



Organization Information

Organization Name *

Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina, VALA NC

Application Type *

Virtual

Operator Type *

New Operator

Primary Contact Name *

Cevdet Akbay

Has the School Leader Been Identified? *

☒ Yes ☐ No

Proposed Leader Name *

Cevdet Akbay

Proposed School Leader Current Job/Position *

Executive Director / School Leader

List any principal/leadership programs the proposed leader is currently enrolled in or have completed

Is Management Organization Used

☐ Yes ☒ No

Management Organization Name

Primary Contact Relation To Board *

Board President

Primary Contact Email *

info@vala.academy

Proposed Leader Name *

Cevdet Akbay

Management Organization Contact Name

Primary Contact Phone *

9104760447

Management Organization Email

PrimaryContact Address *

847 Bay Bouquet Lane

Unit/Suite *

Zip Code *

27523

City *

Apex

State *

North Carolina

Proposed Leader Job *

Executive Director / School Leader



1. Application Contact and Student Enrollment Information

Q1.Name of Proposed Charter School

Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA NC)

Q2.Primary Contact's Alternate Telephone Number (xxx-xxx-xxxx)

- The primary contact will serve as the contact for follow-up, interviews, and notices regarding this Application

910-476-0447

Q3.Geographic County in which charter school will reside

VALA NC is a fully virtual school; however, we recognize the importance of maintaining dedicated physical space to support administrative operations and professional collaboration. The school plans to lease appropriate office space to serve as its administrative headquarters. This facility will serve as our administrative headquarters, providing a centralized location for staff collaboration, student support services, and day-to-day virtual school operations. Additionally, the space may also be used for any in-person staff training, professional development, and strategic planning sessions as needed, while maintaining the flexibility to deliver these experiences in a virtual format when appropriate.

Q4.LEA/District Name

The proposed charter school is a virtual academy with statewide enrollment.

Q5.Zip code for the proposed school site, if known. Please provide a primary zip code location and a secondary, or alternative, proposed zip code.

The proposed administrative headquarters will be located in zip code 27502; a specific facility has not yet been determined.

Q6.Was this application prepared with the assistance of a third party such as a consultant or Charter Support Organization (CSO)?

I. Definition - Charter Support Organization (CSO) - A for profit or nonprofit, nongovernmental entity that provides:

a. assistance to developers during the application, planning, program design, and initial implementation of a charter school; or



b. technical assistance to operating charter schools, including specific and limited services such as but not limited to professional development, nonprofit board development, payroll, and curriculum development.

☒ Yes

☐ No

Q7. Provide the name of the third-party consultant or CSO.

Leaders Building Leaders

Q8. Describe any fees provided to the third-party person or CSO in preparation of this application and, if applicable, any future fees as reflected in the budget.

The fees for support of this application were \$15,000.

Q9. What assistance was provided by the third-party consultant or group while preparing this application, what assistance is currently being provided, and when the assistance will end?

The third-party consultant provided technical and strategic support to the founding board during the preparation of this charter application. This assistance included facilitating planning discussions, organizing application materials, assisting with drafting and editing narrative responses, reviewing alignment across sections of the application, and providing guidance on North Carolina charter application requirements.

The founding board and school leadership team were responsible for all major decisions regarding the school's mission, educational model, governance structure, and operational plan. The consultant served in an advisory and facilitation role to support the board in clearly documenting these elements within the application.

The consultant is currently assisting the founding board with the charter application review process, including responding to feedback and preparing any requested revisions. The current consulting agreement covers support through the application process and will conclude once the school receives a final vote of approval or denial from the Charter School Review Board.

Q10. Projected School Opening Month

Fall 2028

Q11. Will this school operate on a year-round schedule?

☐ Yes (Year-Round)



☐ No

Q12. Complete the Enrollment Summary table (see resources), providing grade levels and total projected student enrollment for Years 1-5.

- Please note: If applying as a **"FACE VIRTUAL"** remote academy, the applicant must provide separate enrollment figures for in-person and remote student cohorts (see resources).
- State law requires that a charter school serve a minimum of 80 students unless the school has a compelling reason such as serving a geographically remote student population. 115C-218.1(13).

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Applicant Comments :

See tab 2 on the uploaded document for our remote enrollment.

Resources



Enrollment Summary Tab...

Applicant Evidence :



VALA_Enrollment Summa...

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Q13. At full capacity, what is your estimated student enrollment and grade spans?



At full capacity, VALA NC estimates to serve 930 students serving grades kindergarten through twelfth grade by year six. VALA NC's projected enrollment targets were developed using a phased growth approach that expands both grade levels and class sections over time. The school will open serving grades K–5 and will expand by adding two grade levels each year until reaching full K–12 implementation, with one final grade level added in the fifth year. This deliberate, phased growth strategy ensures that academic systems, staffing structures, and student support services are firmly established and operating effectively before expanding into additional grade levels.

Grade	Year 1	Classes	Year 2	Classes	Year 3	Classes	Year 4	Classes	Year 5	Classes	Year 6	Classes
K	60	3 classes (20 each)	60	3 classes (20 each)	60	3 classes (20 each)	60	3 classes (20 each)	60	3 classes (20 each)	60	3 classes (20 each)
1	60	3 classes (20 each)	60	3 classes (20 each)	60	3 classes (20 each)	60	3 classes (20 each)	60	3 classes (20 each)	60	3 classes (20 each)
2	60	3 classes (20 each)	60	3 classes (20 each)	60	3 classes (20 each)	60	3 classes (20 each)	60	3 classes (20 each)	60	3 classes (20 each)
3	50	2 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)
4	50	2 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)
5	50	2 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)
6	—		75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)
7	—		25	1 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)



8	—		—		50	2 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)
9	—		—		25	1 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)
10	—		—		—		50	2 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)
11	—		—		—		25	1 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)
12	—		—		—		—		50	2 classes (25 each)	75	3 classes (25 each)
Total	330	15	505	22	630	27	780	33	905	38	930	39

Q14. How did you determine the projected enrollment targets and grade levels listed in this application?
Reference data, methodology, calculations and other factors used.



Early Elementary Enrollment and Foundational Literacy

VALA NC's enrollment projections are intentionally designed to support strong foundational learning in the early grades. In Year 1, the school will serve grades K–5 with a total enrollment of approximately 330 students across 15 classes. Grades K–2 will each include three sections of approximately 20 students per class, while grades 3–5 will initially include two sections of approximately 25 students per class. This structure ensures that early elementary students benefit from small class sizes and intensive instructional support during the critical years of literacy and numeracy development.

Research consistently demonstrates that early reading development is highly sensitive to instructional quality, individualized support, and frequent monitoring of student progress (Snow et al., 1998; National Reading Panel, 2000). Early literacy proficiency is also a strong predictor of long-term academic success and high school completion (Hernandez, 2011). Smaller class sizes in the primary grades allow teachers to provide more targeted feedback, closely monitor student progress, and build strong relationships with families, factors that are particularly important in virtual learning environments.

Within VALA NC's 5A Learning Framework, foundational literacy instruction will be supported through multiple evidence-based practices:

- 1) Active Learning: Students engage in structured small-group instruction, guided reading, interactive literacy activities, and project-based learning experiences that actively develop reading and writing skills (National Reading Panel, 2000).
- 2) Adaptive Instruction: Teachers use real-time data and formative assessments to adjust instruction, provide targeted interventions, and address diverse learning needs (Snow et al., 1998).
- 3) Accountable Systems: Regular literacy assessments and ongoing progress monitoring allow teachers to adjust instruction and ensure mastery of foundational reading and writing skills.
- 4) Authentic Experiences: Students participate in storytelling, digital publishing, collaborative reading projects, and family literacy activities that connect reading and writing to meaningful real-world contexts (Guthrie et al., 2004).
- 5) Accessible Education: Differentiated instruction and family engagement strategies support equitable literacy development for all students (Henderson and Mapp, 2002).

Early elementary students require strong teacher interaction and meaningful family engagement in virtual environments, VALA NC maintains intentionally small class sizes in grades K–2 and expands enrollment gradually as students progress through the grade levels.

Responsible Enrollment Projections and System Capacity

VALA NC has adopted a carefully phased enrollment plan that aligns enrollment growth with staffing capacity, instructional quality, and organizational readiness. The school will open in Year 1 with grades K–5 (330 students across 15 classes) and will add additional grade levels each year until reaching a full K–12 program by Year 5 with approximately 905 students across 38 classes. Beginning in Year 2, grades 3–5 expand to three sections each, and middle school grades are added with three sections in grade 6



and one section in grade 7, gradually expanding to three sections per grade as the program grows. By full implementation, most grades across K–12 will include three sections per grade, creating a consistent and sustainable instructional structure.

Class sizes are intentionally designed to support effective teaching and student engagement: approximately 20 students per class in grades K–2 and 25 students per class in grades 3–12. This enrollment model ensures that staffing, instructional support, and student services remain aligned with enrollment growth while preserving high levels of teacher presence and individualized attention.

Research suggests that moderate school size supports stronger student engagement, more effective monitoring of academic progress, and greater teacher collaboration (Lee and Smith, 1997; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Maintaining enrollment below approximately 1,000 students allows VALA NC to foster a close-knit learning community, provide personalized instruction, and maintain consistent communication with families.

Existing statewide virtual charter schools in North Carolina operate with significantly larger enrollments. According to the North Carolina School Report Card (2025):

North Carolina Cyber Academy: 2,442 students

North Carolina Virtual Academy: 3,474 students

Dogwood Virtual School: 2,136 students

These schools enroll two to three times more students than VALA NC's projected capacity. While larger virtual schools can achieve certain operational efficiencies, research in online learning environments emphasizes that strong teacher presence, frequent interaction, and sustained engagement are essential for student persistence and success (Garrison et al., 2000; Borup et al., 2012; Means et al., 2014).

By maintaining a moderate enrollment size and gradually expanding grade levels, VALA NC prioritizes a high-quality learning environment that supports project-based learning, personalized instruction, and meaningful teacher-student interaction within its 5A Learning Framework.

REFERENCES

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Snow, C. E.; Burns, M. S.; Griffin, P. Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children; National Academy Press: Washington, DC, 1998.

Q15. Provide a narrative explaining the projected demographics of your targeted county/LEA/region over the next 10-25 years. Reference data, methodology, calculations and other factors used.

- This information should provide evidence of school age populations corresponding to the grade levels you plan to serve, and whether those populations are increasing or decreasing. This information should support the applicant's stated demand for this charter school and the growth plan outlined in the enrollment chart provided in Q12.



VALA NC will serve students statewide, our enrollment projections are based on North Carolina's overall student population rather than a single county or district.

According to the North Carolina School Report Card (2025), the state serves more than 1.5 million public school students across grades K–12. This represents a large and diverse student population across urban, suburban, and rural communities.

The 2024–2025 North Carolina Public School Enrollment Forecast Report explains that student enrollment across the state is shaped by several factors, including birth rates and families moving within North Carolina or relocating from other states. While some rural areas have experienced enrollment declines, other parts of the state continue to grow. Overall, North Carolina continues to serve a substantial number of school-age students. Enrollment patterns reflect shifts in where families live rather than a major decline in the total number of students statewide.

In addition, educational preferences have shifted in recent years. Families are increasingly seeking flexible and personalized learning options that better meet their children's academic, social-emotional, and scheduling needs. Existing full-time virtual charter schools in North Carolina enroll thousands of students statewide, demonstrating sustained demand for virtual education.

VALA NC's projected full implementation enrollment of approximately 905 students by Year 5 (K–12) and approximately 930 students beginning in Year 6 and beyond represents a very small portion of the overall statewide K–12 population. Given the size of North Carolina's student population, even a modest level of statewide interest would be sufficient to support this enrollment level. The school will open serving grades K–5 in Year 1 (330 students) and will add additional grade levels each year until reaching a full K–12 program in Year 5, allowing the school to grow responsibly while ensuring that instructional systems, staffing structures, and student support services are fully established before expansion. Maintaining enrollment at approximately 900–930 students at full implementation enables VALA NC to preserve manageable class sizes, strong teacher presence, and consistent engagement with students and families while serving learners across North Carolina who are seeking a high-quality virtual education option.

Q16. Complete the Enrollment Demographics table (see resources), providing projected enrollment for each of the following demographic groups.

VALA NC will serve students statewide and enrollment is open to all eligible students. Projected racial and ethnic demographics are informed by enrollment patterns of existing statewide virtual public charter schools in North Carolina. Available data from these schools demonstrates that virtual programs serve diverse student populations that generally reflect the broader composition of the state, with some variation based on family choice and access to virtual learning environments. VALA NC's projections are aligned with these documented trends, reinforcing the reasonableness and credibility of the anticipated student demographics.

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Resources



Enrollment Demographic...

Applicant Evidence :



VALA_Enrollment Demog...

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Q17.Does the school plan to provide services to certain targeted subgroup(s)? If so, please explain.



VALA NC is designed as an open-enrollment, statewide public charter school and will not restrict admission to any single subgroup of students. The school intends to implement a weighted lottery, in accordance with North Carolina charter law, to support equitable access for students, including those who are economically disadvantaged, as further outlined in the admissions section of this application. The school intentionally plans to provide targeted services and support for several student populations whose needs align especially well with VALA NC's instructional model. These supports are embedded within the school's 5A Framework and Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) so that students receive differentiated instruction, timely intervention, and equitable access to rigorous grade-level content.

Students Needing Flexible Learning Environments

VALA NC is particularly designed to support students who need a flexible learning environment, including students whose health needs, family circumstances, extracurricular commitments, or other life situations make a traditional school schedule difficult to sustain. For these students, the school's combination of live instruction, structured asynchronous learning, predictable routines, and ongoing teacher support can increase continuity of learning while preserving high academic expectations. Research suggests that online and blended learning models can be effective when they include strong instructional supports, interaction, and feedback rather than independent seat-time alone (Means et al., 2010).

Students Seeking Personalized and Differentiated Instruction

VALA NC also plans to provide strong services for students who need personalized pacing and differentiated instruction, including students performing below grade level and students who need enrichment or acceleration. The school will use adaptive learning platforms, frequent formative assessment, and dedicated intervention/enrichment blocks such as WIN ("What I Need") time to tailor instruction to student readiness and progress. Research on personalized learning indicates that these approaches can improve achievement when student needs and progress are visible and instruction is adjusted accordingly (Pane et al., 2017).

Students Who Benefit From a Smaller, More Personalized Environment

VALA NC's instructional model is designed to provide a smaller, more personalized learning environment in which each student is known, supported, and actively engaged. Through reduced student-to-teacher ratios in synchronous sessions, advisory-based support systems, and consistent communication, students receive individualized attention, frequent feedback, and strong relationship-building opportunities. Research shows that increased teacher-student interaction and smaller learning environments are associated with higher academic achievement, improved engagement, and a stronger sense of belonging (Finn et al., 2003; Hattie, 2009), while positive teacher-student relationships significantly influence motivation and performance (Roorda et al., 2011). The advisory model further supports student success by promoting goal setting, monitoring progress, and strengthening school-family connections, which are linked to improved persistence and achievement (Klem and Connell, 2004). Additionally, the integration of adaptive learning technologies and real-time data allows for targeted instruction tailored to individual needs, an approach shown to improve outcomes, particularly



for diverse and underserved students (Pane et al., 2015; Pane et al., 2017). When combined with structured support and meaningful interaction, well-designed virtual environments can enhance personalization and provide levels of individualization that are often difficult to achieve in large traditional classrooms (Means et al., 2010).

Students with Diverse Learning Needs, Including Students with Disabilities and Multilingual Learners

In addition, VALA NC plans to serve students with disabilities through inclusive, standards-based instruction, accommodations, related services, and individualized supports delivered in accordance with IEPs and 504 Plans. The school's design will incorporate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles so that barriers are reduced proactively and students can access the general curriculum in multiple ways. Federal guidance emphasizes that students with disabilities must be enabled to make progress in the general education curriculum aligned with grade-level state standards, and that inclusive practices are associated with stronger academic and postsecondary outcomes when supports are individualized and expectations remain high (U.S. Department of Education, 2025). UDL provides an evidence-based framework for designing flexible learning environments that support diverse learners, including in digital and online contexts (CAST, 2018; Meyer et al., 2014).

VALA NC also intends to provide targeted support for multilingual learners/English learners. These supports will include scaffolded language development, small-group support, formative assessment, progress monitoring, and teacher use of feedback to address both language and academic needs. Institute of Education Sciences practice guides recommend formative assessment and focused small-group intervention for English learners who need additional support, and also emphasize structured opportunities for speaking, writing, and academic language development (Gersten et al., 2007; Baker et al., 2014).

Students in Rural or Geographically Isolated Areas

Finally, as a statewide virtual school, VALA NC is well positioned to expand access for students in rural or geographically isolated communities and for students in areas with limited course options. National guidance on digital equity notes that online learning can expand access to courses for students in smaller districts that may lack advanced classes or curricular breadth, provided the school also addresses device, connectivity, and support needs (NCES, 2022).

In summary, VALA NC is not a subgroup-restricted school, but it does intentionally plan to provide targeted services for students who need flexibility, personalized pacing, disability-related supports, multilingual learner supports, enrichment, intervention, and broader course access. This framing better reflects the school's goal: to be a high-achieving virtual charter school for all students while providing especially strong supports for student groups whose needs are often not fully met in one-size-fits-all settings. Research suggests that this kind of success depends on purposeful instructional design, strong progress monitoring, inclusive practices, and sustained teacher support—not merely on offering instruction online (Means et al., 2010; Woodworth et al., 2015; Pane et al., 2017).



REFERENCES

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Woodworth, J. L.; Raymond, M. E.; Chirbas, K.; Gonzalez, M.; Negassi, Y.; Snow, W.; Van Donge, C. *Online Charter School Study 2015*; CREDO, Stanford University: Stanford, CA, 2015.



Q18. This subsection is entirely original and has not been copied, pasted, or otherwise reproduced from any other application.

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

Q19. Explanation (optional)



2. Non-Profit Corporation Information

Private Non-profit Corporation (NCGS 115C-218.1)

- The nonprofit corporation must be officially authorized by the NC Secretary of State upon application submission.

Q20.Organization Type: Nonprofit Corporation or Municipality

- Private Nonprofit Corporation (NCGS 115C-218.1) The nonprofit corporation must be officially authorized by the NC Secretary of State upon application submission.
- ☒ Non-Profit Corporation
- ☐ Municipality

Q21.Official name of the private, non-profit corporation as registered with the NC Secretary of State.

- This is the entity that will hold the Charter if final approval is granted by the NC Charter Schools Review Board (CSRB).

Virtual Active Learning Academy

Q22.Does the private non-profit listed as the responsible organization for the proposed charter school have 501(c)(3) status?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

Applicant Comments :

The responsible organization, Virtual Active Learning Academy, has received federal tax-exempt status as a nonprofit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The Internal Revenue Service issued the determination letter on February 24, 2026, recognizing the organization as a public charity under IRC Section 170(b)(1)(A)(vi), with an effective date of exemption of January 31, 2025. Documentation of the IRS determination letter is provided in the application materials.

Q24.Attach as Appendix F Federal Documentation of Tax-Exempt Status.

See attached Appendix F.

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Applicant Evidence :


Appendix F- Federal Docu...

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Q25.Name of Registered Agent and Address as listed with the NC Secretary of State

Cevdet Akbay, 847 Bay Bouquet Ln, Apex, NC 27523

Q26.If applying as a municipality, please provide the name of municipality.

N/A

Q27.Attach Appendix K Articles of Incorporation or Municipal Charter

- If the applicant is a non-profit board of directors, attach a copy of the articles of incorporation from the NC Department of the Secretary of State.
- If the applicant is a municipality, attach a copy of the municipal charter.

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Applicant Evidence :


Appendix K- Articles of In...

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Q28.Attach as Appendix J Proposed By-Laws of the Nonprofit Organization or Municipality The proposed by-laws, which must include a Conflict of Interest Policy for board members and a stated commitment to the NC Open Meetings Law.

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Applicant Comments :

The bylaws have been revised to include a dedicated **Conflict of Interest and Anti-Nepotism** article (**Article 10**) to address governance expectations related to transparency, disclosure, recusal, ethical conduct, financial conflicts of interest, anti-nepotism safeguards, and annual conflict-of-interest reporting in alignment with **G.S. §115C-218.15, Chapter 55A of the North Carolina General Statutes**, and the **North Carolina Charter Schools Act**. Specifically, **Article 10** was added to the proposed bylaws to establish clear governance safeguards and ethical standards for Board members, officers, employees, committee members, and affiliated parties.

