and I just -- I commend
18 Dr. Pride, I commend Amber, Jeffery, the whole team,
19 the committees that came in and were part of this. I
20 can't say enough. They are eagerly awaiting too. I
21 get contacted --

22 DR. PRIDE: Yeah.

23 SECRETARY KEY: -- pretty often from members of
24 the committee, saying, "Hey, when's this" -- I say,
25 "Thursday, it's going to be on the State Board

1 Thursday."

2 DR. PRIDE: Yeah.

3 SECRETARY KEY: So thank you all for the
4 dedicated efforts y'all have put into this and I
5 certainly think it's a good product.

6 DR. PRIDE: Well, we thank our Secretary. So I
7 would say it was a collaborative effort from our
8 Secretary to our Deputies. Everybody here was vested
9 in helping as they -- as we asked them to help. So
10 we appreciate that full collaboration, so --

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you. I've got a couple
12 of questions.

13 DR. PRIDE: Sure.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: First one, we know to
15 implement any kind of standards-based curriculum you
16 have to have high quality instruction materials.
17 What work have y'all done on that side of it to make
18 sure that teachers are going to have the resources
19 that will align with what you've got envisioned here?

20 DR. PRIDE: Right. You've asked a great
21 question. So as we think about high quality
22 instruction materials, we have journeyed through
23 literacy and math -- and of course you know we have
24 that partnership with Ed Report. And so with science
25 and social studies the field is catching up. Right?

1 And so some of the things we will do is support our
2 teachers and educators with units of studies that
3 will support them in, you know, those things that may
4 not be present in their resources. And so we also
5 have characteristics and criteria that we know should
6 be part of high quality instruction materials. So
7 what they have that's of quality, they will know; and
8 what they don't have, we'll be able to help them fill
9 in the gaps until the field catches up with high
10 quality instructional materials with Social Studies.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

12 DR. PRIDE: I mean, it's just -- right now it's
13 just not as robust as math and literacy.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right.

15 DR. PRIDE: But we see that for science and both
16 social studies, and that's a national conversation
17 right now. And so we talk about it because we have a
18 strategy around it, and so in the coming years, 23,
19 24, we really have it in our strategy to say for
20 science and other areas, like Social Studies, how do
21 we signal what's important and how do you know you
22 have HQIN. So we're working on that. And until
23 then, we'll fill in the gaps, units of studies, and
24 open educational resources that will help our
25 teachers with building robust units in teaching

1 Social Studies.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So your plans are to develop
3 some units that will help that?

4 DR. PRIDE: Yes.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So that leads to my other
6 question. You're in this transition phase. You
7 talked about having some teachers do some review
8 units?

9 DR. PRIDE: Yes.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Is that something that y'all
11 are going to develop or is that going to be the
12 teacher have to develop that? How would that --

13 DR. PRIDE: So it'll be a collaborative process;
14 so Jeffery will lead that process. And we always
15 engage our educators who are experts in the
16 classroom, so we always involve them in that process.
17 Typically, in the summer, you know, as we're training
18 and putting out needs they are always responding to
19 those needs. So we always try to have a
20 collaborative approach to that.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Just kind of speaking from
22 teacher viewpoint for a little bit, you know, you've
23 got the standards, and if they don't have the
24 materials or the review units the intention going
25 into the school year is, "Well, I'll develop that as

1 I go along." But you start putting out fires and you
2 start doing this and that --

3 DR. PRIDE: Right.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: -- and so you revert back to
5 what you had before. And so I would encourage you to
6 help teachers -- you know, have some materials
7 developed for them that will fill in those blanks
8 until, you know, they can get the instructional
9 materials and resources that they kind of need.

10 DR. PRIDE: Yes, ma'am. Thank you for that.
11 And I know Jeffery and I have talked about that, and
12 he's excited about it.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

14 DR. PRIDE: Especially about Geography. He's a
15 Geography expert.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

17 DR. PRIDE: He's been deputized by National
18 Geographic, so he's really excited about that.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Good.