Article 10 includes provisions addressing: **(1)** duty of loyalty and written disclosure of actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest (**Section 10.2**); **(2)** financial conflict-of-interest restrictions related to procurement, employment, and contracting decisions (**Section 10.3**); **(3)** recusal procedures and Board documentation requirements (**Section 10.4**); **(4)** anti-nepotism safeguards and Board approval requirements consistent with North Carolina law (**Section 10.5**); and **(5)** annual conflict-of-interest disclosure and policy review requirements (**Section 10.7**).

Consistent with **Section 10.7 of the bylaws**, the Board will, in consultation with legal counsel, adopt and annually review a more comprehensive standalone **Conflict of Interest and Anti-Nepotism Policy** to further operationalize implementation procedures, disclosure forms, compliance monitoring, and annual reporting practices consistent with nonprofit and charter school governance best practices. In addition, the revised bylaws reaffirm the Board's commitment to compliance with the **North Carolina Open Meetings Law**.

Applicant Evidence :



Appendix J - Proposed Byl...

Uploaded on **5/26/2026** by
Cevdet Akbay



3. Governance and Capacity

3.1. School Governing Body

Q29. **Organization Street Address (if you have one)**

- On the Organization Information page, you already provided the mailing address.

847 Bay Bouquet Ln, Apex, NC 27523

3.2. Governance

The private nonprofit corporation or municipality is the legal entity that has responsibility for all aspects of the proposed charter school. Its members should reflect the ability to operate a charter school from both business and education perspectives.

Q30. **The private nonprofit corporation or municipality is the legal entity that has responsibility for all aspects of the proposed charter school. Its members should reflect the ability to operate a charter school from both business and education perspectives. Using the attached resource as a template, please complete the table depicting the initial members of the nonprofit organization.**

☒ Upload Required File Type: excel Max File Size: 30 Total Files Count: 3

Resources


Initial Members of the No...

Applicant Evidence :


Virtual Active Learning Ac...

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Q31. **Describe the governance structure of the proposed charter school, including the governing board's functions, primary duties, roles, and responsibilities as it relates to overseeing the charter school. Include how the board will recruit, hire, and supervise the lead administrator.**



VALA NC is governed by an independent, nonprofit Board of Directors that holds full legal and fiduciary responsibility for the school. The Board's primary role is governance, not day-to-day management. This includes setting strategic direction, safeguarding academic quality, ensuring fiscal stewardship of public funds, monitoring compliance with all applicable laws and charter requirements, and holding the Executive Director accountable for performance. Clear separation between governance and management is widely recognized as a hallmark of effective nonprofit and charter oversight (Chait et al., 2005; Brown, 2005).

The Board operates pursuant to adopted bylaws and policies and exercises its authority through formal action in duly noticed public meetings in compliance with North Carolina Open Meetings and Public Records laws. Core governance responsibilities include:

- Hiring, supervising, supporting, and evaluating the Executive Director;
- Approving and monitoring the annual budget, financial reports, audits, and internal controls;
- Adopting policies related to academics, operations, finance, compliance, and technology oversight;
- Monitoring student performance, engagement, and equity outcomes aligned to VALA NC's mission and 5A Framework;
- Ensuring ethical conduct, transparency, and avoidance of conflicts of interest.

The Board may establish standing and ad hoc committees (e.g., Finance/Audit, Governance, Academic Oversight) to support effective oversight while retaining final decision-making authority as a full board. Research on nonprofit governance and charter school performance consistently finds that high-performing organizations demonstrate strong mission alignment, effective board oversight, and clear performance expectations at the governance level (Miller, 2024; Herman and Renz, 2008).

The governing board will be responsible for recruiting, hiring, and supervising the school's lead administrator (Executive Director). The board will conduct a formal search process to identify candidates with strong leadership experience in education, organizational management, and virtual learning environments. Leadership quality is strongly associated with student success and organizational effectiveness (Leithwood et al., 2004; Miller, 2024). The Executive Director will be evaluated annually by the board based on measurable goals related to academic performance, operational effectiveness, financial management, and organizational leadership. Performance-driven executive oversight is a core feature of high-performing charter governance (Miller, 2024).

Dr. Cevdet Akbay, who currently serves as the founding Board President and lead developer of the proposed school model, intends to transition into the role of Executive Director if the charter is approved. Prior to being considered for employment, Dr. Akbay will resign from the governing board to ensure a clear separation between governance and school administration. The remaining members of the governing board will conduct the hiring process and determine whether to appoint Dr. Akbay as Executive Director based on the needs of the school and the qualifications of the candidate.

Dr. Akbay brings more than twenty-five years of experience in education and leadership, including his current role as Professor of Chemistry at Fayetteville State University (FSU) and director of the S8



Program (Student-Centered Strategies, Scholarships, and Support Services for Student Success in Sciences), a National Science Foundation (NSF)-funded student success initiative designed to support and retain science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) majors. At FSU, he served two years as Assistant Department Chair and six years as Department Chair of the Department of Chemistry, Physics, and Materials Science, where he provided academic and administrative leadership for the department. During his tenure, he led significant improvements to the academic program, including updating the curriculum, developing several new academic concentrations, and strengthening undergraduate research and experiential learning opportunities.

Under Dr. Akbay's leadership, the department achieved a major milestone when the chemistry program received accreditation from the American Chemical Society (ACS) in 2019, the first time the program had obtained ACS accreditation since its establishment in 1972. He also helped secure external grant funding to enhance laboratory infrastructure, student support programs, and the overall quality of STEM education within the department. In addition, Dr. Akbay has been a strong advocate for innovative teaching practices. In 2014, with funds from the NSF, he established the first Studio Classroom at FSU, creating a student-centered active learning environment designed to increase engagement and improve student success in STEM courses.

His experience includes developing active learning environments, leading academic departments, securing external funding, and serving on charter school governing boards. His professional background in STEM education, student-centered pedagogy, and educational innovation aligns closely with the mission and instructional model of VALA NC.

Once hired, the Executive Director will report directly to the governing board and will be responsible for the day-to-day leadership and management of the school, including academic programming, staffing, operations, and implementation of the school's mission and strategic goals.

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Leithwood, K.; Louis, K. S.; Anderson, S.; Wahlstrom, K. *How Leadership Influences Student Learning*; Wallace Foundation: New York, 2004.

Miller, T. W. *10 Indicators of High-Performing Charter Schools: What Sets the Best Schools Apart and How to Become One of Them*; Leaders Building Leaders: Santa Rosa Beach, FL, 2024.



Q32. Describe the size, current and desired composition, powers, and duties of the governing board.

The VALA NC Board is composed of no fewer than five (5) and no more than nine (9) voting members, as defined in the bylaws. Board members serve staggered three-year terms to ensure continuity of leadership and institutional knowledge.

The Board is intentionally composed to provide collective expertise across:

- Education leadership and instructional design (including virtual and STEAM education);
- Finance, audit, risk management, and compliance;
- Nonprofit governance and organizational leadership;
- Data systems, technology, and cybersecurity;
- Student support services, mental health, and equity;
- Community engagement and statewide perspective.

The Board holds all powers necessary to govern the school, including policy adoption, budget approval, contract authorization, appointment and evaluation of the Executive Director, and oversight of academic, operational, and financial performance.

Q33. Describe the founding board's individual and collective qualifications for implementing the school design successfully.



The founding board members of VALA NC bring complementary professional backgrounds and governance-relevant expertise that collectively position the Board to effectively oversee a high-quality, compliant, and innovative virtual charter school. Individual qualifications include the following:

Cevdet Akbay, Ph.D., brings more than 25 years of experience in education as a middle and high school teacher, higher education faculty member, department chair, and academic leader. He has led academic program accreditation efforts, overseen curriculum development, managed budgets and personnel, demonstrated strong grantsmanship, and participated in charter school governance. Dr. Akbay's expertise in instructional quality, accreditation, data-informed decision-making, and active-learning pedagogies supports strong academic oversight and mission alignment.

Abdelilah Choukri is an executive leader in corporate investment banking and risk management, with extensive experience overseeing large-scale data systems, compliance structures, and organizational risk controls. His background in financial governance, transparency, and systems oversight strengthens the Board's capacity for fiscal accountability, internal controls, and strategic growth planning.

Ana da Silva, Ph.D. is an experienced educator and chemist with over two decades of teaching experience across in-person, online, and hybrid learning environments. Her expertise in curriculum design, instructional delivery, and assessment across diverse student populations informs Board oversight of academic programming, instructional quality, and virtual learning effectiveness.

Nizar Mashal is a finance executive and Chief Financial Officer with more than 15 years of experience in financial management, investment strategy, and structured finance. He brings expertise in budgeting, financial modeling, compliance, and long-term financial planning, which supports the Board's oversight of fiscal sustainability, enrollment-based funding, and risk management.

Altovise Parks is a veteran K–12 educator and school leader with approximately 25 years of experience in public, private, and faith-based education. Her background includes instructional leadership, MTSS implementation, restorative practices, and community-based educational programming. Ms. Parks contributes practical insight into student support systems, family engagement, and equity-focused governance.

Naimah Rashad is a licensed mental health professional with experience in clinical assessment, community-based services, and systems-level coordination within public agencies. Her expertise supports Board oversight related to student wellness, mental health supports, compliance with student services requirements, and the development of trauma-informed and inclusive school policies.

Khalid Lodhi, Ph.D. is a professor and program director in forensic biology with extensive experience in higher education leadership, program accreditation, and research administration. He has overseen complex academic programs and budgets and brings strong expertise in STEM education, program evaluation, and quality assurance.

Collectively, the Board has demonstrated capacity in nonprofit governance, academic oversight, fiscal



stewardship, compliance, data-driven accountability, student wellness, and community engagement. This depth and diversity of expertise enable the Board to provide informed, independent, and effective governance of VALA NC’s innovative virtual school model.

Q34.Explain how this governance structure and composition will help ensure the school's success, the board's evaluation of that success, and active stakeholder representation.



VALA NC's governance structure is designed to support school success through clear role delineation, data-informed oversight, and accountability aligned with the school's mission and 5A Framework (Active Learning, Adaptive Instruction, Accountable Systems, Authentic Experiences, and Accessible Education). Research on nonprofit and charter school governance consistently shows that organizations with clearly defined governance responsibilities and strong board oversight are more likely to achieve sustained organizational effectiveness and mission alignment (Chait et al., 2005; Brown, 2005). The Board evaluates success through multiple indicators, including academic outcomes, student engagement metrics, financial health, regulatory compliance, and stakeholder feedback—an approach consistent with evidence-based models of performance measurement in nonprofit and educational organizations (Herman and Renz, 2008).

Consistent with VALA NC's Accountable Systems approach, the Board engages in formal, scheduled review of school performance data. Quarterly Board Oversight sessions include review of attendance, engagement, academic progress, social-emotional indicators, budget alignment, and progress toward strategic goals. Data-informed governance practices enable boards to monitor trends, assess program effectiveness, and guide strategic decision-making, which research identifies as a key characteristic of high-performing educational organizations (Datnow and Park, 2014; Marsh et al., 2006). These reviews are supported by data dashboards and reports prepared by school leadership, allowing the Board to maintain alignment between academic outcomes and financial and operational decisions.

The Board's structure promotes:

- **Strong executive leadership** through clear supervision and evaluation of the Executive Director, a governance practice associated with improved organizational performance and accountability (Brown, 2005; Miller, 2024).
- **Continuous improvement** through systematic review of performance data and strategic goals (Datnow and Park, 2014).
- **Active stakeholder representation** through public meetings, transparent decision-making, and family engagement processes, which research identifies as essential for strengthening trust and community partnership in schools (Henderson and Mapp, 2002).
- **Long-term sustainability** through fiscal discipline, risk management, and leadership succession planning—governance practices associated with strong nonprofit performance and organizational resilience (Herman and Renz, 2008; Chait et al., 2005).

Together, these governance practices ensure that VALA NC maintains strong mission alignment, effective oversight, and meaningful stakeholder engagement while supporting continuous improvement and long-term organizational success.

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Miller, T. 10 Indicators of High-Performing Charter Schools: What Sets the Best Schools Apart and How to Become One of Them; Leaders Building Leaders: Santa Rosa Beach, FL, 2024.

Q35.Explain the procedure by which the founding board members have been recruited and selected. If a position is vacant, how and on what timeline will new members be recruited and added to the board?

Founding board members were recruited through professional, educational, and community-based networks aligned with VALA NC's mission and statewide focus. Prospective members were identified based on demonstrated leadership experience, commitment to public education, and expertise relevant to charter school governance, including academics, finance, nonprofit oversight, compliance, technology, and student services.

As part of the recruitment and selection process, prospective board members completed Charter School Board Member Information Forms and provided resumes, background certifications, and required disclosures. These materials were reviewed to confirm eligibility, identify potential conflicts of interest, and ensure alignment with state requirements and the school's governance needs prior to formal appointment.

Board vacancies are filled by a vote of the existing Board following a needs-based recruitment process. The Board evaluates prospective members based on identified skills gaps, community and geographic representation, and alignment with VALA NC's mission. Vacancies are typically filled within 60–90 days to maintain effective governance.

Q36.Describe the group's ties to and/or knowledge of the target community.



Board members demonstrate specific, meaningful ties to North Carolina communities through their professional roles, service, and lived experience. Several members live and work in North Carolina and have direct experience serving students, families, and institutions across the state.

Board members include educators and administrators currently or formerly serving in North Carolina public schools, higher education institutions, and nonprofit organizations, with professional footprints in regions such as Wake County, Cumberland County, and surrounding communities. This includes direct engagement with K–12 students and families, teacher preparation and leadership development, mental health and student support services, and partnerships with community-based and faith-based organizations serving youth and families. In addition, board members bring experience working with diverse populations across urban, suburban, and rural contexts, as well as with historically underserved communities.

As a statewide virtual charter school, VALA NC is designed to serve students regardless of geography. The Board's combined local and statewide perspectives support informed governance of a virtual model that responds to regional needs while maintaining consistent expectations for academic quality, access, and equity across North Carolina.

Q37. Outline the strategic board calendar detailing how often the board will meet according to the bylaws established. Describe any advisory bodies, councils, or associations listed in the organization chart or to be formed, including their roles and duties, and the reporting structure.



The Board meets at least eight (8) times per year, with additional meetings convened as needed, in accordance with the bylaws. Regular meetings, including an annual board retreat, are typically held monthly except in July and August unless an additional meeting is deemed necessary. Meetings are generally scheduled for the third Thursday of each month in the evening, at a time and place designated by the Board. Establishing a regular meeting schedule enables governing boards to maintain consistent oversight of academic performance, financial management, and strategic priorities—practices widely recognized as essential to effective nonprofit and charter school governance (Chait et al., 2005; Brown, 2005).

The annual meeting of the Board is held in June of each year for the purpose of electing directors and conducting the normal business of the Board. All meetings are publicly noticed and conducted in compliance with the North Carolina Open Meetings Law, with public access provided through feasible means of communication, including virtual platforms when appropriate. Transparent governance and open meeting practices are widely recognized as key mechanisms for maintaining stakeholder trust and public accountability in educational institutions (Herman and Renz, 2008).

Special or emergency meetings may be called by the Board President, any officer, or any two directors. Notice of regular meetings, including the annual board retreat, is provided at least seven (7) days in advance, while notice of special meetings is provided at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance, consistent with the bylaws and state law. Directors are expected to notify the President at least twenty-four (24) hours in advance if they are unable to attend a scheduled meeting. Consistent board participation and structured meeting procedures strengthen board effectiveness and organizational accountability (Chait et al., 2005).

Standing committees may include Finance/Audit, Governance, Academic Oversight, and other committees as determined by the Board. In accordance with the bylaws, the Board appoints committees as needed, and all committees operate under the authority and direction of the full Board. The Board nominates and elects the chair of each committee, and each committee chair nominates committee members for Board approval.

Committee membership is not limited to Directors, allowing the Board to leverage additional professional expertise from community members and stakeholders when appropriate; however, any Executive Committee or committee addressing personnel matters is limited to Board members to ensure appropriate governance oversight. Committees meet between full Board meetings as necessary to conduct detailed work within their areas of responsibility and are required to report findings and recommendations to the full Board for discussion and action.

Research on nonprofit governance indicates that committee structures enable boards to conduct deeper oversight of finance, academic performance, and organizational strategy while maintaining accountability to the full board (Brown, 2005; Miller, 2024). Each Director serves on at least one standing committee, and the roles and responsibilities of each committee are clearly defined and formally approved by the Board.

Through this structured meeting schedule and committee system, the Board ensures continuous



oversight of academic performance, financial stewardship, compliance obligations, and strategic planning while promoting transparent governance and active stakeholder engagement.

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Miller, T. *10 Indicators of High-Performing Charter Schools: What Sets the Best Schools Apart and How to Become One of Them*; Leaders Building Leaders: Santa Rosa Beach, FL, 2024.

Q38.What kinds of orientation or training will new board members receive, and what kinds of ongoing professional development will existing board members receive? The plan for training and development should include a timetable, specific topics to be addressed, and requirements for participation.



New board members participate in a structured orientation and mentoring process designed to ensure continuity of governance and long-term board effectiveness. Research on nonprofit governance indicates that formal onboarding and mentoring processes help new board members understand their responsibilities more quickly and improve board effectiveness (Ostrower and Stone, 2010; Tschirhart and Bielefeld, 2012). Consistent with the Board's belief that there is no success without succession, each new board member is paired with an experienced board member who serves as a mentor during the transition period. This mentorship typically occurs during the final months of an outgoing board member's term or during the first several months of a new member's service, helping new members develop a clear understanding of governance responsibilities, strategic priorities, and board culture.

Orientation Timeline and Content. Within the first 60 days of appointment, new board members complete a formal orientation that includes review of a comprehensive governance resource binder developed by the founding board. This binder includes the charter application, the executed charter agreement with the State, the Board's bylaws and policy manual, applicable charter and public school laws, Open Meetings and Public Records requirements, board member roles and expectations, and the Board's annual meeting calendar. Orientation also includes an overview of the school's history, key decisions from the prior twelve to eighteen months, current strategic priorities, board goals, successes, and ongoing challenges. Research suggests that structured orientation materials and clear documentation improve governance effectiveness and help boards make better strategic decisions (BoardSource, 2010; Hill and Lake, 2008). New members are expected to join at least one standing committee during their first year of service to deepen their understanding of Board operations and oversight responsibilities.

Ongoing Professional Development. All board members participate in ongoing professional development annually. Training topics include fiduciary duties, ethics and conflicts of interest, financial oversight and audit review, charter compliance, virtual school accountability, equity and access, and effective board-leader relations. Continuous professional development for board members is widely recognized as a key factor in strengthening nonprofit governance and improving organizational performance (Ostrower and Stone, 2010; Tschirhart and Bielefeld, 2012). Training is delivered through a combination of board retreats, scheduled training sessions during regular board meetings, and external workshops or webinars facilitated by charter-experienced legal counsel, auditors, or governance experts. The founding board has already participated in formal training sessions led by charter-experienced legal and financial professionals and will continue to engage in ongoing professional development to ensure effective oversight of the school's academic, financial, and operational performance.

Participation Requirements. Participation in orientation and ongoing training is an expectation of board service. Attendance at required trainings is tracked, and completion of training is considered as part of overall board effectiveness and member accountability. Governance research emphasizes that clear participation expectations and accountability mechanisms strengthen board engagement and organizational oversight (BoardSource, 2010; Ostrower and Stone, 2010). Through this structured approach, the Board ensures that both new and continuing members are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfill their governance responsibilities effectively.



REFERENCES

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Ostrower, F.; Stone, M. M. Moving Governance Research Forward: A Contingency-Based Framework and Data Application. *Nonprofit Volunt. Sect. Q.* 2010, *39*, 901–924.

Tschirhart, M.; Bielefeld, W. *Managing Nonprofit Organizations*; Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA, 2012.

Q39. Describe the board's ethical standards and procedures for identifying and addressing conflicts of interest. Identify any existing relationships that could pose actual or perceived conflicts if the application is approved; discuss specific steps that the board will take to avoid any actual conflicts and to mitigate perceived conflicts.



The Board of Directors of the Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA NC) operates under a formally adopted Conflict of Interest and Anti-Nepotism Policy, as outlined in its bylaws. These policies require all Board members to act in the best interests of the school and to avoid any situation in which personal, professional, or financial interests could conflict, or appear to conflict, with the interests of VALA NC.

Board members are required to complete and sign an annual Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement and to update their disclosures promptly if circumstances change. These disclosures include any relationships with vendors, contractors, employees, or other entities that may conduct business with the school.

When a potential or actual conflict of interest is identified, the Board follows a structured procedure to ensure ethical decision-making. The interested Board member must fully disclose the nature of the conflict and is required to recuse themselves from all discussions, deliberations, and voting related to the matter. The remaining disinterested Board members review the situation, determine whether a conflict exists, and, if applicable, approve any related transaction only if it is determined to be fair, reasonable, and in the best interest of the school. All disclosures, determinations, and recusals are formally documented in the official meeting minutes.

To further mitigate both actual and perceived conflicts of interest, the Board utilizes transparent procurement practices, including competitive bidding when appropriate, and ensures that no Board member or related party receives preferential treatment or improper financial benefit. The Board is committed to maintaining the highest standards of transparency and public accountability.

At this time, the Board is not aware of any existing relationships among Board members, school leadership, vendors, or service providers that would pose an actual or perceived conflict of interest if the application is approved. However, the Board recognizes that potential conflicts may arise as the school develops and is committed to proactively identifying and addressing such situations through regular review of disclosures and adherence to its established policies.

The Anti-Nepotism provisions of the bylaws prohibit preferential treatment in hiring, contracting, supervision, or evaluation based on familial or close personal relationships. These safeguards ensure that all employment and contracting decisions are based solely on qualifications, merit, and the needs of the school.

Through these policies and procedures, the Board upholds high ethical standards, ensures compliance with applicable state and federal laws, and promotes transparency, accountability, and public trust consistent with best practices in nonprofit and charter school governance (IRS, 2023; National Council of Nonprofits, 2021).

REFERENCES

Internal Revenue Service. *Governance and Related Topics—501(c)(3) Organizations*; IRS: Washington, DC, 2023.

National Council of Nonprofits. *Conflict of Interest Policy for Nonprofits*; National Council of Nonprofits: Washington, DC, 2021.



Q40. Explain the decision-making processes the board will use to develop school policies.

Board decisions are made through formal action in open session during duly noticed meetings in accordance with North Carolina open meetings requirements. In addition to general decision-making procedures, the Board follows a structured, multi-step process for developing, reviewing, adopting, implementing, and evaluating school policies to ensure clarity, legal compliance, and effectiveness.

The policy development process begins when a need for a new policy or revision to an existing policy is identified by the Board, school leadership, or a standing committee. Existing policies are reviewed to determine whether the issue is already addressed. Relevant data including: academic performance, operational metrics, stakeholder feedback, and applicable legal and regulatory requirements, are gathered and analyzed to inform policy development and ensure alignment with North Carolina General Statutes and State Board of Education expectations.

Input is solicited from appropriate stakeholders, including staff, students, and families, particularly when policies directly affect those groups. Recommendations are reviewed and discussed by the Board or an assigned committee to establish the policy framework. A draft policy is then developed using a standard format that focuses on desired outcomes and clearly defines the parameters within which school administration will operate. When appropriate, draft policies, especially those involving legal, financial, or student services considerations, are reviewed by legal counsel to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Proposed policies are presented for a first reading with public notice, allowing for public comment and stakeholder input. Based on feedback received, revisions may be made prior to a second reading, at which time the Board may formally adopt the policy by majority vote, provided a quorum is present. All adopted policies are documented and incorporated into the official policy manual.

The Board maintains a clear distinction between governance and management: the Board is responsible for establishing policy, while the school's administration is responsible for developing procedures and implementing those policies. Following adoption, school leadership develops implementation procedures and provides training to ensure effective execution.

The Board monitors the implementation and effectiveness of policies through regular reports from school leadership, review of performance data, and stakeholder feedback. Policies are reviewed on a regular cycle, at least annually as part of the Board's outcomes-based governance calendar, and are revised as necessary to support continuous improvement, accountability, and alignment with the school's mission and legal requirements.

Q41. Describe any advisory bodies, councils, or associations listed in the organization chart or to be formed, including the roles and duties of that body, and the reporting structure as it relates to the school's governing body and leadership.



In accordance with the bylaws, the Board utilizes standing and ad hoc committees to support effective governance and informed decision-making. Committees function in an advisory capacity and operate under the direction and authority of the full Board. While committees may conduct detailed analysis and discussion within their scope, they do not exercise independent governing authority.

Standing committees may include Finance/Audit, Governance, Academic Oversight, and other committees established by the Board as needed. The Board nominates and elects the chair of each committee, and committee chairs nominate members for Board approval. Committee membership may include individuals who are not Board members to provide additional expertise; however, the Executive Committee and any committee addressing personnel matters are limited to Board members only, as required by the bylaws.

Committees meet between full Board meetings to conduct work within their assigned responsibilities and provide reports and formal recommendations to the full Board for discussion and action. Through this structure, committees support the Board's oversight of academics, finance, compliance, and organizational performance while preserving clear lines of authority between the Board and school leadership.

Q42. How will the board ensure grievances/concerns from parents and staff members are heard?



The Board is committed to ensuring that parent, student, staff, and community concerns are addressed through clear, fair, and transparent grievance processes. To support this commitment, the Board will formally adopt comprehensive grievance policies for employees and for parents/students that align with state and federal law and reflect best practices in charter school governance.

Consistent with these policies, informal resolution is encouraged as a first step whenever appropriate. Day-to-day concerns are initially addressed at the school level through open communication with teachers, supervisors, and school administrators. When concerns are not resolved informally and meet the definition of a grievance, as clearly defined in Board-adopted grievance policies, individuals may initiate a formal grievance process.

Employee grievance procedures will include clearly defined timelines, written submission requirements, and a step-by-step escalation process beginning with the Head of School and, when necessary, progressing to the Board of Directors. Where a grievance implicates the Head of School, the grievance may be submitted directly to the Board President or another designated Board officer. The Board retains final authority over grievance appeals and may review matters in open session in accordance with North Carolina Open Meetings Law or take other lawful action, including appointing a Board panel or engaging an independent investigator when appropriate.

Similarly, parent and student grievance procedures will provide a structured process for escalating unresolved concerns from school administration to the Board when the issue meets the definition of a grievance. The Board will ensure that grievance processes are accessible, timely, and clearly communicated, while maintaining compliance with applicable laws governing student discipline, special education, civil rights, and other protected processes.

The Board maintains oversight of grievance trends and outcomes to inform policy development, training, and continuous improvement. Through the adoption and consistent implementation of these grievance policies, the Board promotes accountability, due process, and trust among students, families, staff, and the broader school community.

Q43. Attach as Appendix Organizational Chart.

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Applicant Evidence :


Appendix- Organizational...

Uploaded on **4/24/2026** by
Lauren Watters



Q44. Attach as Appendix Charter School Board Member Information Form and Resume.

- How were you recruited and Why do you wish to serve - are asked twice, in succession. Just a redundancy we need to remove.
- The very first question - Have you ever served before? is a Yes or No. About 6-7 questions down, they are asked to describe their past board service. I would move that up to the Yes/No question to tie the two together.

See the appendix item attached.

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Resources


Charter School Board Me...

Applicant Evidence :


Appendix- Board Membe...

Uploaded on **4/9/2026** by
Lauren Watters

Q45. Attach Appendix For Each Board Member: Charter School Board Member Background Certification Statement and Completed Background Check. PLEASE NOTE: A background check that does not meet the following requirements will be deemed incomplete and could jeopardize the submission status of your application.

- **Background check must include a Social Security Trace** (which scans his/her SSN and lists every county/state of residence where that SSN has been used).
- **Background check must include any additional aliases that have been used by the individual.**
- **Background check must include a completed county level check for any county returned in the Social Security Trace.**
- **Background check must include a completed nationwide check.**

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Resources


Charter School Board Me...



Applicant Evidence :



Appendix- Background C...

Uploaded on **4/9/2026** by
Lauren Watters

3.3. Staffing: Hiring, Management, and Evaluation

Q46. **Projected Staff: Complete the staffing chart below outlining your staffing projections.**

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Resources



Staffing Chart Template.x...

Applicant Evidence :



VALA NC- Staffing Chart T...

Uploaded on **4/24/2026** by
Lauren Watters

Q47. **Explain the board's strategy for recruiting and retaining high-performing teachers.**



The VALA NC Board of Directors is committed to ensuring that the school recruits, develops, and retains high-performing educators who are equipped to succeed in a rigorous, student-centered virtual learning environment. The Board will provide active oversight of a comprehensive talent strategy aligned with the school's mission and 5A Framework (Active Learning, Adaptive Instruction, Accountable Systems, Authentic Experiences, Accessible Education), ensuring that staffing decisions support both instructional excellence and long-term sustainability.

A) Recruitment Strategies

VALA NC will implement a targeted and strategic recruitment approach designed to attract educators with strong instructional expertise and readiness for virtual teaching.

The school will prioritize candidates who:

- Demonstrate a track record of strong student outcomes and content knowledge
- Are skilled in student engagement, relationship-building, and project-based learning
- Show proficiency or strong potential in virtual instruction, learning management systems, and educational technology
- Are committed to serving diverse learners, including students with disabilities and English learners

To ensure a high-quality and diverse candidate pool, VALA NC will recruit from multiple, clearly defined pipelines:

- University-based educator preparation programs, including North Carolina institutions (e.g., UNC System schools, Appalachian State, UNC Greensboro) and national online programs such as Western Governors University (WGU), which emphasize competency-based and technology-integrated instruction.
- National educator pipelines such as Teach For America (TFA), TNTP, and Relay Graduate School of Education, which prepare teachers in data-driven instruction and high-impact teaching practices.
- Virtual and blended learning environments, including North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS), North Carolina Virtual Academy, and other established online schools, to identify candidates with direct experience in remote instruction.
- Educational technology and non-traditional talent pipelines, including instructional designers, online tutors, and professionals with digital teaching or training experience, who bring strong communication skills and comfort with virtual platforms.

To operationalize this strategy, VALA NC will implement a proactive and multi-channel recruitment approach that includes:

- Targeted outreach through state and national job boards, including the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) educator platform, NC Charter School Association, and university career platforms such as Handshake
- Participation in virtual and in-person educator job fairs, with a focus on candidates interested in innovative and virtual learning environments
- Strategic partnerships with educator preparation programs, including opportunities for student teaching placements, internships, and early hiring pipelines as the school grows



- Direct recruitment from virtual and blended schools, leveraging professional networks to identify experienced online educators
- Digital recruitment campaigns, including social media, professional networks (e.g., LinkedIn), and targeted outreach to high-need subject areas

All candidates will participate in a rigorous selection process that includes:

- Structured, competency-based interviews aligned to the 5A Framework
- Performance-based tasks, such as delivering a sample virtual lesson or analyzing student data
- Demonstration of technology proficiency and ability to engage students in an online setting

Through this multi-layered approach, the Board ensures that recruitment is intentional, competitive, and aligned to the unique demands of a high-quality virtual school.

B) Retention Strategies

VALA NC recognizes that retaining high-performing teachers is essential to maintaining instructional consistency and improving student outcomes. The Board will oversee a comprehensive retention strategy focused on compensation, support, professional growth, and organizational culture.

1. Competitive Compensation and Benefits

VALA NC will offer a competitive compensation and benefits package designed to attract and retain highly qualified educators. Teacher salaries will be aligned with, and in some cases slightly exceed, the North Carolina state salary schedule, particularly in high-need subject areas and for experienced teachers.

The school will provide a comprehensive benefits package estimated at approximately 22% of salary, which includes health insurance, employer-paid payroll taxes, and retirement contributions. VALA NC plans to offer a retirement savings option with an employer match of approximately 2–3%, supporting long-term financial stability for staff.

In addition to compensation, VALA NC will provide a supportive and flexible virtual work environment, access to high-quality instructional resources, and ongoing professional development aligned with the school's instructional model. Research indicates that strong working conditions, professional support, and opportunities for growth are critical factors in teacher retention (Ingersoll et al., 2018).

2. Structured Instructional Support and Coaching

Teachers will be supported through a robust instructional system that includes:

- Ongoing coaching and feedback from instructional leaders
- Weekly Teacher Data Huddles to review student progress and adjust instruction
- Access to specialized roles such as instructional coaches, digital learning specialists, and intervention staff.

3. Ongoing Professional Development



Professional learning will be continuous, job-embedded, and aligned to the school's model, including:

- Effective virtual instruction and student engagement strategies
- Use of data and adaptive learning platforms
- Project-based and authentic learning design

4. Collaborative and Mission-Driven Culture

To address the common challenge of teacher isolation in virtual schools, VALA NC will intentionally build collaborative structures, including:

- Grade-level and content-area teams
- Shared planning and problem-solving time
- Opportunities for teacher leadership and innovation

5. Clear Career Pathways and Leadership Opportunities

High-performing teachers will have opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities within the school, such as mentoring peers, leading grade-level or content teams, and contributing to curriculum and instructional innovation, as well as advancing into formal roles such as Instructional Coach as the school grows.

REFERENCES

Ingersoll, R. M.; Merrill, L.; Stuckey, D.; Collins, G. *Seven Trends: The Transformation of the Teaching Force*; Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 2018.

Q48.If already identified, describe the principal/head of school candidate and explain why this individual is well-qualified to lead the proposed school.



Dr. Cevdet Akbay has been identified as the founding leader candidate for VALA NC and is expected to be considered for the role of Executive Director upon charter approval. Dr. Akbay currently serves as the founding Board President and lead developer of the proposed school model. To ensure a clear separation between governance and school administration, Dr. Akbay will resign from the governing board prior to being considered for employment. The remaining board members will conduct a formal hiring process and determine whether to appoint Dr. Akbay as Executive Director based on the needs of the school and the qualifications of the candidate.

Dr. Akbay brings more than 25 years of experience in education, leadership, and instructional innovation. He currently serves as Professor of Chemistry at Fayetteville State University (FSU) and as Director of the S8 Program (Student-Centered Strategies, Scholarships, and Support Services for Student Success in Sciences), a National Science Foundation (NSF)-funded initiative focused on improving student retention and success in STEM fields. This role demonstrates his ability to design, implement, and manage complex, outcomes-driven educational programs.

Dr. Akbay has extensive academic leadership experience, having served as Assistant Department Chair for two years and Department Chair for six years in the Department of Chemistry, Physics, and Materials Science at FSU. In these roles, he led curriculum development, faculty support, and program improvement efforts. Under his leadership, the chemistry program achieved American Chemical Society (ACS) accreditation in 2019, the first accreditation earned by the program since its founding in 1972. He also secured external funding to enhance laboratory infrastructure, expand student support programs, and strengthen overall academic quality.

A key strength of Dr. Akbay's leadership is his commitment to innovative, student-centered instruction. He established the first Studio Classroom at FSU through NSF funding, implementing an active learning model designed to increase student engagement and achievement. His work reflects deep expertise in project-based, collaborative, and inquiry-driven learning—core elements of VALA NC's instructional approach.

Dr. Akbay also brings relevant K–12 and governance experience. He began his career as a science teacher in public schools and has served as a governing board member for a charter school, providing him with insight into charter school governance, accountability, and compliance. In addition, he is the founding organizer of VALA NC and has led the development of the school's academic model, including the 5A Framework, which is grounded in research-based best practices for virtual and student-centered learning.

If selected as Executive Director, Dr. Akbay will be responsible for the overall leadership and management of the school, including academic programming, staffing, operations, and implementation of the school's mission and strategic goals. He will report directly to the governing board and will work collaboratively with instructional and operational leaders to ensure the successful launch and long-term success of VALA NC.

Dr. Akbay's combination of instructional expertise, proven leadership, innovation in active learning, and deep alignment with the school's mission positions him as a strong candidate to lead VALA NC as a high-quality, student-centered virtual charter school.



Q49.If the school leader has been identified, attach the school leader's one-page resume as Appendix

☒ Upload Required File Type: pdf, excel, word, text Max File Size: 30 Total Files Count: 5

Applicant Evidence :


Appendix- School Leader'...

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Lauren Watters

Q50.Provide a description of the relationship that will exist between the charter school employees and the school's board of directors.



The VALA NC Board of Directors will operate under a clear and well-defined governance model that distinctly separates the roles of governance and management. The Board will be responsible for setting the strategic direction of the school, ensuring financial and legal compliance, and monitoring overall school performance, while the Executive Director and staff will be responsible for the day-to-day operations and implementation of the school's mission and program. Consistent with best practices outlined in 10 Indicators of High-Performing Charter Schools, high-performing boards maintain a clear distinction between governance and management, focusing on organizational performance while delegating execution to school leadership (Miller, 2024).

The Executive Director will serve as the sole employee of the Board and will be responsible for all aspects of school leadership, including staff supervision, academic programming, and operational management. All school employees will report directly or indirectly to the Executive Director, ensuring a clear chain of command and organizational coherence.

The relationship between the Board and the Executive Director will be grounded in trust, transparency, and accountability. The Executive Director will provide regular reports to the Board on academic performance, financial health, enrollment, staffing, and organizational progress. The Board will use this information to monitor progress toward goals, ask strategic questions, and make informed decisions.

Clear communication protocols will be established to maintain appropriate boundaries and prevent micromanagement. Board members will not be involved in the direct supervision or evaluation of staff. Communication between the Board and employees will occur through the Executive Director, except in limited circumstances authorized by the full Board. Board members may engage with staff during school events, presentations, or strategic planning activities, but will not direct staff work or interfere with daily operations.

VALA NC will adopt formal personnel and grievance policies to ensure that employee concerns are addressed through appropriate channels. Staff will be expected to follow established procedures for resolving issues at the school level. The Board will become involved in personnel matters only when necessary and in accordance with policy, ensuring fairness, consistency, and compliance with applicable laws.

To support continuous improvement, the Board will also utilize multiple sources of information, including staff feedback, climate surveys, and performance data, to assess organizational health and inform decision-making.

Through this clearly defined structure, VALA NC will maintain strong governance, effective leadership, and a professional working environment that supports both staff success and student achievement.

REFERENCES

Miller, T. 10 Indicators of High-Performing Charter Schools: What Sets the Best Schools Apart and How to Become One of Them; Leaders Building Leaders: Santa Rosa Beach, FL, 2024.

Q51. Outline the board's procedures for hiring and dismissing school personnel, including conducting criminal background checks.



The VALA NC Board of Directors will adopt and implement comprehensive personnel policies to guide the hiring, evaluation, and dismissal of school employees. The Board will be responsible for hiring, supervising, and, if necessary, dismissing the Executive Director. The Executive Director will be responsible for the recruitment, hiring, supervision, evaluation, and recommendation for dismissal of all other school personnel. This structure ensures clear lines of authority and aligns with best practices in effective charter school governance.

Hiring Procedures

VALA NC will implement a rigorous, multi-step hiring process designed to identify high-quality candidates who align with the school's mission, instructional model, and expectations for virtual learning. Consistent with best practices outlined in Indicator 4 of *10 Indicators of High-Performing Charter Schools*, the school will define clear attributes of an "ideal team member," ensuring that hiring decisions are grounded not only in qualifications, but also in values, mindset, and alignment with the school's culture (Miller, 2024).

The hiring process will include:

- Application screening to verify qualifications, licensure, and relevant experience
- Structured, behavior-based interviews designed to assess past performance and professional behaviors, recognizing that prior actions are strong predictors of future success (Miller, 2024)
- Performance-based assessments, such as delivering a sample virtual lesson or completing a job-related task
- Multiple rounds of interviews involving key stakeholders to ensure a thorough and consistent evaluation process
- Reference checks focused on prior performance, professionalism, and ability to collaborate effectively

VALA NC will maintain clear systems for managing applications, communication, and candidate evaluation to ensure consistency and professionalism throughout the process. The school recognizes that a strong hiring process is critical to long-term success, as ineffective hiring decisions can negatively impact school culture and performance if not addressed early (Miller, 2024).

All offers of employment will be contingent upon successful completion of a criminal background check in accordance with North Carolina law. This will include:

- A national and state criminal history check
- Verification of identity and employment eligibility
- Review of employment history related to student safety

The school will comply with all federal and state requirements to ensure the safety and well-being of students.



Dismissal Procedures

VALA NC is committed to maintaining high expectations for professional performance while supporting employee growth and development. All staff will be evaluated using a formal evaluation system aligned to instructional quality, professional responsibilities, and student outcomes.

If performance concerns arise, employees may be placed on a structured improvement plan with clear expectations, support, and timelines for improvement. The school will provide coaching, feedback, and professional development opportunities to support staff growth.

To ensure transparency and effective governance oversight, the Executive Director will establish a regular cadence of reporting to the Board regarding personnel performance trends. This may include updates on staff members who are on improvement plans, at risk of non-renewal, or recommended for dismissal, while maintaining appropriate confidentiality. This proactive approach allows the Board to remain informed and prepared to make timely, well-informed personnel decisions.