20 DR. PRIDE: And so we do have a great team here
21 who is going to engage with our educators. And,
22 you're right, it's really essential.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

24 DR. PRIDE: They have a great start on
25 professional learning. We'll help them with that, as

1 well as continually filling their bucket around units
2 of instruction and how do you pull it together
3 without HQA.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Very good.

5 Any questions from the Board over here?

6 Dr. Moore.

7 DR. MOORE: I do have a question.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Sure.

9 DR. MOORE: Arkansas History is 7th and 8th
10 grade. Is that correct?

11 DR. PRIDE: Yes.

12 DR. MOORE: Is that how it's always been?

13 DR. PRIDE: No. So Geography was placed from
14 the 7/8 band -- so districts had an opportunity where
15 they could put it in 7 or 8 --

16 DR. MOORE: Okay.

17 DR. PRIDE: -- along with a combination of
18 Arkansas History. But it's been placed in Geography.
19 Geography has been placed in 5th grade so we could
20 create greater continuity around learning the eras.
21 So before, there would be a gap. They would learn an
22 era, go on to some other subject areas, and then
23 learn another era -- opposed to now they'll learn all
24 of the eras over a two-year span of time, back-to-
25 back, so that they can really understand the

1 progression from the Colonial times on into, you
2 know, today.

3 DR. MOORE: That makes sense. So is Arkansas
4 History sort of a part of the unit or is it a
5 separate -- you know, as a part --

6 DR. PRIDE: Yeah. Do you want to answer that?

7 DR. MOORE: -- as you're learning about the
8 history, or is it separate?

9 DR. PRIDE: Yeah, how we embed it -- yeah.

10 MR. DAVIDSON: Yes. Arkansas History has always
11 been a semester length course in the state and
12 districts can offer it in 7th and 8th grade or 9
13 through 12. Most districts tend to do the 7th and
14 8th grade and they pair it with one of those other
15 7th and 8th grade courses. But districts have that
16 freedom to decide do we want to make Arkansas History
17 -- do we want to put like 7th grade as one semester,
18 Arkansas History second semester, or do we just want
19 to put Arkansas History as its own required course
20 and make 7th grade an entire year. That's what most
21 districts have done, and this maintains that.
22 Districts can choose to put it in 7th or 8th as a
23 one-semester course.

24 DR. MOORE: Okay.

25 DR. PRIDE: Thank you. He loves history, I told

1 you.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions?

3 Okay. We will need a motion to approve the
4 revision of the Arkansas Social Studies standards.

5 DR. MOORE: I'll make a motion to approve the
6 standards.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion by Dr.
8 Moore.

9 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Henderson.
11 All in favor?

12 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

14 Motion passes.

15 Congratulations.

16 DR. PRIDE: Thank you. We appreciate you all.
17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: And thank you, team, for your
19 hard work and thank you for all the teachers that
20 worked with you on this.

21 5) CONSIDERATION FOR PUBLIC COMMENT RELEASE: DESE RULES
22 GOVERNING HOME SCHOOLS

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Ms. Freno, I think
24 you're up. Consideration for Public Comment with
25 DESE Rules Governing Home Schools.

1 MS. FRENO: Yes. These are rules that we are
2 asking the Board to release for public comment
3 pending Governor's office review.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Are there any questions
5 or comments on the DESE rules governing home school?

6 Okay. We need a motion.

7 MS. WOODS: I'll move to submit to Governor's
8 office for approval. Is that the correct motion, to
9 present for public comment?

10 MS. FRENO: To release the rules for public
11 comment --

12 MS. WOODS: Yeah.

13 MS. FRENO: -- review pending Governor's office
14 approval.

15 MS. WOODS: Exactly that.

16 MS. FRENO: Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Okay. We have a
18 motion by Ms. Woods.

19 MS. McFETRIDGE: I'll second that.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Ms. McPetridge.
21 All in favor?

22 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

24 MS. FRENO: Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Motion passes. Thank you.

1 6) REQUEST TO APPROVE EMERGENCY RULES: DESE RULES GOVERNING
2 SCHOOL SAFETY

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Now we have a
4 request to approve emergency rules for DESE rules
5 governing school safety.