In alignment with board policy and governance best practices, the Executive Director will bring formal recommendations regarding dismissal or non-renewal of contracts to the Board in closed session, as appropriate. The Board will define in its policies the specific evidence, documentation, and data required to support such recommendations and will make final determinations in accordance with those policies and applicable law.

Consistent with best practices in staffing and organizational effectiveness, VALA NC recognizes that maintaining a high-performing team requires addressing both performance and alignment with the school's values and expectations. If an employee does not demonstrate sufficient improvement, or in cases of serious misconduct, dismissal or non-renewal may be pursued in a fair, consistent, and legally compliant manner.

The Board of Directors will be responsible for the evaluation and potential dismissal of the Executive Director and will follow established procedures to ensure fairness, documentation, and legal compliance.

All personnel procedures, including hiring, evaluation, non-renewal, and dismissal, will be clearly outlined in board-approved policies to ensure consistency, transparency, and adherence to legal and regulatory requirements.

Through these clear and structured procedures, VALA NC ensures that all personnel decisions prioritize student safety, staff quality, and alignment with the school's mission and culture.

REFERENCES

Miller, T. 10 Indicators of High-Performing Charter Schools: What Sets the Best Schools Apart and How to Become One of Them; Leaders Building Leaders: Santa Rosa Beach, FL, 2024.

Q52. Outline the school's proposed salary range and employment benefits for all levels of employment.



VALA NC has developed a comprehensive and financially sustainable compensation structure designed to attract and retain highly qualified staff while remaining aligned with North Carolina public school benchmarks and the school's projected budget. Salary ranges are informed by role responsibilities, licensure requirements, years of experience, and market comparisons with both traditional public schools and virtual charter models.

For school leadership, the Lead Administrator will earn approximately \$95,000 to \$110,000 annually over the first five years, reflecting the scope of responsibilities associated with leading a statewide virtual charter school. Additional leadership roles, such as Assistant Administrators, are projected within a range of approximately \$75,000 to \$88,000, depending on experience and organizational needs.

Administrative and operational personnel salaries are structured to ensure strong organizational systems and compliance. Key roles include a Finance Officer (\$55,000–\$67,500), Instructional Technology Facilitator (\$75,000–\$85,000), and clerical and support staff (\$45,000–\$52,500). Help desk technicians and other technical support roles will range from approximately \$40,000 to \$50,000, supporting the school's virtual infrastructure and ensuring timely service for students and families.

Instructional staff salaries are competitive with North Carolina averages and reflect the importance of recruiting highly effective virtual educators. Core content teachers will earn approximately \$65,000 to \$72,000, with specialized roles such as Exceptional Children teachers ranging from \$65,000 to \$75,000. Elective and specialty teachers fall within a similar range, while counselors and student support personnel are projected between \$70,000 and \$82,000. Additional instructional support roles, including instructional coaches and student success coordinators, will range from approximately \$70,000 to \$77,500 as the school grows.

VALA NC will also utilize a limited number of part-time and contracted personnel, such as testing proctors and related service providers, allowing the school to remain flexible and cost-efficient while meeting all student needs and compliance requirements.

In addition to competitive salaries, VALA NC will offer a comprehensive benefits package to support employee well-being and retention. Full-time staff will have access to employer-supported health insurance, with annual contributions ranging from approximately \$10,500 to \$13,000 per employee. The school will also provide a retirement contribution option, estimated at approximately \$3,000 per employee annually, along with standard employer-paid payroll taxes, disability coverage, and other required benefits.

Beyond traditional benefits, VALA NC's virtual model allows for additional advantages, including flexible work environments for eligible staff, access to technology and digital tools, and ongoing professional development aligned with the school's instructional model. These supports are designed to foster a positive, sustainable work environment that promotes long-term staff retention and instructional excellence.

Overall, the compensation and benefits structure is intentionally aligned with the school's mission, staffing plan, and financial projections, ensuring that VALA NC can recruit high-quality educators and staff while maintaining fiscal responsibility and long-term sustainability.



Q53. Provide the procedures for handling employee grievances and/or termination.



VALA NC will implement clear, fair, and legally compliant procedures for handling employee grievances and termination, as outlined in board-approved personnel and grievance policies. These procedures are designed to ensure due process, consistency, and alignment with the school's mission and professional expectations.

Employee Grievance Procedures

VALA NC will encourage the resolution of concerns at the lowest appropriate level through open communication and professional dialogue. Employees will be expected to follow a structured grievance process as defined in board policy.

The grievance process will include:

1. **Informal Resolution:** Employees are encouraged to first address concerns directly with their immediate supervisor or the Executive Director, as appropriate.
2. **Formal Written Grievance:** If the concern is not resolved, the employee may submit a formal written grievance outlining the issue, relevant facts, and desired resolution.
3. **Administrative Review:** The Executive Director (or designee) will review the grievance, conduct any necessary investigation, and provide a written response within a defined timeline.
4. **Board-Level Appeal:** If the grievance is not resolved at the administrative level, the employee may appeal to the Board of Directors. Appeals may be reviewed by the Board or a designated committee, and may be addressed in closed session as appropriate and in accordance with North Carolina Open Meetings Law.

If a grievance involves the Executive Director, the employee may submit the grievance directly to the Board Chair or designee for review.

The Board retains final authority over grievance appeals and will ensure that all matters are handled fairly, consistently, and in compliance with applicable laws and policies.

Termination and Disciplinary Procedures

VALA NC will maintain high expectations for professional conduct and performance. Employment with the school will be at-will and all employees will be expected to adhere to established policies, professional standards, and performance expectations.

The Executive Director will be responsible for the supervision, evaluation, and discipline of all staff. In cases of performance concerns or policy violations, the school may implement progressive discipline, which may include:

- Verbal warning
- Written warning
- Performance improvement plan or probationary period
- Suspension (with or without pay, as appropriate)
- Recommendation for termination or non-renewal



While progressive discipline is the general approach, VALA NC reserves the right to determine the appropriate level of disciplinary action based on the severity of the situation. In cases involving serious misconduct, violations of law or policy, or actions that jeopardize student or staff safety or school operations, immediate termination may be warranted.

The Executive Director will provide the Board with a regular cadence of updates regarding personnel matters, including staff on improvement plans, at risk of non-renewal, or recommended for dismissal, while maintaining appropriate confidentiality. Formal recommendations for termination or non-renewal will be presented to the Board in closed session, as appropriate. The Board will determine what documentation and evidence are required to support such recommendations and will make final decisions in accordance with board policy and applicable law.

The Board of Directors will be responsible for the evaluation and potential termination of the Executive Director and will follow established procedures to ensure fairness, documentation, and legal compliance.

All grievance, discipline, and termination procedures will be clearly defined in board-adopted policies and employee handbooks. VALA NC will ensure that all procedures comply with applicable federal and state laws, including employment law, due process requirements, and North Carolina Open Meetings Law.

Through these structured procedures, VALA NC will promote a professional, respectful, and accountable work environment while ensuring that all employees are treated fairly and consistently.

Q54. Identify any positions that will have dual responsibilities and the funding source for each position.



VALA NC is committed to building an efficient, scalable, and sustainable staffing model that maximizes resources while maintaining high-quality instructional and operational support. As a virtual charter school, the model allows for strategic alignment of roles where appropriate, particularly during the initial years of operation. All dual-role assignments will be implemented only when they are feasible, do not compromise effectiveness, and are supported by appropriately licensed or qualified personnel, as required by North Carolina law.

Several positions may include dual responsibilities, particularly in the school's early years, based on enrollment and staffing needs:

- The Finance Director will initially also serve as the Operations Director, overseeing financial management, budgeting, compliance, and reporting, while also managing key operational functions such as vendor coordination, contracts, and organizational systems. This alignment allows for strong integration between financial oversight and operational execution during the school's start-up phase.
- The Exceptional Children (EC) Teacher may also serve as the EC Director/Coordinator, overseeing compliance, case management, and service delivery for students with disabilities, provided that all IDEA requirements, caseload expectations, and service delivery obligations are fully met
- The Digital Media Teacher may also fulfill the role of School Library Media Coordinator, supporting digital literacy, research skills, and media resources
- A Digital Learning Specialist may serve as the Instructional Technology Facilitator and/or Remote Technician, providing instructional technology support to teachers while also assisting students and families with technical needs
- In some cases, a core content teacher may take on additional responsibilities as an Instructional Coach, provided that teaching load, scheduling, and supervision structures allow for effective support of peers
- Administrative or operations staff may assume limited Data Manager responsibilities in the initial year, with appropriate training and oversight, until enrollment growth supports a dedicated position

To ensure effectiveness and compliance, VALA NC will maintain clear supervision and reporting structures for all dual-role positions. The Board and school leadership will regularly review workload, performance, and compliance indicators to ensure that dual responsibilities do not negatively impact service quality, student outcomes, or regulatory obligations. Roles will be adjusted or separated as needed to maintain high standards of performance and compliance.

These dual-role configurations are designed to maintain operational efficiency while ensuring that all required functions are fulfilled in accordance with North Carolina statutes governing remote charter schools, including requirements for an Instructional Technology Facilitator, School Library Media Coordinator, Data Manager, and remote technical support staff (G.S. 115C-218.122).

As enrollment grows, VALA NC anticipates transitioning many of these dual-role positions into fully dedicated roles to ensure continued effectiveness, compliance, and scalability.



Funding Sources

All positions will be funded through a combination of:

- State per-pupil funding
- Federal funds, including applicable allocations such as IDEA (for EC services) and Title programs (e.g., Title I and Title III), where allowable
- Grants or supplemental funding, as available

Funding will be aligned to position responsibilities and documented in accordance with federal and state requirements, including appropriate time and effort reporting for positions supported in whole or in part by federal funds.

For example:

- EC-related roles may be partially funded through IDEA funds
- Positions supporting multilingual learners may be supported through Title III funds
- Instructional and general staffing will primarily be supported through state and local per-pupil allocations

Through this flexible and scalable staffing model, VALA NC will ensure fiscal responsibility, regulatory compliance, and the delivery of high-quality services to all students.

Q55. Describe the plans to have qualified staffing adequate for serving all student needs including SWD, ML, and AIG students.



VALA NC is committed to providing comprehensive, compliant, and high-quality services to meet the diverse needs of its student population, including Students with Disabilities (SWD), Multilingual Learners (ML), and Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) students. Based on projected enrollment, VALA NC anticipates serving approximately 18% SWD, 8% ML, and a representative population of AIG students consistent with statewide identification trends.

Students with Disabilities (SWD)

VALA NC will implement a robust Exceptional Children (EC) program aligned with federal and state requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The school will employ qualified EC teachers who will serve as case managers, responsible for IEP development, progress monitoring, and service coordination.

Staffing will include:

- EC Teachers to provide direct instruction, case management, and progress monitoring
- An EC Director/Coordinator (which may initially be a dual role) to oversee compliance, service delivery, and program quality
- Related service providers (e.g., speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, and other specialists), which may be provided through a combination of direct hires and contracted virtual service providers with expertise in delivering remote special education services

Services will be delivered through a combination of synchronous and asynchronous instruction, including small-group and individualized support aligned to student IEPs. The EC team will collaborate closely with general education teachers to ensure appropriate accommodations, modifications, and inclusive practices are implemented across all learning environments.

The use of qualified virtual service providers will allow VALA NC to ensure timely access to specialized services, maintain compliance with IEP requirements, and provide continuity of support for students across the state.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

VALA NC will provide services for Multilingual Learners in accordance with federal and state requirements, including Title III guidelines. The school will employ or contract with qualified ML/ESL teachers to support language development and access to academic content.

Staffing will include:

- ML/ESL Teachers to provide direct language instruction and support content access
- Collaboration between ML staff and general education teachers to ensure appropriate instructional supports and scaffolding

Supports will include targeted language instruction, embedded supports within core instruction, and ongoing monitoring of English language proficiency to inform instructional decisions. In addition, VALA NC may leverage qualified virtual service providers and digital language development platforms to enhance instruction and provide flexible, targeted support for multilingual learners in an online environment.



Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) Students

VALA NC recognizes the importance of meeting the needs of advanced learners and will provide appropriate opportunities for acceleration, enrichment, and differentiation within its instructional model. VALA NC is committed to ensuring that students demonstrating advanced academic ability are appropriately challenged and supported.

The school's instructional approach emphasizes personalization, allowing teachers to adjust pacing, provide advanced content, and offer enriched learning experiences based on individual student readiness and performance.

Supports for advanced learners will include:

- Differentiated instruction within core courses
- Opportunities for acceleration and flexible pacing
- Enrichment through project-based learning and deeper exploration of content
- Use of data to identify students who would benefit from advanced opportunities

As the school grows, VALA NC may designate staff or coordinators to further support advanced learners and expand programming based on student needs and enrollment.

Q56. [How will teachers be evaluated? What system or tool will be utilized?](#)



Teachers at VALA NC will be evaluated through a comprehensive, growth-oriented evaluation system aligned with the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards and all applicable state requirements. VALA NC will implement an evaluation framework aligned with the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES), enhanced to reflect the school's virtual instructional model and its 5A Learning Framework (Active, Adaptive, Accountable, Authentic, and Accessible learning).

Alignment to NC Teacher Standards

All evaluations will be grounded in the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards, including teacher leadership, establishing a respectful environment for a diverse population of students, content knowledge, facilitation of student learning, and reflection on practice. These standards will be applied within a virtual context, emphasizing digital engagement, personalized learning, data-informed instruction, and effective use of technology.

Multiple Measures of Effectiveness

VALA NC will use a multi-measure evaluation system to ensure a comprehensive and balanced assessment of teacher performance. Evidence will include:

- Formal and informal observations of synchronous and asynchronous instruction (e.g., live virtual lessons, LMS activity, and discussion facilitation)
- Student academic growth and performance data, including formative, benchmark, and course-level assessments
- Instructional artifacts such as lesson plans, recorded lessons, and student work samples
- Teacher self-assessments and goal-setting aligned to Individualized Professional Development Plans (IPDPs)
- Student and family feedback, where developmentally appropriate
- Evidence of professional growth documented through teacher ePortfolios

Teacher ePortfolios will serve as a central component of the evaluation process, enabling teachers to document instructional practices, reflect on their growth, and provide evidence of impact on student learning over time.

Student feedback will be incorporated, where developmentally appropriate, as a supplemental measure to provide insight into student engagement, clarity of instruction, and overall learning experience. Student input will be used as a formative tool to support teacher growth and will not serve as the sole or primary basis for evaluation decisions.

Ongoing Coaching and Feedback Cycles

Teacher evaluation at VALA NC is embedded within a continuous improvement model. Instructional leaders (e.g., Academic Dean and instructional coaches) will conduct regular observations and provide timely, actionable feedback. Teachers will participate in:

- Ongoing coaching cycles focused on instructional improvement
- Mentorship for new teachers, including co-planning and virtual observation
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) focused on collaboration and data analysis



Teachers will also engage in regular data review cycles, including weekly or biweekly instructional team meetings, to analyze student performance and adjust instruction. This ensures that evaluation is directly connected to instructional practice and student outcomes.

Frequency and Structure

Teacher evaluations will follow North Carolina requirements and best practices, including:

- Annual evaluations for all teachers
- More frequent observations and support for beginning or probationary teachers
- Mid-year and end-of-year conferences to review progress, performance, and professional goals

Connection to Professional Development

Evaluation results will directly inform individualized professional development. Teachers will receive targeted support based on evaluation outcomes, including coaching, professional learning sessions, and individualized growth plans. Professional development will focus on effective virtual instruction, student engagement, differentiation, and the use of data and technology to improve learning outcomes.

Accountability and Continuous Improvement

VALA NC is committed to a culture of accountability and continuous improvement. Teacher performance will be monitored through multiple data sources, including instructional practice and student outcomes, to ensure high-quality teaching across the school. The evaluation system is designed not only to assess performance but also to support teacher growth and ensure that all students receive engaging, rigorous, and student-centered instruction in a virtual environment.

Q57. Provide a narrative detailing the roles and responsibilities, qualifications, and appropriate licenses that each position must have to be hired by the school's board of directors and effectively perform the job function(s).



VALA NC has established a comprehensive staffing structure aligned with its instructional model, operational needs, and compliance with North Carolina requirements. Each position includes clearly defined responsibilities, qualifications, and licensure expectations to ensure the effective implementation of the school's mission and delivery of a high-quality virtual education program. VALA NC recognizes that North Carolina charter schools are required to maintain at least 50% licensed teaching staff, while certain roles, including Exceptional Children teachers, must meet full licensure requirements. The school will ensure compliance with all applicable state and federal regulations while prioritizing the recruitment of highly qualified and licensed educators.

The Lead Administrator (Executive Director/Head of School) is responsible for the overall leadership, management, and accountability of the school. Key responsibilities include overseeing academic programming, staff supervision, financial management, regulatory compliance, and implementation of the school's mission and strategic vision. Dr. Cevdet Akbay will serve in this role and brings more than 25 years of experience in education, including roles as a teacher, higher education faculty member, department chair, and academic leader. His experience includes leading curriculum development, overseeing academic programs, managing budgets and personnel, supporting accreditation processes, and contributing to charter school governance. This background provides a strong foundation in instructional leadership, organizational management, and data-informed decision-making. Minimum qualifications for this role include an advanced degree in education or a related field and demonstrated success in educational or organizational leadership. The school will ensure that all leadership roles meet applicable North Carolina requirements. While administrative licensure is not required for all charter school leaders, VALA NC will prioritize candidates with appropriate credentials and ensure that the leadership team collectively possesses the experience and qualifications necessary to effectively lead a public charter school.

Assistant Administrators support the Lead Administrator in overseeing daily operations, instructional programming, staff supervision, and student services. Responsibilities include monitoring academic performance, supporting compliance, and assisting with implementation of school initiatives. Candidates must hold a bachelor's degree (master's preferred), have relevant experience in education or school leadership, and hold or be eligible for appropriate credentials aligned to their responsibilities.

Core content and specialty teachers are responsible for delivering standards-aligned instruction in a virtual environment, facilitating both synchronous and asynchronous learning, monitoring student progress, and providing differentiated support. Teachers will collaborate in professional learning communities, analyze student data, and maintain consistent communication with students and families. All teachers must hold a bachelor's degree and demonstrate subject-area expertise appropriate to their assignment. VALA NC will meet or exceed North Carolina's requirement that at least 50% of teachers hold a valid North Carolina teaching license. The school will prioritize the hiring of licensed teachers and those eligible for licensure, particularly in core academic areas, to ensure instructional quality and compliance. Preference will be given to candidates with experience in virtual instruction, project-based learning, or technology-integrated classrooms.

Exceptional Children (EC) teachers are responsible for ensuring compliance with IDEA, developing and implementing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and providing specialized instruction and progress monitoring for students with disabilities. All Exceptional Children teachers will hold a valid



North Carolina teaching license in Exceptional Children, as required by federal and state regulations, ensuring full compliance with special education laws and high-quality services for students with disabilities.

Instructional support staff, including instructional coaches and student success coordinators, provide coaching, intervention support, and data-driven guidance to improve instructional effectiveness and student outcomes. Responsibilities include supporting teachers, coordinating interventions, and monitoring student engagement and progress. These positions require a bachelor's or master's degree in education or a related field, with prior teaching experience preferred. Licensure requirements will align with the specific role, with preference given to candidates holding a North Carolina teaching license or relevant certification.

Counselors and student support personnel provide academic advising, social-emotional support, and college and career readiness guidance, and play a key role in monitoring student well-being and engagement in a virtual setting. School counselors must hold a master's degree in school counseling and a valid North Carolina school counselor license.

The Finance Officer manages all financial operations, including budgeting, accounting, reporting, and compliance with state and federal financial regulations. Candidates must have a background in finance, accounting, or a related field, with experience in public school finance preferred. The Finance Officer will meet all applicable North Carolina requirements for school finance officers.

The Instructional Technology Facilitator supports the implementation and maintenance of digital learning systems, provides training to staff, and ensures effective integration of technology into instruction. Candidates must have experience in educational technology or IT support, with relevant certifications preferred.

Help desk technicians provide technical support to students, families, and staff, ensuring timely resolution of technology issues essential to a virtual learning environment. Candidates must have experience in IT support or a related field; industry certifications are preferred.

Clerical/Data Manager and administrative support staff manage enrollment, student records, communication systems, and day-to-day operational tasks. Candidates must demonstrate strong organizational and communication skills, with prior administrative experience preferred.

VALA NC will also utilize part-time or contracted personnel, including related service providers and testing staff, to ensure flexibility and cost efficiency while meeting all student needs. All contracted personnel will meet applicable state licensure and certification requirements for their respective roles.

All personnel will be hired by the Board of Directors or its designee in accordance with North Carolina law and school policy. Background checks, credential verification, and licensure validation will be completed prior to employment. VALA NC will ensure ongoing compliance with all state and federal requirements, including licensure, certification, and professional development expectations.



Q58. Identify the positions responsible for maintaining teacher license requirements and professional development.

In the school's initial year(s) of operation, the Executive Director will hold primary responsibility for ensuring all instructional staff maintain appropriate North Carolina licensure and meet ongoing professional development requirements. This includes monitoring licensure status, ensuring compliance with state regulations, and overseeing the implementation of a comprehensive professional development program aligned to instructional goals and teacher evaluation outcomes.

As the school grows and additional leadership capacity is established, these responsibilities will be strategically distributed to ensure effective oversight and support. Responsibilities may be delegated to roles such as an Assistant Principal, Human Resources personnel, and/or a Beginning Teacher (BT) Coordinator, each playing a key role in supporting staff development and compliance. For example:

- The Assistant Principal may oversee instructional coaching, evaluation alignment, and professional learning communities.
- Human Resources personnel may monitor licensure documentation, renewal timelines, and compliance reporting.
- The BT Coordinator will support beginning teachers through mentoring, onboarding, and state-required support programs.

This distributed leadership model ensures both compliance and a strong focus on continuous professional growth. Professional development will be aligned to teacher evaluation outcomes, school priorities, and the instructional expectations of a virtual learning environment, ensuring that all staff are equipped to deliver high-quality, student-centered instruction.

Q59. Explain the school's professional development model or plan. The plan should describe how the school will meet the teacher certification and licensure requirements for teachers as prescribed by state and federal law. Be sure this overview matches with the projected staff and funding of the proposed budget section.



VALA NC will implement a comprehensive, job-embedded professional development (PD) model aligned with its 5A Framework (Active Learning, Adaptive Instruction, Accountable Systems, Authentic Experiences, and Accessible Education) and designed to support high-quality virtual instruction. The model ensures that teachers are fully prepared prior to the start of the school year and continuously supported through structured, data-driven professional learning throughout the year. This approach reflects research demonstrating that effective professional development is sustained, collaborative, and directly connected to instructional practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone and Garet, 2015). The system is intentionally aligned with the school's staffing structure, leadership roles, and budget to ensure both effectiveness and sustainability.

Professional Development Model and Structure

VALA NC's professional development system is built on three integrated components: 1) foundational training, 2) ongoing job-embedded professional learning, and 3) individualized professional growth.

Prior to the start of the school year, all instructional staff will participate in a two-week Summer Professional Development Institute, which serves as the foundation for instructional readiness. This institute prepares teachers to implement VALA NC's instructional model, including active learning, team-based learning (TBL), project-based learning (PBL), differentiation, and effective virtual pedagogy. Teachers will also be trained in the use of the Learning Management System (LMS), instructional technology tools, and the RADAR (Real-time Analytics for Detection, Action, and Response) system to monitor student performance and engagement in real time and inform instructional decisions.

During the school year, professional learning will be ongoing and job-embedded, primarily through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), instructional coaching, mentoring, and collaborative planning structures. Teachers will meet regularly in PLCs to analyze student data, refine instructional strategies, and ensure alignment with curriculum and assessment expectations. Weekly instructional cycles—including assessment, feedback, and WIN ("What I Need") intervention blocks—provide continuous opportunities for teachers to apply professional learning in real time, reinforcing a culture of reflection and continuous improvement. This model aligns with established PLC practices shown to improve instructional coherence and student outcomes (DuFour et al., 2016).

Instructional leaders will provide ongoing coaching and feedback through virtual classroom observations, data analysis, and targeted support. Beginning teachers will participate in mentoring aligned with North Carolina's Beginning Teacher Support Program expectations.

Alignment with Staffing Structure

The professional development model is directly aligned with VALA NC's organizational and instructional leadership structure:

- The Executive Director/Head of School provides overall leadership, ensures alignment between professional development and the school's mission, and oversees licensure compliance in Year 1.
- The Academic Dean leads the design and implementation of professional development, oversees instructional coaching, facilitates PLCs, and ensures fidelity to the instructional model.
- Teachers actively participate in PLCs, coaching cycles, and ongoing professional learning as part of their professional responsibilities.



- As the school grows, additional instructional leaders (e.g., assistant principals, instructional coaches, or content leads) will expand the school's capacity to provide differentiated coaching and support.

This distributed leadership model ensures that professional development is embedded within existing roles, making it both effective and scalable.

Alignment with Budget and Resource Allocation

VALA NC's professional development plan is designed to be cost-efficient and aligned with the proposed budget:

- Professional development is delivered primarily through internal leadership capacity (Executive Director, Academic Dean, instructional leaders), minimizing reliance on external providers.
- Teacher contracts include participation in PD, PLCs, and coaching cycles as part of their professional responsibilities, ensuring no additional staffing costs are required.
- Dedicated PD time is embedded within the school calendar (e.g., two-week Summer Professional Development Institute, ongoing PLC time, and weekly data/planning cycles), reducing the need for additional expenditures.
- External professional development is used strategically for curriculum-specific training (e.g., OpenSciEd, Khanmigo, etc.), technology platforms, and compliance requirements, and is included as a modest, planned budget line item.
- Technology systems (LMS, RADAR, instructional platforms) support professional learning by enabling real-time data analysis, collaboration, and instructional improvement.

This approach ensures that high-quality professional development is delivered within existing staffing and financial resources, while remaining sustainable as enrollment grows.

Teacher Certification and Licensure Compliance

VALA NC will ensure that all instructional staff meet North Carolina licensure and certification requirements in accordance with state and federal law. The school will prioritize hiring **fully licensed North Carolina teachers** in all core content areas and will verify credentials prior to employment.

To maintain compliance, VALA NC will:

- Maintain accurate records of teacher licensure and credentials
- Monitor renewal timelines and requirements
- Provide support for licensure renewal and continuing education
- Offer structured mentoring and professional development for beginning and alternative-entry teachers

Beginning teachers will participate in a formal mentoring program aligned with state expectations. As the school grows, licensure monitoring will be supported by leadership roles such as the Academic Dean and HR/Operations personnel to ensure consistency and accountability.



Individualized Professional Growth

Consistent with the Adaptive Instruction pillar of the 5A Framework, VALA NC will provide **individualized professional learning opportunities** through Individualized Professional Development Plans (IPDPs). These plans will be informed by evaluation data, coaching feedback, and student outcomes.

Professional learning will be differentiated based on teacher needs:

- New or transitioning teachers receive targeted foundational support
- Experienced teachers engage in advanced instructional strategies and leadership roles
- Teacher leaders may serve as mentors, PLC facilitators, or instructional leads

This personalized approach ensures that professional development is relevant, targeted, and directly connected to improving instructional effectiveness and student outcomes (Desimone and Garet, 2015).

In summary, through a structured, job-embedded, and data-driven professional development system, VALA NC ensures that all educators are prepared and continuously supported to deliver high-quality virtual instruction. By aligning professional learning with staffing roles, leadership capacity, and budget resources—and by maintaining strict compliance with licensure requirements—the school establishes a sustainable and scalable model that supports both teacher effectiveness and student success.

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3.4. Staff Evaluations and Professional Development

Q60. Identify the positions responsible for maintaining teacher license requirements and professional development.



In Year 1, the Executive Director will oversee licensure compliance, including:

- Verification of credentials prior to hiring
- Monitoring licensure status and renewal requirements
- Maintaining accurate personnel records
- Supporting teachers in obtaining and maintaining appropriate licensure

As the school grows, these responsibilities may be distributed to designated leadership roles (e.g., Human Resources or Beginning Teacher Coordinator). VALA NC will maintain full compliance with all licensure requirements and reporting obligations.

Q61. Provide a detailed plan noting how the school will mentor, retain and evaluate staff in a format that matches the school's mission and educational program. The plan should also describe how the school will meet the teacher certification and licensure requirements for teachers as prescribed by state and federal law. Be sure this overview matches with the projected staff and funding of the proposed budget section.



VALA NC will implement a comprehensive, integrated talent development system designed to mentor, evaluate, and retain high-quality educators aligned with the school's mission and virtual instructional model. This system reflects VALA NC's 5A Learning Framework: Active, Adaptive, Accountable, Authentic, and Accessible learning, and incorporates research-based practices in effective teaching, coaching, and professional learning to ensure strong instructional outcomes in a virtual environment (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Kraft et al., 2018).

Alignment to Mission and Instructional Model

VALA NC recognizes that effective virtual instruction requires specialized expertise in digital pedagogy, student engagement, and data-informed instructional design. Teachers are expected to deliver high-quality synchronous and asynchronous instruction aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study while incorporating evidence-based strategies such as retrieval practice, spaced learning, and formative assessment to improve student retention and transfer of knowledge (Brown et al., 2014; Dunlosky et al., 2013).

All mentoring, evaluation, and professional learning structures are intentionally designed to support these instructional expectations and ensure consistent, high-quality teaching across the school.

Mentoring and Induction

VALA NC will implement a structured induction and mentoring program aligned with North Carolina Beginning Teacher Support Program requirements. All beginning teachers will be paired with trained mentors and will receive ongoing coaching, observation, and support.

Mentoring will include:

- Co-planning and lesson design for virtual instruction
- Virtual classroom observations and modeling of best practices
- Regular feedback cycles focused on engagement, differentiation, and instructional clarity
- Support in using digital tools and data systems

All teachers will participate in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and instructional team meetings to collaboratively analyze student data, share effective practices, and refine instruction. Job-embedded, collaborative professional learning has been shown to significantly improve teacher effectiveness and student outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Evaluation System

Teachers will be evaluated using a system aligned with the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards and the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES), enhanced to reflect VALA NC's virtual instructional model.

The evaluation system will incorporate multiple measures, including:

- Observations of synchronous and asynchronous instruction
- Student academic growth and performance data
- Instructional artifacts (lesson plans, recordings, student work)



- Teacher self-assessment and goal setting
- Student feedback (developmentally appropriate and used formatively)
- Professional responsibilities and collaboration

Evaluation will be embedded within ongoing coaching cycles, ensuring timely, actionable feedback. This integrated approach reflects VALA NC's commitment to Accountable Systems, where data is continuously used to monitor performance and guide instructional improvement (Kraft et al., 2018).

Retention and Professional Growth

VALA NC is committed to retaining high-quality educators through a supportive, collaborative, and growth-oriented professional culture. Key retention strategies include:

- Competitive compensation aligned with market conditions
- Manageable teaching loads and structured schedules to support work-life balance in a virtual setting
- Ongoing, job-embedded professional learning focused on virtual instruction and student engagement
- Opportunities for teacher leadership (e.g., mentor teacher, PLC facilitator, instructional lead)
- Recognition of teacher effectiveness and contributions

Teachers will develop individualized professional growth plans aligned with evaluation outcomes and will maintain digital portfolios to document growth and impact on student learning. Strong professional learning and leadership opportunities are associated with increased teacher retention and job satisfaction (Ingersoll et al., 2018).

Teachers will also be trained and supported in implementing VALA NC's WIN (What I Need) block structure, which provides dedicated time for targeted intervention, enrichment, and personalized support based on student performance data. Teacher effectiveness in using WIN blocks to differentiate instruction and respond to student needs will be incorporated into coaching, evaluation, and professional growth processes.

Licensure and Compliance

VALA NC will ensure that all instructional staff meet North Carolina licensure and certification requirements in accordance with state and federal law. The school will prioritize hiring fully licensed teachers and will support eligible candidates pursuing licensure through approved alternative pathways when necessary.

In Year 1, the Executive Director will oversee licensure compliance, including:

- Verification of credentials prior to hiring
- Monitoring licensure status and renewal requirements
- Maintaining accurate personnel records
- Supporting teachers in obtaining and maintaining appropriate licensure



As the school grows, these responsibilities may be distributed to designated leadership roles (e.g., Human Resources or Beginning Teacher Coordinator). VALA NC will maintain full compliance with all licensure requirements and reporting obligations.

System Coherence and Sustainability

VALA NC's talent development system is designed as a continuous improvement cycle in which mentoring, evaluation, and professional learning are fully integrated. Data collected through evaluation informs coaching and professional development, which in turn supports improved instructional practice and teacher retention.

This system aligns with the school's staffing model and budget by leveraging instructional leadership, structured mentoring, and job-embedded professional learning. Through this coherent and sustainable approach, VALA NC ensures high-quality instruction, regulatory compliance, and long-term organizational effectiveness.

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Ingersoll, R. M.; Merrill, L.; Stuckey, D.; Collins, G. *Seven Trends: The Transformation of the Teaching Force*, CPRE: Philadelphia, PA, 2018.

Kraft, M. A.; Blazar, D.; Hogan, D. The Effect of Teacher Coaching on Instruction and Achievement. *Rev. Educ. Res.* **2018**, 88, 547–588.

Q62. Describe the core components of the professional development plan and how these components will support the effective implementation of the educational program. Describe the extent to which professional development will be conducted internally or externally and will be individualized or uniform.



The professional development plan at VALA NC is designed as a comprehensive, job-embedded system that equips teachers with the specialized skills required for high-quality virtual instruction. Grounded in the school's instructional model and aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, professional learning is intentionally structured to support effective implementation of synchronous and asynchronous teaching, personalized learning, and data-driven instruction. This approach reflects VALA NC's 5A Framework (Active Learning, Adaptive Instruction, Accountable Systems, Authentic Experience, and Accessible Education) ensuring that both teaching and professional learning are responsive, data-informed, and student-centered (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Core Components of the Professional Development Plan

1. Intensive Pre-Service Training (Two-Week Institute)

All teachers will participate in an intensive two-week professional development institute prior to the start of the school year. This foundational training ensures that all instructional staff are fully prepared to implement VALA NC's virtual instructional model with fidelity. Teachers will receive explicit training on the design and implementation of WIN (What I Need) blocks, including how to use RADAR (Real-time Analytics for Detection, Action, and Response) system data to group students, plan targeted interventions, and provide enrichment opportunities aligned with individual learning needs.

The institute will include:

- Training in digital pedagogy and online instructional design
- Implementation of VALA NC's 5A Framework and instructional routines
- Application of research-based learning strategies such as retrieval practice, spaced practice, interleaving, and formative assessment to improve student learning and retention (Brown et al., 2014; Dunlosky et al., 2013)
- Training in the use of the RADAR system to monitor student engagement, track mastery of standards, and inform real-time instructional decisions
- Design and facilitation of project-based learning (PBL) experiences that connect learning to authentic, real-world applications
- Implementation of team-based learning (TBL) structures to promote collaboration, peer instruction, and accountability
- Use of the learning management system (LMS), adaptive platforms, and digital assessment tools
- Strategies for student engagement, differentiation, and culturally responsive teaching in a virtual environment
- Simulation lessons, peer teaching, and structured feedback cycles

Teacher readiness will be assessed during this institute, and follow-up support will be differentiated based on individual needs.

2. Foundational Training in Virtual Instruction (Ongoing)

Building on the initial institute, teachers will continue to develop proficiency in virtual instruction through structured onboarding and ongoing training. Professional learning will focus on:

- Designing high-quality synchronous and asynchronous lessons



- Facilitating interactive, student-centered learning experiences
- Integrating PBL and TBL strategies into daily instruction
- Providing timely, actionable feedback
- Using RADAR and other digital tools to monitor engagement and learning

VALA NC will prioritize hiring candidates with prior virtual or blended learning experience; however, all teachers will be supported in developing mastery of online instruction through differentiated training pathways.

3. Job-Embedded Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Teachers will participate in weekly PLCs and instructional team meetings, which serve as the primary vehicle for continuous professional learning.

PLCs will focus on:

- Analyzing student data using RADAR system and other assessment tools
- Planning instruction aligned with standards and assessments
- Refining project-based learning units and team-based learning structures
- Sharing best practices and instructional strategies
- Engaging in collaborative problem-solving

These structures promote collective responsibility and are strongly associated with improved teaching practice and student achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

4. Instructional Coaching, Mentorship, and Feedback

Professional development at VALA NC is closely integrated with coaching and evaluation systems. Teachers will receive ongoing, job-embedded support through:

- Regular virtual classroom observations
- Coaching cycles with instructional leaders
- Mentorship for beginning teachers (aligned with NC requirements)
- Targeted feedback focused on engagement, clarity, and instructional effectiveness

Coaching will include support in implementing PBL, facilitating TBL structures, and using RADAR system data to refine instruction. Sustained instructional coaching has been shown to significantly improve teacher practice and student outcomes (Kraft et al., 2018).

5. Data-Driven Instruction and Weekly Data Cycles

Teachers will engage in structured weekly data cycles to analyze student performance and adjust instruction accordingly. Professional development will also emphasize the effective use of WIN blocks as a structured mechanism for delivering differentiated instruction, intervention, and enrichment based on real-time student data. Professional development will emphasize:

- Use of formative and benchmark assessments
- Interpretation of real-time data from WIN blocks, RADAR, LMS, and adaptive platforms
- Identification of misconceptions and targeted interventions



- Personalization of learning pathways based on student needs

This ongoing cycle ensures that professional learning is directly connected to instructional practice and student outcomes, reinforcing VALA NC's Accountable Systems.

6. Reflective Practice and Professional Growth

Teachers will maintain digital portfolios (ePortfolios) to document instructional practices, professional learning, and evidence of student growth. These portfolios support:

- Reflection on instructional effectiveness
- Alignment with evaluation processes
- Development of Individualized Professional Development Plans (IPDPs)

Reflective practice is a key component of effective teaching and continuous improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Internal vs. External Professional Development

Professional development at VALA NC will be delivered through a strategic combination of internal and external resources.

Internal professional development will serve as the primary driver and will include:

- PLCs and collaborative planning
- Coaching cycles
- Leadership-led training sessions
- Data team meetings

These structures ensure strong alignment with VALA NC's instructional model and allow for rapid responsiveness to student needs.

External professional development will be used strategically to supplement internal efforts, including:

- Curriculum-specific training (e.g., OpenSciEd, Khanmigo, IXL, etc.)
- Digital learning and technology integration
- Specialized training in PBL, TBL, and online pedagogy
- Compliance-related training (e.g., EC, multilingual learners)

Individualized vs. Uniform Professional Development

VALA NC will implement a balanced approach that includes both uniform and individualized professional learning.

Uniform professional development will ensure all teachers are trained in:

- The 5A instructional framework
- Virtual instructional practices
- Use of RADAR, LMS, and digital tools



- Curriculum implementation and assessment systems

Individualized professional development will be guided by:

- Evaluation data
- Coaching feedback
- IPDPs
- Onboarding assessments

Teachers will receive targeted support based on experience level and identified needs. Beginning teachers will receive intensive mentoring, while experienced educators may take on leadership roles or engage in advanced learning opportunities.

This differentiated approach reflects VALA NC's commitment to Adaptive Instruction and models the same personalized learning approach expected for students.

System Alignment and Impact

Each component of the professional development plan is intentionally aligned with VALA NC's educational program and instructional expectations. By combining intensive onboarding, weekly job-embedded learning, coaching, and data-driven practices—including the use of RADAR (Real-time Analytics for Detection, Action, and Response) system, project-based learning, and team-based learning—VALA NC ensures that teachers are fully prepared to deliver rigorous, engaging, and student-centered virtual instruction.

This comprehensive and differentiated system supports consistent instructional quality, teacher effectiveness, and long-term retention, while remaining responsive to both teacher needs and student outcomes. Active and collaborative learning approaches such as PBL and TBL have been shown to significantly improve student achievement, engagement, and knowledge retention (Freeman et al., 2014).

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Kraft, M. A.; Blazar, D.; Hogan, D. The Effect of Teacher Coaching on Instruction and Achievement. *Rev. Educ. Res.* 2018, 88, 547–588.

Q63. Provide a schedule and explanation of professional development that will take place prior to the school opening. Explain what will be covered during this induction period and how teachers will be prepared to deliver any unique or particularly challenging aspects of the curriculum and instructional methods.



Prior to the opening of VALA NC, all instructional staff will participate in a two-week Summer Professional Development Institute designed to prepare teachers to deliver high-quality virtual instruction aligned with the school's instructional model and the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. This induction experience reflects the school's comprehensive professional development framework for remote instruction and ensures that all teachers are equipped with the specialized skills required for success in a virtual environment. The institute is grounded in VALA NC's 5A Framework and incorporates research-based instructional strategies such as retrieval practice, spaced learning, and active learning to support effective teaching and long-term student success (Brown et al., 2014; Dunlosky et al., 2013).