6 MS. SALAS-FORD: Good afternoon. Courtney
7 Salas-Ford. I apologize for my voice; I've got a
8 little sinus issue going on, but --

9 So we are asking for your approval on these
10 emergency rules, and hopefully they look a little
11 familiar to you because you all approved these
12 several months ago to go out for public comment.
13 However, while they were out for public comment the
14 Legislature actually decided to put aside \$50,000,000
15 to be able to issue school safety grants to school
16 districts. And so, instead of starting an entirely
17 separate process for rules to distribute that funding
18 we decided to add them into the public safety rules
19 that were already out.

20 Now in an effort to get that money to the
21 schools faster we decided to promulgate these as
22 emergency room. And so what that means is if you all
23 approve these rules they will go to the Legislature
24 -- Legislative Council next week for approval and
25 then become effective immediately so that we can

1 start the process of distributing those grant funds.

2 Simultaneously, the original regular rules will
3 also go out for a second public comment period so
4 that we do receive public comment and will fully
5 promulgate those rules, because emergency rules are
6 only effective for 120 days. But that gives us
7 enough time to go ahead and start the grant process
8 and get those funds flowing, which is required per
9 the Legislature -- legislative act.

10 So I'd be happy to answer any questions. I also
11 have some additional copies, if anyone needs them, if
12 you had trouble getting into that.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any questions?

14 MR. SUTTON: Yes.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Mr. Sutton.

16 MR. SUTTON: Are the grant funds on sort of a
17 first-come first-serve basis, or are they available
18 for all districts, or how is that going to work?

19 MS. SALAS-FORD: So the way the process is laid
20 out, there's a formula that makes a specific amount
21 of money available to each district based on the size
22 of the district, a range of size, and then a per-
23 student amount based on the enrollment of that school
24 district. Now in order to access the specific amount
25 of funds that has been allotted for that district

1 they will have to submit an application saying what
2 they are going to use those funds for. And it has to
3 be tied to a prioritized list of the recommendations
4 of the Governor's School Safety Commission that met
5 earlier this year and issued recommendations in
6 October.

7 MR. SUTTON: Okay. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions on these
9 emergency rules?

10 Oh, you have -- okay.

11 MR. WOOD: Well, I was reading while Mr. Sutton
12 asked that question. So if this happens to be the
13 same question, I apologize.

14 MS. SALAS-FORD: You're fine.

15 MR. WOOD: I heard something that you referenced
16 there about the recommendations that came out in
17 October.

18 MS. SALAS-FORD: Yeah.

19 MR. WOOD: Is that right?

20 MS. SALAS-FORD: Yes. So it's not an automatic
21 that they get the money. They still have to apply
22 for their designated amount of money and they have to
23 say what they're going to do with it, and it has to
24 be at least initially in alignment with the
25 recommendations of the Governor's School Safety

1 Commission. So mostly things like physical upgrades
2 or modifications to the public school facilities --
3 so locks, doors, anti-shatter resistant film,
4 cameras, monitoring systems, lots of different
5 things. Now if they already have those in their
6 school district or are in the process of getting
7 those, and then they still have funds available, then
8 they could kind of go to a Priority 2 or a Priority
9 3. In Priority 3 they can come back and say, "Well,
10 hey, I have all of Priority 1 and Priority 2; I want
11 to do this with it," and then that will go through an
12 approval process here at the Department. But they
13 have some flexibility of how they want to spend those
14 additional funds.

15 MS. WOODS: Is there a timeline that they have
16 to spend them by?

17 MS. SALAS-FORD: Yes. And he's not in here, but
18 I believe it's maybe two years. Well, the funds are
19 appropriated through June 30th of '23, but I don't --
20 I'm not sure entirely if they have to all be spent by
21 June of '23 or if they can carry those over.

22 Do you know?

23 SECRETARY KEY: Any funds that remain in there
24 that have not been dispersed for the state can be
25 carried over through re-appropriation into the next

1 fiscal year. I think once it goes to the districts
2 then there's more flexibility once it hits their
3 account of how long it takes them. But we would
4 expect that most of these situations are going to be
5 fairly immediate.