Structure and Schedule of Pre-Opening Professional Development

The two-week institute will include a combination of whole-group training, collaborative planning, asynchronous learning modules, compliance training, and applied practice. A representative schedule is outlined below:

Week 1: Foundations of Virtual Instruction, Systems, and Compliance

Day 1:

School mission, vision, and instructional model (including the 5A Framework); expectations for virtual teaching and learning; introduction to the North Carolina Educator Code of Ethics and professional expectations

Day 2:

Foundations of virtual pedagogy, including effective practices for online instruction and strategies to support both educators and students in navigating and succeeding in a virtual learning environment; introduction to active learning principles, including team-based learning (TBL) structures; digital citizenship and responsible technology use

Day 3:

Learning Management System (LMS) training, including course navigation, content delivery, communication tools, and student progress monitoring; introduction to the RADAR data system for tracking student engagement, monitoring mastery, and informing instructional decisions; student data privacy and confidentiality (FERPA)

Day 4:

Curriculum overview, alignment to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, pacing, and assessment expectations; introduction to project-based learning (PBL) design principles to support authentic, real-world learning experiences; overview of the teacher evaluation system, including standards, rubric, and observation cycle

Day 5:

Designing structured lessons, interactive modules, and assessments for synchronous and asynchronous instruction; application of retrieval practice, spaced practice, and formative assessment strategies; Beginning Teacher Support Program expectations, including mentor/mentee roles and required meeting structures



Week 2: Instructional Practice, Differentiation, and Application

Day 6:

Student engagement strategies in virtual environments, including discussion boards, breakout rooms, interactive tools, and implementation of TBL structures to promote collaboration and accountability

Day 7:

Differentiation and personalization, including modifying courses to meet diverse learner needs and using adaptive learning tools; using RADAR system data to personalize instruction and identify targeted supports; implementation of WIN (What I Need) blocks, including grouping strategies, targeted intervention planning, enrichment design, and use of RADAR system data to inform instructional decisions.

Day 8:

Assessment practices, grading, feedback strategies, and use of formative and benchmark data to guide instruction and intervention; integrating retrieval practice and feedback cycles to strengthen learning retention

Day 9:

Communication strategies, student support systems, and building strong relationships in a virtual setting; family engagement; mandatory reporting requirements related to student safety and well-being

Day 10:

Practice and demonstration teaching, including peer feedback, coaching, and final readiness checks; teachers will deliver model lessons incorporating PBL, TBL, and data-informed instructional strategies

Throughout the institute, teachers will actively engage in building course materials, facilitating mock lessons, and applying instructional strategies in simulated virtual environments. Active and collaborative learning approaches, such as project-based learning and team-based learning, have been shown to significantly improve student engagement, achievement, and retention (Freeman et al., 2014).

Teacher Orientation Course and Readiness Expectations

As part of the induction process, all teachers will complete a structured Teacher Orientation Course delivered through the school's learning management system. This course includes modules aligned to the competencies outlined above, including instructional design, technology integration, use of the RADAR system, assessment practices, and communication strategies.

To ensure readiness, teachers will be required to demonstrate proficiency in key systems and instructional practices by earning a minimum score of 80% or higher. This requirement ensures that all teachers are prepared to begin instruction and provides additional support for those transitioning from traditional classroom settings.



Baseline Data and Differentiated Support

As all staff will be new to VALA NC in Year 1, the induction process will also serve as a critical opportunity to establish baseline data on teacher readiness and proficiency in virtual instruction. Through onboarding assessments, performance tasks, and observation of practice teaching sessions, school leadership will identify individual strengths and areas for growth.

Consistent with VALA NC's commitment to Adaptive Instruction, this baseline data will be used to differentiate ongoing professional development throughout the school year. Teachers with strong backgrounds in virtual instruction may move more quickly into advanced application, leadership, or coaching opportunities, while others may receive additional targeted support, guided practice, and more frequent coaching cycles. This approach ensures that professional learning is responsive, efficient, and aligned to individual teacher needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Preparation for Unique Aspects of the Instructional Model

The pre-service institute is intentionally designed to prepare teachers for the unique and complex demands of VALA NC's instructional model, including:

- Delivering effective synchronous and asynchronous instruction
- Engaging students through active learning approaches, including PBL and TBL
- Utilizing the RADAR system and digital tools to monitor student progress and inform instruction
- Implementing WIN blocks to provide structured, data-informed intervention and enrichment aligned with student needs
- Personalizing learning through data analysis and adaptive technologies
- Applying research-based strategies such as retrieval practice and spaced learning to improve retention and transfer
- Providing timely, meaningful feedback to support student growth

Teachers will practice these skills through hands-on application, peer collaboration, and structured feedback cycles to ensure confidence and competence prior to the first day of school.

Connection to Ongoing Professional Learning

The Summer Professional Development Institute serves as the foundation for ongoing professional learning throughout the school year. The systems, tools, and instructional expectations introduced during this induction period—including RADAR, PBL, and TBL—will be reinforced through job-embedded professional learning communities (PLCs), coaching, mentoring, and continuous feedback cycles.

Sustained, job-embedded professional learning and coaching are strongly associated with improvements in instructional quality and student outcomes (Kraft et al., 2018). This ensures continuous instructional improvement and alignment with VALA NC's educational program.

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Q64. Describe the expected number of days/hours for professional development throughout the school year, and explain how the school's calendar, daily schedule, and staffing structure accommodate this plan.



VALA NC's professional development plan is intentionally aligned to its academic calendar and instructional model to ensure that professional learning is continuous, job-embedded, and sustainable.

According to the proposed school calendar, VALA NC includes 18 teacher workdays throughout the year, which serve as the primary structure for professional development, onboarding, data analysis, and instructional planning . This includes a two-week Summer Professional Development Institute prior to the start of school, as well as additional workdays distributed at key points during the year (e.g., beginning of year, quarter transitions, and mid-year). These dedicated days provide approximately 100–120 hours of structured professional development and planning time annually.

In addition to scheduled workdays, VALA NC embeds ongoing professional learning within the weekly schedule. The instructional model includes protected teacher planning and collaboration time every Friday afternoon (12:00–3:30 p.m.), following student assessment and conferencing cycles . During this time, teachers engage in data analysis, lesson design, intervention planning, and collaborative Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). This structure ensures that professional development is continuous and directly connected to student learning.

The school's daily and weekly schedule further supports job-embedded professional learning through intentional design. Instructional blocks incorporate small-group learning, independent work time, and asynchronous components, allowing flexibility for collaboration, coaching, and instructional refinement without disrupting student learning. Additionally, the built-in WIN ("What I Need") block and Friday assessment cycles generate real-time data that directly informs professional learning priorities.

VALA NC's staffing structure is designed to support this model. In Year 1, the Executive Director and instructional leadership team will facilitate professional development, coaching, and evaluation. As the school grows, teacher leaders and instructional coaches will expand capacity, enabling differentiated and role-specific professional learning aligned to teacher needs.

Overall, VALA NC's professional development model leverages calendar-embedded workdays, weekly protected collaboration time, and data-driven instructional cycles to ensure that teachers receive consistent, relevant, and high-impact professional learning that directly improves instructional quality and student outcomes.

3.5. Student Recruitment

Reaching the full capacity for enrollment will be critical to obtaining the necessary financial resources to keep your school viable and operating efficiently. In addition, it is required by law that charter schools provide equal access to all students. Read the charter school state statute regarding admissions 115C-218.45 carefully.

Q65. Marketing Plan: Provide a plan indicating how the school will market to potential students and parents in order to reasonably reflect the racial/ethnic and demographic composition of the district in



which the charter school will be located or of the special population the school seeks to serve.



VALA NC will implement a comprehensive, multi-channel marketing plan designed to ensure broad, equitable access to enrollment opportunities and to reasonably reflect the demographic composition of North Carolina. As a statewide virtual school, VALA NC's outreach strategy is intentionally designed to reach diverse geographic regions, including urban, suburban, and rural communities, as well as historically underserved populations.

During the charter application submission year, VALA NC has already begun grassroots outreach efforts, including distributing informational flyers across multiple regions of North Carolina (Triangle, Charlotte, Fayetteville, and surrounding communities) and leveraging digital outreach through targeted Facebook groups such as homeschooling networks and parent communities. These early efforts have generated initial family interest and inquiries, demonstrating demand across varied regions.

Building on this foundation, the school's marketing plan will include:

Digital Outreach and Targeted Advertising

VALA NC will utilize geographically and demographically targeted digital campaigns (e.g., Facebook, Google Ads, and other platforms) to reach families across North Carolina. Campaigns will be designed using data analytics to ensure representation across racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographic groups. Messaging will highlight the school's flexible, personalized, and accessible learning model, including its focus on active learning, data-informed instruction (RADAR system), and individualized support through WIN (What I Need) blocks.

Digital campaigns will be continuously monitored and adjusted based on engagement metrics (click-through rates, conversions, geographic reach) to ensure effectiveness and equitable outreach.

Community-Based and Regional Outreach

Board members and founding team members will continue to serve as regional ambassadors, conducting outreach in their local communities. This decentralized approach ensures representation across multiple regions of the state.

VALA NC will expand outreach efforts to include:

- Community centers, libraries, and faith-based organizations
- Local events and family engagement opportunities
- Targeted outreach in rural and underserved communities

This approach ensures that families without strong digital access are also reached.

Virtual Information Sessions and Family Engagement

The school will host ongoing virtual information sessions, webinars, and Q&A sessions to provide accessible opportunities for families statewide to learn about the program, ask questions, and engage with school leadership.

To increase participation, sessions will be offered:



- At varied times (daytime, evenings, weekends)
- In multiple languages when needed
- With recordings available for flexible access

Follow-up communication (email, text, phone) will support families through the enrollment process, increasing conversion from interest to application.

Partnership-Driven Outreach

VALA NC will collaborate with community organizations, homeschool networks, educational advocacy groups, and organizations serving multilingual learners and students with disabilities to expand outreach to diverse student populations.

Partnerships may include:

- Nonprofit organizations and community-based groups
- After-school and youth development programs
- Organizations serving economically disadvantaged families

These partnerships will help ensure that outreach extends beyond traditional networks and reaches historically underrepresented populations.

Multilingual and Accessible Materials

All marketing materials will be designed to be accessible and inclusive, including translation into multiple languages and formats aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. Materials will be written in clear, family-friendly language and will include visual and multimedia formats to ensure accessibility for all families.

Data-Driven Recruitment and Enrollment Monitoring

VALA NC will monitor applicant and enrollment data throughout the recruitment process to assess demographic representation and identify any gaps. Recruitment strategies will be adjusted in real time to ensure outreach efforts are reaching diverse populations and aligning with statewide demographics.

This continuous improvement approach ensures that marketing efforts are both equitable and effective.

Enrollment Support and Conversion Strategies

VALA NC will provide structured support to families throughout the enrollment process, including:

- Step-by-step application guidance
- Technical assistance for online enrollment
- Direct communication with school staff

This support is particularly important for families who may be unfamiliar with virtual schools or school choice processes.



Mission-Aligned Messaging

Marketing will emphasize VALA NC's commitment to active, adaptive, and accessible learning, ensuring families understand the school's focus on personalized instruction, real-world learning (including project-based learning), and equitable access. Messaging will clearly communicate how the school supports diverse learners through data-informed instruction, targeted support systems, and engaging learning experiences.

Compliance and Equity Assurance

VALA NC will ensure that all recruitment and enrollment practices comply with state and federal requirements, including non-discrimination and open enrollment policies. Student admission will be conducted through a fair and transparent lottery process, as required by North Carolina law, if applications exceed available seats.

Continuous Improvement

VALA NC will regularly evaluate the effectiveness of its marketing strategies using data on outreach reach, application rates, and enrollment demographics. Strategies will be refined annually to improve access, representation, and engagement across all communities.

In summary, through this comprehensive, data-driven, and equity-focused marketing plan, VALA NC will ensure broad and inclusive outreach across North Carolina. By combining digital strategies, community partnerships, and personalized family engagement, the school will attract a diverse student population that reflects the demographics of the state while remaining fully aligned with its mission of providing accessible, high-quality virtual education.

Q66. Describe how parents and other members of the community will be informed about the school.



VALA NC will implement a comprehensive and transparent communication strategy to ensure that parents and community members across North Carolina are well-informed about the school and its educational program.

During the charter application phase, the school has already begun actively informing families through a combination of grassroots and digital outreach efforts. These efforts include distributing informational flyers across multiple regions of the state (including the Triangle, Charlotte, Fayetteville, and surrounding communities), engaging with established parent and homeschool networks through social media platforms, and hosting virtual information sessions via Google Meet. These initial activities have generated measurable interest and established an early presence within diverse communities.

In addition, VALA NC has developed a dedicated school website that serves as a central hub for information about the school's mission, instructional model, and overall program design. The website currently allows prospective families to learn about the school and express interest.

Upon approval, VALA NC will expand and formalize its communication strategy to ensure consistent, accessible, and statewide engagement. The website will be enhanced to include a streamlined online enrollment application, lottery procedures, enrollment timelines, and detailed guidance for families navigating the enrollment process. Recorded information sessions and onboarding resources will also be made available to ensure access for families who are unable to attend live events.

The school will continue to host regular virtual information sessions and open houses, providing families with opportunities to engage directly with school leadership, ask questions, and better understand the expectations of a virtual learning environment. Communication will also be supported through social media platforms, email updates, and interest-based mailing lists to ensure ongoing engagement with prospective families.

Importantly, VALA NC is committed to maintaining two-way communication with families and the broader community. Opportunities for feedback, questions, and direct interaction will be embedded throughout the recruitment and enrollment process, ensuring that families feel informed, supported, and connected from initial inquiry through enrollment.

Through this multi-channel and proactive approach, VALA NC will ensure that all families, regardless of location, have equitable access to clear, accurate, and timely information about the school.

Q67. Describe your plan to recruit students during the planning year, including the strategies, activities, events, and responsible parties.



VALA NC will implement a strategic and data-driven student recruitment plan during the planning year, grounded in clear enrollment goals, consistent outreach activities, and ongoing monitoring of progress toward full enrollment.

Establishing Enrollment Goals and Tracking Systems

VALA NC's recruitment goal is to achieve at least 100% of enrollment capacity with an additional 25 to 50% waitlist across grade levels. To support this goal, the school will establish internal benchmarks for applications and interest that exceed available seats. The school has already begun generating early interest through grassroots outreach efforts, including flyer distribution across multiple regions and engagement through online parent and homeschool communities, resulting in initial family inquiries.

Progress toward enrollment goals will be monitored through a structured tracking system, with regular review of application numbers, event participation, and outreach effectiveness. This process will allow the school to adjust strategies in real time and ensure alignment with enrollment targets.

Multi-Channel Marketing and Outreach Execution

VALA NC will execute a comprehensive marketing and recruitment strategy that builds on current outreach efforts and expands statewide. Key strategies include:

- Maintaining an up-to-date, user-friendly website with clear pathways for families to learn about the school and, upon approval, apply for enrollment
- Leveraging social media platforms, including targeted Facebook outreach already in progress, to build awareness and engage prospective families
- Utilizing targeted digital advertising campaigns across North Carolina
- Distributing flyers and promotional materials through community networks in regions such as the Triangle, Charlotte, Fayetteville, and surrounding areas
- Engaging homeschool networks, parent groups, and community-based organizations

All communication channels will reflect a consistent message aligned to the school's mission and its focus on active, adaptive, and accessible learning experiences.

Community Engagement and Event-Based Recruitment

VALA NC will prioritize direct engagement with families through a consistent cadence of events designed to build trust and understanding of the virtual model. These efforts have already begun with scheduled virtual interest meetings and will continue throughout the planning year. Key activities include:

- Hosting regular virtual information sessions and open houses
- Facilitating interactive sessions where families can ask questions and learn expectations for virtual learning
- Participating in and creating community-based engagement opportunities, both virtually and in-person when appropriate

These events will serve as both informational and relationship-building opportunities, helping families make informed enrollment decisions.



Leveraging Networks and Relationship-Based Recruitment

Recognizing that personal connections are one of the most effective recruitment strategies, VALA NC will:

- Engage board members and founding team members as regional ambassadors across North Carolina
- Continue leveraging existing community connections in multiple regions to expand outreach
- Encourage interested families to share information within their own networks

This approach ensures that awareness grows through trusted relationships and diverse community channels.

Ongoing Engagement and Conversion to Enrollment

Following initial interest, VALA NC will implement structured follow-up systems to support families through the enrollment process. These strategies include:

- Regular communication with prospective families through email, website updates, and virtual sessions
- Clear guidance on enrollment timelines, application steps, and lottery procedures
- Ongoing engagement opportunities leading up to enrollment deadlines
- Collection and analysis of data on how families learn about the school to refine recruitment strategies

As part of this process, VALA NC will host a public lottery event in accordance with state requirements. Regardless of application volume, the lottery will be designed as a welcoming and community-building experience for prospective families.

Responsible Parties

- The Executive Director and founding leadership team will oversee recruitment strategy and execution
- Board members will support outreach efforts as regional ambassadors

Through this structured and intentional approach, VALA NC will build a strong pipeline of prospective students, ensure equitable access to enrollment opportunities, and successfully meet its enrollment goals during the planning year.

Q68. Describe how students will be given an equal opportunity to attend the school. Specifically, describe any plans for outreach to: families in poverty, academically low-achieving students, students with disabilities, English learners, and other students at-risk of academic failure. If your school has a specific area of focus, describe the plan to market that focus.



VALA NC is committed to ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to attend the school through an open, transparent, and non-selective enrollment process. Admission will be open to all eligible students in North Carolina, and if applications exceed available seats, enrollment will be determined through a public lottery, including a weighted lottery component for economically disadvantaged students, in accordance with state law. No student will be denied admission based on academic ability, disability status, language proficiency, or socioeconomic background.

To support equitable access, VALA NC will implement a comprehensive outreach strategy designed to intentionally reach diverse and historically underserved student populations across the state. As a virtual school, VALA NC is uniquely positioned to remove geographic barriers and expand access to high-quality educational options for students in urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Outreach efforts will include targeted strategies to ensure that specific student populations are aware of and able to access the school:

Families in poverty:

VALA NC will partner with community organizations, social service agencies, and local support networks to share information about the school. Outreach will include clear communication about available technology support, including access to devices and internet connectivity, to reduce barriers to participation.

Academically low-achieving and at-risk students:

Recruitment messaging will emphasize VALA NC's personalized and flexible learning environment, including adaptive instruction, targeted interventions, and structured support such as WIN (What I Need) blocks designed to meet students where they are academically.

Students with disabilities:

VALA NC will conduct outreach through EC advocacy groups and family networks, highlighting the school's commitment to inclusive practices, Universal Design for Learning, and individualized supports. The school will also explore partnerships with experienced virtual service providers to ensure access to high-quality specialized services.

English learners:

The school will provide multilingual marketing materials and utilize translation tools to ensure accessibility for families whose primary language is not English. Outreach will include engagement with community organizations that serve multilingual populations.

Rural and geographically isolated students:

Targeted digital outreach and community-based partnerships will ensure that families in rural areas are aware of VALA NC as an accessible, high-quality virtual option.



All marketing and communication materials will be designed with accessibility in mind, including clear language, multiple formats, and inclusive messaging that reflects the diverse student population the school seeks to serve.

In addition, VALA NC will actively communicate its core educational model, grounded in Active, Adaptive, Accountable, Authentic, and Accessible learning, to ensure families understand both the opportunities and expectations of a virtual learning environment. This focus will be consistently reflected in outreach materials, information sessions, and enrollment communications.

In addition to targeted outreach efforts, VALA NC's use of a weighted lottery for economically disadvantaged students further ensures that access to enrollment aligns with the school's mission and commitment to equity, reinforcing that historically underserved students are not only reached but also have increased opportunity to enroll.

Through these intentional strategies, VALA NC will ensure that all students, regardless of background or circumstance, have equitable access to enrollment and the opportunity to succeed in a high-quality virtual learning environment.

Q69. What established community organizations would you target for marketing and recruitment?



VALA NC will engage with a broad network of established community organizations across North Carolina to support student recruitment and ensure equitable access to enrollment opportunities. These efforts will align with the school's commitment to reaching diverse student populations and building awareness across urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Building on current outreach already underway through homeschool networks, parent groups, and regional community engagement, VALA NC will continue to prioritize partnerships with organizations that have strong, trusted connections to families. Key outreach efforts will include collaboration with:

- Statewide and local homeschool associations, as well as regional parent networks
- Public libraries and community hubs that serve as accessible information centers for families
- Local Chambers of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, and other civic organizations
- Community-based organizations and family support networks serving a wide range of student populations

In addition, VALA NC will explore membership and engagement opportunities with statewide organizations such as the North Carolina Coalition for Charter Schools and the North Carolina Association for Public Charter Schools. These partnerships will support broader awareness, provide access to established communication channels, and strengthen the school's connection to the statewide charter community.

VALA NC will also continue leveraging informal networks, including online parent communities and the regional connections of board members and founding team members, to expand outreach through trusted relationships.

Through these aligned and intentional partnerships, VALA NC will ensure that families across North Carolina have access to clear, accessible information about the school and the opportunity to enroll.

3.6. Parent and Community Involvement

Q70. Describe how you will communicate with and engage parents and community members from the time that the school is approved through opening.



Upon approval, VALA NC will implement a structured, phased, and proactive communication and engagement plan to ensure that parents and community members are informed, connected, and prepared for a successful school launch. Communication will begin immediately following approval and will build on existing outreach efforts already underway, including the school's website, interest lists, and virtual information sessions.

Phased Communication and Engagement Approach

Phase 1: Post-Approval (Awareness and Information Sharing)

Families who have expressed interest will receive regular updates regarding approval status, enrollment timelines, and next steps. Outreach will focus on building awareness and maintaining engagement with prospective families across North Carolina.

Phase 2: Enrollment and Onboarding (Preparation and Orientation)

As enrollment opens, communication will become more targeted and personalized. Families will receive step-by-step guidance on enrollment, required documentation, and onboarding expectations. Virtual orientation sessions will introduce families to the school's instructional model, including expectations for virtual learning and family support roles.

Phase 3: Pre-Opening (Readiness and Engagement)

Prior to the start of school, families will participate in onboarding sessions focused on technology setup, learning platforms, and student expectations. Parents will also be introduced to key components of VALA NC's instructional model, including personalized learning structures, use of data systems (e.g., RADAR), and targeted support through WIN (What I Need) blocks.

Multi-Channel Communication Strategy

VALA NC will utilize a multi-channel communication approach to ensure accessibility and consistency, including:

- Email updates and newsletters for prospective and enrolled families
- Ongoing website updates with key dates, enrollment information, and resources
- Social media platforms to share announcements and engagement opportunities
- Virtual information sessions and open houses to provide direct access to school leadership
- Text messaging and phone outreach, as appropriate, to ensure timely communication

Two-Way Engagement and Family Partnership

In addition to providing information, VALA NC will prioritize meaningful two-way engagement. Families will be invited to participate in virtual meetings, feedback sessions, and onboarding events designed to build understanding of the school's model and expectations for virtual learning.

Recognizing the critical role of families in a virtual environment, VALA NC will provide guidance and resources to help parents support student success, including establishing routines, monitoring progress, and engaging with teachers and school systems.



Equity, Access, and Inclusivity

VALA NC is committed to ensuring that all families can access and engage with the school. Communication materials will be provided in multiple languages and formats, and the school will offer technical support to assist families with technology access and platform navigation. Outreach efforts will intentionally include underserved and geographically diverse communities to ensure equitable access to enrollment opportunities.

Continuous Feedback and Improvement

VALA NC will collect feedback from families through surveys, virtual forums, and ongoing communication to assess the effectiveness of its engagement strategies. This feedback will be used to continuously refine communication practices and ensure responsiveness to family needs.

Community Engagement

In addition to family engagement, VALA NC will maintain connections with community organizations and partners to support outreach and build a strong, inclusive school community across the state.

In summary, through this structured, inclusive, and responsive communication plan, VALA NC will ensure that parents and community members are not only informed but actively engaged as partners in the school community. This approach supports a smooth transition from approval to opening and establishes a strong foundation for ongoing collaboration and student success.

Q71. **Describe how you will engage parents in the life of the public charter school.**



VALA NC views parents and caregivers as essential partners in the educational process and will intentionally engage families as active participants in the life of the school.

Given the nature of a virtual learning environment, family engagement is a critical component of student success. At VALA NC, parents or designated caregivers will serve as key learning partners, supporting students in maintaining consistent engagement, monitoring progress, and reinforcing learning at home. The level of involvement will be developmentally appropriate and will gradually shift as students gain independence.

At the elementary level, parent involvement will be significant and highly structured, with families supporting daily learning routines, assisting with pacing and organization, and working closely with teachers to ensure students remain engaged and on track. As students transition into middle school, they will take on increasing responsibility for their learning, while parents continue to play an important role in monitoring progress, supporting accountability, and maintaining communication with teachers.

By high school, students will work more directly with their teachers through live instructional sessions, small group support, and individualized academic guidance. While students are expected to demonstrate greater independence and ownership of their learning, parents will continue to play an important support role by monitoring progress, ensuring consistent engagement, and maintaining communication with school staff. This balanced approach allows students to develop independence while still benefiting from consistent family support.

To support this evolving role, VALA NC will provide clear expectations, guidance, and tools to help families effectively engage in their child's learning. Ongoing engagement strategies will include:

- Regular communication from teachers and school leadership regarding student progress, expectations, and school updates
- Opportunities for parents to participate in virtual events, workshops, and school-wide activities
- Feedback mechanisms such as surveys, forums, and virtual meetings to ensure parent voice is incorporated into school improvement efforts
- Opportunities for parents to serve in volunteer roles, advisory groups, or family engagement committees

In addition, VALA NC will equip families with resources and training to support their role as learning partners, including guidance on time management, use of digital platforms, and strategies for supporting student engagement in a virtual setting.

Through these structures, VALA NC will foster a collaborative school culture in which families are engaged, informed, and empowered to contribute meaningfully to student success while supporting the development of student independence over time.

Q72.If already identified, describe any programs you will offer to parents and/or the community and how they may benefit students and support the school mission and vision.



VALA NC will implement a comprehensive family engagement model designed to equip parents and caregivers with the knowledge, tools, and ongoing support needed to successfully navigate a virtual learning environment and actively support their child's academic growth.

A central component of this model will be Parent University, a structured program that provides both initial onboarding and ongoing learning opportunities for families. Parent University will begin prior to the start of the school year and continue throughout the year to ensure that families feel confident and prepared in their role as learning partners.

Program Components

New Family Onboarding and Orientation

Training on the school's virtual learning model, daily expectations, technology platforms, and the role of families in supporting student success. Families will also be introduced to key elements of VALA NC's instructional model, including personalized learning structures, the use of data systems (e.g., RADAR), and targeted academic support through WIN (What I Need) blocks.

Ongoing Workshops and Learning Sessions

Topics such as student engagement, time management, organization, and strategies for supporting learning at home. Additional sessions will focus on helping families understand and support project-based learning (PBL) and team-based learning (TBL), enabling them to better support their child's collaboration, critical thinking, and real-world application of knowledge.

Academic Support and Data Literacy

Guidance for families on understanding student progress, interpreting performance data, and accessing academic supports. Families will be trained to use parent-facing components of the school's data systems (e.g., RADAR dashboards) to monitor student performance, identify areas of need, and support learning at home.

Technology and Platform Training

Support for navigating digital tools, learning systems, and communication platforms. This includes troubleshooting support and guidance to ensure all families can effectively access and use the school's virtual learning environment.

Family Resource Hub (On-Demand Support)

To provide ongoing, on-demand support, VALA NC will develop a centralized Family Resource Hub accessible through the school's website. This hub will include recorded training sessions, step-by-step guides, communication tools, and resources to support families at all stages of their child's learning journey.



Parent Community and Leadership Opportunities

VALA NC will foster a strong sense of connection among families through a virtual parent community network, where families can engage with one another, share experiences, and access peer support. This may include facilitated virtual meetups, discussion forums, and opportunities for families to connect across grade levels and regions of the state.

In addition, parents will have opportunities to take on leadership roles through advisory groups, feedback panels, or participation in school improvement discussions, strengthening family voice and partnership in school development.

Equity, Access, and Multilingual Support

All programs and resources will be designed to ensure accessibility for families across North Carolina, including multilingual materials, flexible scheduling, and recorded options for those unable to attend live sessions. VALA NC will also provide targeted support for families with limited technology access or experience to ensure equitable participation.

Community Engagement and Partnerships

In addition to parent-focused programming, VALA NC will explore partnerships with community organizations to provide additional resources, enrichment opportunities, and support services for students and families. These partnerships will help extend learning beyond the virtual classroom and strengthen connections between the school and local communities.

Alignment to Mission and Impact

These programs directly support the school's mission by ensuring that families are equipped to support active, adaptive, and accessible learning experiences. By providing structured training, ongoing resources, and opportunities for connection, VALA NC reinforces its commitment to shared accountability, strong family partnerships, and improved student outcomes.

Through this comprehensive approach, families become active partners in the learning process, supporting student engagement, reinforcing instructional strategies, and contributing to a cohesive and supportive virtual learning community.

3.7. Admissions Policy

Q73. Weighted Lottery Does your school plan to use a weighted lottery? The State Board of Education may approve an applicant's request to utilize a special weighted, or otherwise limited, lottery in certain circumstances. If the charter applicant wishes to deviate in any way from the open lottery normally utilized by charter schools, the following requirements must be met:

1. In no event may a lottery process illegally discriminate against a student on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, or disability.



2. A lottery process may not be based upon geographic boundaries, such as zip code or current public school attendance zones, unless the charter school is operated by a municipality OR the charter school was converted from a traditional public school. Municipal charter schools may give enrollment priority to domiciliaries of the municipality in which the school is located (G.S. 115C-218.45(f)(7)), and charter schools that were converted from traditional public schools shall give admission preference to students who reside within the former attendance area of the school (G.S. 115C- 218.45(c)).
3. A lottery process that deviates from the standard lottery must be based upon the school's unique mission and must be based upon educationally, psychometrically, and legally sound practices, protocol, and research.

☒ Yes

☐ No

Q74. Please provide the following: 1) A thorough explanation of how the specific mission of the school, as set forth in the application, requires the utilization of the weighted or limited lottery

VALA NC's mission is to provide an accessible, high-quality virtual education that empowers all students to succeed through active, adaptive, and inclusive learning experiences.

A core component of this mission is the commitment to Accessible Education, one of the five pillars of the school's 5A Framework, which emphasizes removing barriers to learning and ensuring equitable access for all students, particularly those historically underserved in traditional and virtual settings.

Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds often face barriers to accessing high-quality educational options, including limited access to flexible learning environments, fewer enrichment opportunities, and fewer options that provide personalized academic support. At the same time, these students can benefit significantly from the flexibility, individualized pacing, and targeted support systems embedded within VALA NC's virtual model.

To ensure that the school fulfills its mission of expanding access and opportunity, VALA NC will implement a weighted lottery that prioritizes economically disadvantaged students (e.g., students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch). This approach helps ensure that the school does not unintentionally create access barriers and instead actively supports equitable enrollment aligned with its mission.

Q75.2) A thorough description of the processes and procedures the applicant intends to use to effectuate the lottery.



VALA NC will implement a fair, transparent, and legally compliant weighted lottery process if the number of applications exceeds available seats.

Open Enrollment Process:

The school will establish and publicly communicate an annual open enrollment period in accordance with North Carolina General Statutes governing charter school admissions. Applications will be available online and in paper format, with language assistance and accessibility accommodations provided to ensure equitable access for all families.

Identification of Weighted Category:

Families will have the option to complete a supplemental form, separate from the admissions application, to indicate whether a student qualifies as economically disadvantaged (e.g., eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch). This information will be used solely for the purpose of administering the weighted lottery and will be handled in compliance with applicable state and federal privacy laws.

Weighted Lottery Structure:

VALA NC will apply additional weight to applicants who meet the economically disadvantaged criteria. This weighting will increase the probability of selection for these students relative to non-weighted applicants (e.g., through an approximate doubling of selection probability), while maintaining a random and equitable lottery process.

The final weighting methodology will be approved by the Governing Board and implemented through a computerized randomization system to ensure compliance, transparency, and auditability. The school will not reserve a fixed percentage of seats but will use weighting to support equitable access aligned with its mission.

Lottery Execution:

The lottery will be conducted in accordance with North Carolina law, including open meetings requirements (G.S. 143-318.10), and will be open to the public. The lottery will be conducted using a computerized randomization system, and the process will be clearly communicated in advance and executed in a consistent and transparent manner.

Waitlist Procedures:

Students not selected in the lottery will be placed on a waitlist in the order generated by the lottery. As seats become available, students will be admitted in order from the waitlist.

Communication:

Families will be notified promptly of lottery results and provided a defined timeframe to accept or decline enrollment.



Q76.3) The underlying research, pedagogical, educational, psychometric, and legal, that supports the request and the procedures the applicant is requesting.



VALA NC's request to implement a weighted lottery is grounded in a comprehensive body of legal authority, educational research, pedagogical best practices, and principles of fair and valid student access. The proposed approach ensures alignment between the school's mission, instructional model, and enrollment practices, while maintaining full compliance with North Carolina law.

In accordance with North Carolina General Statutes § 115C-218.45, charter schools must implement an open enrollment process and conduct a lottery when applications exceed available seats. North Carolina law permits the use of weighted lotteries to increase access for economically disadvantaged students, provided that the process remains random, transparent, and non-discriminatory. VALA NC's lottery procedures are designed to comply with all applicable statutes, including open meetings requirements (G.S. 143-318.10), and federal non-discrimination laws such as Title VI, Title IX, Section 504, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The school will apply weighting only to permitted categories, will not implement quotas or set-asides, and will ensure that all students continue to participate in a fair and unified lottery process.

The educational and research-based rationale for this approach is rooted in the well-documented need to intentionally expand access to high-quality educational opportunities for economically disadvantaged students. Research on school choice and enrollment patterns demonstrates that, without targeted access strategies, historically underserved populations are often underrepresented due to disparities in awareness, access, and support (Ladd, 2002; Hastings et al., 2005). Weighted lotteries are widely recognized as an effective mechanism to promote equitable access while preserving fairness and transparency in admissions.

VALA NC's instructional model further reinforces this approach. The school is designed around principles of personalized, student-centered learning, including adaptive instruction, flexible pacing, and project-based learning, which are particularly beneficial for students who may not thrive in traditional settings. In addition, VALA NC incorporates the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, which emphasizes multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression to remove barriers and improve outcomes for diverse learners. Research supports that intentionally designed, accessible learning environments improve student engagement and achievement, particularly for students facing economic and systemic barriers (Basham et al., 2018; CAST, 2024).

Research also highlights that accessibility in virtual learning must extend beyond technology access to include intentional design and support systems that address disparities in opportunity and readiness (McAlvage & Rice, 2018).

By aligning its enrollment practices with these research-based instructional strategies, VALA NC ensures that students who are most likely to benefit from flexible, personalized, and accessible learning environments are able to access them.

From a psychometric and equity standpoint, the use of a weighted lottery supports principles of fairness, validity, and unbiased selection. While a traditional lottery is random, it does not account for unequal access to the application process. Weighted lotteries preserve randomization while introducing a controlled adjustment to selection probability, ensuring that no individual student is guaranteed admission but that systemic disparities are meaningfully addressed (National Academies of Sciences,



Engineering, and Medicine, 2019). VALA NC's use of a computerized randomization system with defined weighting parameters ensures that the process is transparent, replicable, and auditable, maintaining the integrity of the lottery while improving equitable representation.

The procedures proposed by VALA NC, including the use of a supplemental eligibility form, probability-based weighting (e.g., increased likelihood of selection), public lottery execution, and structured waitlist management, are intentionally designed to reflect these legal, educational, pedagogical, and psychometric principles. By combining randomized selection with targeted weighting and transparent processes, VALA NC's approach creates a balanced system that promotes equitable access while ensuring compliance, fairness, and public trust.

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Q77. Provide the school's proposed policies and the procedures for admitting students to the proposed charter school, including:

1. Tentative dates for the open enrollment application period, enrollment deadlines and procedures.
*Please be advised schools cannot accept applications until after final approval from the SBE.
2. Clear policies and procedures detailing the open enrollment lottery plan, including policies regarding statutory permitted student enrollment preferences.
3. Clear policies and procedures for student waiting lists, withdrawals, re-enrollment, and transfers.
4. Explanation of the purpose of any pre-admission activities (if any) for students or parents.
5. Clear policies and procedures for student withdrawals and transfers.



VALA NC will implement admissions policies and procedures that are equitable, transparent, and fully aligned with all applicable federal and state laws, including North Carolina General Statutes § 115C-218.45 governing charter school enrollment. The school will ensure that all aspects of the admissions process are clearly communicated, consistently applied, and accessible to all families across the state.

Open Enrollment Period and Application Process

Following final approval by the State Board of Education, VALA NC will publicly announce its open enrollment period. The tentative open enrollment window will begin in January and remain open through March 31 at 5:00 PM, with the application window open for no fewer than 30 consecutive days.

Applications will be available online through the school's website, with paper copies and language assistance provided upon request to ensure equitable access. As a remote academy, VALA NC will require a completed application and parental consent prior to enrollment. The school will also provide families with information regarding the characteristics of successful virtual learners and expectations for participation.

Lottery Procedures and Enrollment Preferences

If the number of applications exceeds available seats, VALA NC will conduct a lottery in accordance with North Carolina law. The lottery will be conducted in a fair and transparent manner, consistent with open meetings requirements (G.S. 143-318.10), and will be open to the public or livestreamed.

VALA NC will implement a weighted lottery to increase access for economically disadvantaged students, consistent with state law. Applicants who qualify as economically disadvantaged will receive additional weight in the lottery, increasing their probability of selection while maintaining a random and equitable process. The school will not establish quotas or reserve seats.

As part of the application process, families will have the option to indicate eligibility for the weighted lottery. This information will be used solely for lottery administration, and documentation will only be requested after a student has been offered and accepted a seat.

VALA NC will also apply all statutorily permitted enrollment preferences in accordance with North Carolina law, including:

- Sibling preference for currently enrolled students
- Children of full-time staff and governing board members (not to exceed 15% of total enrollment)

Waitlist Procedures

Following the lottery, applicants who are not offered admission will be placed on a waitlist in the order generated by the lottery process. As seats become available, students will be offered admission in sequence from the waitlist.

Applications received after the close of the open enrollment period will be added to the bottom of the existing waitlist. The school will maintain accurate records of waitlist order and will communicate clearly with families regarding their status.



Families offered admission will be required to respond within a specified timeframe to accept or decline the seat. Failure to respond within the designated timeframe may result in the offer being extended to the next student on the waitlist.

Pre-Admission Activities

Prior to and during the open enrollment period, VALA NC will conduct pre-admission activities to ensure families are fully informed about the school's mission, instructional model, and expectations. These activities may include:

- Virtual information sessions and open houses
- Public webinars and Q&A sessions
- Online resources and recorded informational content

The purpose of these activities is to provide families with a clear understanding of the virtual learning environment, support informed enrollment decisions, and ensure that students and families are prepared for success in a remote learning setting. Participation in these activities will not be required for admission and will not influence lottery outcomes.

Upon acceptance, families must complete the enrollment process within a specified timeframe to secure their child's seat. Required documentation will include:

- Proof of North Carolina residency
- Proof of age (e.g., birth certificate)
- Immunization and health records, as required by state law
- Prior academic records, when applicable

All student data will be maintained in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other applicable privacy requirements.

Withdrawals, Re-Enrollment, and Transfers

Families must notify the school if a student intends to withdraw. VALA NC will verify withdrawals and ensure timely transfer of student records in accordance with state requirements. Any vacated seats will be filled using the established waitlist process.

Students who withdraw and later seek to return will be required to reapply through the standard admissions process unless otherwise permitted by law. Re-enrollment will be subject to space availability.

VALA NC will ensure that student records are transferred promptly and accurately to receiving schools, and that incoming transfer students are enrolled in accordance with established procedures and documentation requirements.



Equity and Access for All Students

VALA NC is a tuition-free, statewide public charter school open to all eligible North Carolina residents and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, religion, disability, or socioeconomic status.

The school will ensure equitable access to enrollment and services for all students, including:

- Students with disabilities, served in accordance with IDEA and Section 504
- English Learners, provided with appropriate language support services
- Students experiencing homelessness, enrolled in accordance with McKinney-Vento requirements

3.8. Certify

Q78. This subsection is entirely original and has not been copied, pasted, or otherwise reproduced from any other application.