6 MR. WOOD: I have another question.

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

8 MR. WOOD: Given that these rules originated in
9 the summer, I assume they don't incorporate the
10 recommendations of the Governor's Commission on
11 School Safety? And I'm probably getting the name of
12 that commission wrong.

13 MS. SALAS-FORD: No. Yes, absolutely, they do.
14 Those are the recommendations. Because even though
15 these originally started back in the spring and
16 through the summer, it wasn't until the \$50,000,000
17 was set aside in July and then the recommendations
18 came out in October that we went ahead and proceeded
19 with this. We had to get approval from ALC. But,
20 yes, they must be specifically tied to the
21 recommendations of the Governor's School Safety
22 Commission and that is specified in 6.03.4. And
23 there will be a prioritized list of all of those
24 recommendations available to school districts so they
25 can see what that includes.

1 MR. WOOD: Getting right to it though, do these
2 rules -- do they require schools to have an armed
3 police -- an armed presence in the school?

4 MS. SALAS-FORD: No. No, that's not something
5 that we would be able to do through rules.

6 MR. WOOD: Okay.

7 MS. SALAS-FORD: If a -- and that's not in the
8 Priority 1 or Priority 2 items. If a school district
9 wanted to use these funds in -- somehow to obtain an
10 armed presence, that's something they could request.
11 But since these are one-time funds it's going to be
12 more about, again, facility improvements or upgrades,
13 materials, equipment. A district could ask, though I
14 wouldn't say very pertinent to want to use that for
15 something revolving, like a salary, that that cost is
16 going to recur every year. But that is something
17 they could ask to use these funds for.

18 MR. WOOD: All right. I would like to learn
19 more background about what rules do versus what I
20 just said.

21 MS. SALAS-FORD: Yeah, legis- -- yeah.

22 MR. WOOD: How those things work together.

23 MS. SALAS-FORD: Yeah, absolutely.

24 MR. WOOD: But that's another day.

25 MS. SALAS-FORD: Any time. We actually have a

1 new School Safety Unit. We have two individuals --
2 Mr. Jerry Keefer and Jason Weatherly -- who are
3 leading that. And they, as well as I, would be happy
4 to sit down any time and go over that with you.

5 But this is essentially just putting a little
6 more detail into what the Legislature has in law
7 about the distribution of those funds.

8 MR. HENDERSON: I do have a question. You know,
9 obviously some school districts are in higher crime
10 areas maybe than others. And I'm trying to
11 understand when it says school climate and culture is
12 that factored into that? Because I don't necessarily
13 see anything on here where it incorporates the crime
14 factor.

15 MS. SALAD-FORD: So there is nothing in the
16 formula that addresses crime factor or the actual
17 location of a school district. It is done solely
18 based on the size of the school district and the
19 number of students. But some of the things that they
20 can use the funding for would be to do a school
21 climate and culture study or things that if once they
22 did their climate survey they discovered that they
23 have bullying issues they could use these funds to
24 put in measures, programs, things to address the
25 bullying issues.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Anything else?

2 All right. These are rules to be approved for
3 emergency promulgation. Do we have a motion?

4 MS. WOODS: Is the motion to release for public
5 comment, same one as last time? Because I'll make
6 that motion.

7 MS. SALAS-FORD: No. It would be to approve the
8 emergency rules.

9 MS. WOODS: Is that it?

10 MS. SALAD-FORD: Yeah.

11 MS. WOODS: I'll move to approve.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We have a motion
13 by Ms. Woods.

14 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

15 MR. SUTTON: I'll second.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Henderson.

17 All in favor?

18 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

20 All right.

21 MS. SALAS-FORD: Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you, Courtney.

23

24

25 (The Action Agenda was concluded at 1:51 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 Little Rock, Arkansas, on December 8, 2022, that the said proceedings was reduced to typewritten form by me or under my direction and supervision; and that the foregoing pages constitute a true and correct transcription of all proceedings had in said matter.

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

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

WITNESS, MY HAND AND SEAL, THIS DATE: December 15, 2022.

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