☒ Yes

☐ No

Q79. Explanation (optional):



4. Acceleration

The Charter Schools Review Board (CSRB) may accelerate the mandatory planning year for a charter applicant that meets the following requirements: agrees to participate in the planning year while the charter application is being reviewed without any guarantee of charter award; and demonstrates that there is a facility identified by the applicant that is feasible for opening on an accelerated schedule. Applicants must know and indicate their intended timeline for opening upon application. Accelerated applications seeking to change timelines following application submission may not be automatically granted approval to standard timeline applications. Please review the requirements carefully before selecting accelerated timeline.

Q80. Do you want your application to be considered for acceleration?

☐ Yes

☒ No



5. Conversion

Q94. Is this application a conversion from a traditional public school or private school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☒ No



6. Replication

Per NC Administrative Code 16 NCAC 06G .0512, the Charter Schools Review Board (CSRB) may, in certain well defined instances, grant permission for a nonprofit corporation board of directors (board) to replicate either its own successful model or to employ an educational management company (EMO) or a charter management organization (CMO) to replicate a successful model currently being operated under the management of the EMO or CMO. The CSRB may also, in certain well-defined instances, grant permission for a nonprofit corporation board to "fast track" such a replication by foregoing the planning year normally required for newly-approved charter applicants.

If applying for a replication, please review the following definitions and continue in this section.

1. "Charter school model" or "model" mean the mission as defined in the charter application and function of a charter school, including its governance, its curriculum, its organizational structure, its targeted population, and other key characteristics of the school, such as small class size, thematic academics, and extended day.
2. "Successful model" means a charter school model that meets the eligibility requirements in Rule .0513 of this Section.
3. "Replication" means the act of copying, recreating, or repeating, a successful charter school model. A "replication" requires the utilization of one charter school "model" to form the creation of a new charter school.
4. "Fast-Track Replication" is a special form of replication in which the approved applicant forgoes the planning year required of new charter school applicants.

Q109. Do you want this application to be considered for standard or fast-track replication? Standard, Fast-Track, or No.

- ☐ Standard
- ☐ Fast-Track
- ☒ No



7. Alternative

In order to qualify for designation as an "alternative school" for purposes of accountability under this administrative code the charter school must demonstrate that it serves a student population as follows:

- The school must include grades 9-12.
- At least 75% of the school's population in grades 9-12 must be at-risk of academic failure as defined in 16 NCAC 06G .0518 and must also meet one or more of the following:
 1. the students shall either be released from a juvenile justice facility within the last year, or otherwise be subject to and participating in the juvenile justice court;
 2. the students shall be currently served by a treatment facility licensed pursuant to Chapter 122C of the General Statutes, or have been discharged from such a facility within the last year;
 3. the students shall be currently under suspension for more than 10 days from a public or private school; or
 4. the students shall be high-school dropouts as defined in Subparagraph (a)(2) of this Rule; or be "Student Chronic Absentee(s)" as defined in 16 NCAC 06E .0106.

Q121. Do you want your application to be considered for an Alternative Charter School?

- ☐ Yes
- ☒ No



8. EMO/CMO

1) A "Charter Management Organization" (CMO) is a nonprofit organization that operates or manages one or multiple charter schools by centralizing support and operations. (2) An "Education Management Organization" (EMO) is a for-profit organization that contracts with new or existing public-school districts, charter school districts, and charter schools to operate and manage one or multiple charter schools by centralizing support and operations.

Q124. Does the Charter School plan to contract for services with an "educational management organization" or "charter management organization"?

☐ Yes

☒ No



9. Remote Academies

§ 115C-218.120(a). Remote charter academies.

A charter that includes a remote charter academy may do any of the following:

- (1) Provide only remote instruction to enrolled students served by the charter in accordance with this Part.
- (2) Provide remote instruction to students enrolled in the remote charter academy and provide in-person instruction to other students served by the charter.
- (3) Provide enrolled students both remote instruction and in-person instruction. A student who receives more than half of the student's instruction through remote instruction shall be classified as enrolled in the charter's remote charter academy.

Q142.

Is the school you're applying to create a remote charter academy?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

Q143. Indicate which status is appropriate for the Remote Academy application.

- ☒ FULL VIRTUAL -- Full virtual: the school has no physical building where students meet with each other or with teachers, all instruction is virtual.
- ☐ FACE VIRTUAL -- Virtual with face-to face options: the school focuses on a systematic program of virtual instruction but includes some physical meetings among students and teachers.

Q146.

Which of the following enrollment areas will the remote charter academy use to enroll students?

- ☒ A statewide remote charter academy that admits students in accordance with G.S. 115C-218.45
- ☐ A regional remote charter academy that, notwithstanding G.S. 115C-218.45(a), admits students only from the county in which the charter school facility is located and the counties of the State geographically contiguous to that county.

Q147. Indicate which grade levels the proposed remote academy will serve. [115C-218.120(c)]

- ☒ Kindergarten



- ☒ 1st
- ☒ 2nd
- ☒ 3rd
- ☒ 4th
- ☒ 5th
- ☒ 6th
- ☒ 7th
- ☒ 8th
- ☒ 9th
- ☒ 10th
- ☒ 11th
- ☒ 12th

Q148.

Pursuant to H259-2023, remote academies are required to meet the following requirements to operate.

Please confirm, by selecting each box below, the applicant understands the following enrollment requirements must be met by the remote academy § 115C-218.121:

- ☒ All students enrolled in the remote academy must have parental consent.
- ☒ A Board of Directors shall require an admissions application to secure parental consent prior to enrollment of a student in a remote academy.
- ☒ A remote academy must identify characteristics for successful remote learning and establish criteria for admittance to a remote charter academy and must make that information available to parents.
- ☒ A student may not be denied admission to the remote academy solely on the basis that the student is a child with a disability.
- ☒ Students with a disability that are admitted to the remote academy must have an IEP team that plans for successful student entry and the provision of accommodations necessary to provide for a free and appropriate public education.



Q149.

Pursuant to H259-2023, remote academies are required to meet the following requirements to operate.

Please confirm, by selecting each box below, the applicant understands the following must be provided to students in the remote academy § 115C-218.122:

- ☒ Any hardware or software needed to participate in the remote academy is provided by the school.
- ☒ Access to a learning management platform that enables monitoring of student performance and school-owned devices, as well as allows video conferencing and supervised text-based chat for synchronous communication is provided.
- ☒ Access to the internet that is available during instructional hours, evenings, and weekends.
- ☒ Technical support during instructional hours.
- ☒ Adaptive or assistive devices, transportation, and in-person services as required by the program or plan are provided for children with an individualized education plan (IEP).

Q150. Please confirm, by selecting each box below, the applicant understands the following requirements must be met by the remote academy:

- ☒ The remote academy does not charge rental fees for hardware or software.
- ☒ If students are charged damage fees for use or abuse of software, it must be clearly outlined in the local board policy.
- ☒ The remote academy satisfies the minimum required number of instructional days or hours for the school calendar through remote instruction.
- ☒ All employees of the remote academy meet the same licensure and evaluation requirements as required for in-person employees of the local school administrative unit.

Q151. Please confirm, by selecting each box below, that the applicant understands the remote academy must have sufficient staff in the following roles:

- ☒ Instructional Technology Facilitator 115C-218.122(d)(1)
- ☒ School Library Media Coordinator 115C-218.122(d)(2)
- ☒ Data Manager 115C-218.122(d)(3)
- ☒ Remote technicians to provide technical support throughout the instructional day 115C-218.122(d)(4)

Q152. How will the remote academy monitor enrollment?



As a remote academy, VALA NC will implement robust systems and procedures to monitor student enrollment and ensure compliance with applicable state regulations, including North Carolina General Statutes (e.g., G.S. 115C-234.15), as well as all reporting requirements of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). These systems will ensure accurate enrollment counts, proper documentation, and alignment with approved grade levels and enrollment capacity.

VALA NC will utilize Infinite Campus, the state-supported Student Information System (SIS), as the central platform for managing all student enrollment data. Infinite Campus will serve as the official system of record for student enrollment, attendance, scheduling, and reporting.

Enrollment Monitoring Procedures

VALA NC will implement the following procedures to ensure accurate and timely monitoring of enrollment:

- **Real-time enrollment tracking:** Student enrollment, withdrawals, and transfers will be entered and updated in Infinite Campus in real time to maintain accurate records
- **Daily and monthly reconciliation:** Enrollment data will be regularly reviewed and reconciled with attendance records to ensure consistency and compliance
- **Verification of residency and eligibility:** Required documentation (e.g., proof of residency, age, and prior school records) will be collected and verified prior to enrollment
- **Enrollment cap monitoring:** School leadership will monitor enrollment levels to ensure compliance with approved grade-level and total enrollment limits
- **Lottery and waitlist management:** If applications exceed capacity, VALA NC will conduct a transparent lottery process and maintain accurate waitlists in accordance with state requirements

Roles and Oversight

Enrollment monitoring will be overseen by designated staff, including the Data Manager and school leadership. Responsibilities will include:

- Maintaining accurate student records
- Monitoring enrollment trends and reporting data
- Ensuring timely submission of required reports to NCDPI
- Conducting periodic internal audits to verify data accuracy

This structure ensures accountability and minimizes the risk of data discrepancies.

Data Accuracy and Reporting

Infinite Campus will support:

- Centralized data management for enrollment, attendance, and student demographics
- State reporting requirements, including enrollment counts and membership reporting
- Secure storage of student records in compliance with FERPA and state privacy laws

VALA NC will follow all state timelines and procedures for enrollment reporting and will ensure that data is accurate, complete, and audit-ready.



Integration with Instructional Systems

While Infinite Campus will serve as the official system of record for enrollment and compliance, VALA NC will utilize its internal instructional systems (e.g., RADAR system) to monitor student engagement and academic progress. These systems will complement enrollment monitoring by ensuring that enrolled students are actively participating and receiving appropriate instructional support.

In summary, through the use of a state-approved student information system, clearly defined procedures, and strong internal oversight, VALA NC will effectively monitor student enrollment, ensure compliance with state requirements, and maintain accurate and transparent records. This comprehensive approach supports both operational integrity and accountability.

Q153. [How will the remote academy monitor calendar compliance?](#)



VALA NC will ensure calendar compliance through clearly defined scheduling structures, real-time data monitoring systems, and ongoing administrative oversight, in alignment with North Carolina General Statutes § 115C-84.2, which requires a minimum of 185 instructional days or 1,025 instructional hours covering at least nine calendar months.

VALA NC will adopt an annual academic calendar that meets or exceeds these requirements and will publish the calendar on its website prior to the start of each school year. The school's daily schedule will be structured to ensure that students receive the required instructional time through a combination of synchronous instruction, asynchronous learning, and structured instructional blocks (e.g., WIN—What I Need—blocks for intervention and enrichment).

Monitoring Instructional Time and Attendance

To ensure compliance with instructional time requirements, VALA NC will implement the following procedures:

- **Daily attendance tracking:** Student attendance will be recorded through participation in synchronous sessions and completion of assigned instructional activities
- **Instructional time documentation:** Scheduled instructional blocks, including core instruction and WIN blocks, will be aligned to ensure that total instructional hours meet or exceed state requirements
- **Engagement monitoring:** Student participation and engagement will be tracked through digital platforms to verify active involvement in instructional activities
- **Course pacing and completion tracking:** Teachers will monitor lesson progression to ensure alignment with the school calendar and instructional pacing guides

Systems and Data Management

VALA NC will utilize Infinite Campus as the official system of record for attendance, scheduling, and enrollment data. Infinite Campus will support:

- Accurate tracking of student attendance and instructional days
- Maintenance of student schedules aligned with the academic calendar
- Reporting of required data to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI)

In addition, VALA NC will use internal instructional systems (e.g., RADAR) to monitor student engagement, assignment completion, and instructional progress. These systems provide real-time data that complement attendance tracking and ensure that students are actively participating in learning.

Oversight and Accountability

Calendar compliance will be monitored by school leadership, including the Data Manager and administrative team, through:

- Regular review of attendance and instructional time reports
- Weekly and monthly checks to ensure alignment with pacing and calendar requirements
- Ongoing monitoring of instructional delivery and course progress
- Internal audits to verify compliance with state requirements



If discrepancies or gaps in instructional time are identified, VALA NC will implement timely adjustments, such as schedule modifications or targeted instructional support, to ensure full compliance.

In summary, through a combination of structured scheduling, real-time data monitoring, and strong administrative oversight, VALA NC will ensure full compliance with state calendar requirements. This comprehensive approach ensures that all students receive the required instructional time while maintaining flexibility and responsiveness within the school's virtual learning environment.

Q154.

How will the remote academy monitor daily attendance?

Note: Remote Academies are subject to policies outlined in the NC School Attendance and Student Accounting Manual and NC State Board of Education policies.

VALA NC will monitor daily attendance through a combination of digital tools, student engagement metrics, and clear communication with students and their families. Accurate attendance tracking is essential for compliance with educational standards and for identifying students who may need additional support.

Key methods include:

Learning Management System (LMS): It will record student logins, track time spent on coursework, and monitor assignment submissions. Regular interaction with LMS is often used to verify attendance.

Synchronous Session Participation: Attendance will be recorded during live virtual classes or check-ins conducted via videoconferencing tools. Presence during these sessions is a direct indicator of attendance.

Assignment and Assessment Completion: Timely submission of assignments and participation in assessments demonstrate active engagement and are used as metrics for attendance.

Learning Coach or Parental Reporting: For younger students, parents or designated learning coaches will log daily learning hours and activities, providing a record of attendance.

Regular Communication: VALA NC teachers and administrators will maintain consistent communication with students and families through emails, phone calls, or messaging platforms to verify participation and address any attendance issues.

By integrating these methods, VAL NC will create a comprehensive system to monitor daily attendance, ensuring students remain engaged and receive the necessary support for their educational success.



Q155.

How will the remote academy monitor course credit accrual, progress toward graduation (if applicable), and course completion? (Required if RA serves grades 9-12)

VALA NC will employ a combination of digital tools, structured planning, and continuous monitoring to oversee course credit accrual, progress toward graduation, and course completion. These measures ensure that students meet educational standards and are on track for successful program completion.

Key strategies include:

Infinite Campus (Student Information System): This platform centralizes student data, enabling VALA NC to track enrollment, attendance, grades, and course credits. Infinite Campus provides real-time insights into each student's academic progress, facilitating timely interventions when necessary.

Learning Management System (LMS): It manages course content and monitors student engagement. Additionally, it records assignment submissions, assessment results, and participation in course activities, offering a comprehensive view of course completion status.

Academic Advisors and Counselors: Dedicated staff members at VALA NC will regularly review individual student progress, ensuring alignment with graduation requirements. They will provide personalized guidance, helping students select appropriate courses and stay on track for timely graduation.

Progress Reports and Dashboards: Automated system at VALA NC will generate periodic reports highlighting each student's achievements and areas needing improvement. These dashboards will allow teachers and administrators at VALA NC to quickly assess overall academic health and address potential issues proactively.

Compliance with North Carolina State Education Requirements: VALA NC will adhere to NC state-mandated guidelines for monitoring academic progress. For example, the North Carolina General Assembly requires schools to submit plans detailing methods for tracking enrollment, attendance, course credit accrual, and progress toward graduation.

By integrating the aforementioned strategies, VALA NC will effectively monitor and support student advancement, ensuring that they are on a clear path to achieving their educational goals.

Q156.

List the hardware and software that students will need to participate in the remote academy.



VALA NC will provide students with hardware and software to ensure seamless access to online learning platforms, assignments, and communication tools. Below is a rough breakdown of the essential hardware and software that VALA NC will provide for a successful virtual learning experience.

1. Hardware

Students need reliable computers and accessories to access online courses, complete assignments, and communicate with teachers.

a) Computer or Laptop (Primary Device): In collaboration with the Technology Team, the Governing Board will determine the most suitable devices—desktops, laptops, or Chromebooks—to ensure students have the necessary tools to access the Learning Management System (LMS) and virtual classroom platforms effectively.

Recommended specifications:

Processor: Intel Core i5/i7 or AMD Ryzen 5/7 (for Windows/macOS), ARM-based (for Chromebooks)

RAM: Minimum 8 GB (4 GB for basic use, 16 GB for advanced applications)

Storage: At least 256 GB SSD (or 32GB for Chromebooks with cloud storage)

Operating System: Windows 10/11, macOS, ChromeOS

Examples: Lenovo Chromebook Duet, HP Chromebook 14

b) Internet Connection and Networking: VALA NC will ensure that students with financial constraints have access to internet connectivity and necessary networking resources to support their online learning experience.

Minimum internet speed: 10 Mbps (for basic browsing and video streaming)

Recommended speed: 25-50 Mbps (for smooth video conferencing and multi-tasking)

Ethernet Connection: If Wi-Fi is unstable, using a wired connection improves reliability.

c) Webcam & Microphone

Most laptops have built-in webcams and microphones.

2. Software

VALA NC will use a variety of software applications to facilitate learning, communication, and assignment submission.

a) Learning Management System (LMS): VALA NC will use an LMS to deliver lessons, assignments, and grades. We are currently assessing Google Classroom, Schoology, and Canvas as potential learning management systems. In collaboration with the Technology Team, the Governing Board will make a final decision based on the platform that best aligns with our educational and operational needs.

b) Virtual Meeting Software (Video Conferencing): VALA NC will use it for live classes, discussions, and teacher-student, teacher-teacher, teacher-parent, etc. interactions. VALA NC is considering several potential software (e.g., Zoom, MS Teams, Google Meet, etc.). However, the Governing Board will make a



final decision in collaboration with our Technology Team

c) Productivity and Office Software: Students need basic document creation and collaboration tools. For example, Microsoft Office 365 (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), Google Workspace (Docs, Sheets, Slides), and Adobe Acrobat (for PDFs). In collaboration with the Technology Team, the Governing Board will make a final decision based on the products that best align with our educational and operational needs.

d) Web Browsers: A reliable web browser is necessary for accessing online resources. In collaboration with the Technology Team, the Governing Board will make a final decision based on the browser that best aligns with our educational and operational needs (e.g., Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Microsoft Edge, and Safari for macOS users).

e) Security and Antivirus Software: Protects student devices from malware and online threats. Examples: Windows Defender (built-in for Windows users), Norton Antivirus, McAfee Security, etc. In collaboration with the Technology Team, the Governing Board will make a final decision based on the security and antivirus software that best aligns with our educational and operational needs

f) Specialized Educational Software: If required, VALA NC will provide the following or similar specialized software for subject-specific software for science, math, and art courses.

Examples:

STEAM Tools: MATLAB, GeoGebra, PhET Simulations

Coding and Computer Science: Python, Scratch, Code.org

Art & Design: Adobe Creative Cloud (Photoshop, Illustrator)

3. Optional but Recommended Accessories

The Governing Board, in collaboration with the Technology Team, will evaluate the budget availability and determine whether to proceed with the purchase of the following items for teachers and/or students:

Touchscreen Tablets or Stylus: Useful for math and art students (e.g., iPad + Apple Pencil, Microsoft Surface Pro).

Ergonomic Keyboard & Mouse: Improves comfort for long study sessions.

Standing Desk or Adjustable Chair: Helps maintain good posture and reduce strain.

4. Final Considerations

Device Compatibility: VALA NC will ensure that all required software and platforms are supported on the student's device.

Parental Controls: VALA NC Technology Team will install monitoring tools to ensure a safe learning environment.

5. Technical Support

VALA NC will ensure the provision of help desk and IT support services for troubleshooting hardware and software issues, either through its internal Technology Team or through qualified third-party service providers.



By having the right hardware and software setup, students can successfully participate in VALA NC with a seamless and productive learning experience.

Q157.

Please indicate which learning management platform the remote academy will use to deliver synchronous and asynchronous instruction. If the platform the remote academy is using is not listed, please select 'Other' and provide the name.

- ☒ Canvas
- ☐ SeeSaw
- ☐ Haiku
- ☐ Blackboard
- ☒ Google Classroom
- ☐ Moodle
- ☒ Schoology
- ☐ Other



Applicant Comments :

We are currently assessing Canvas, Google Classroom, and Schoology as potential learning management systems. In collaboration with the Technology Team, the Governing Board will make a final decision based on the platform that best aligns with our educational and operational needs.

Since VALA NC will implement Team-Based and flipped learning strategies, selecting an LMS that supports collaborative learning environments will be a priority. The chosen LMS should enable students to work in groups effectively, facilitating real-time collaboration, shared assignments, discussion forums, and peer interactions. Features such as group workspaces, integrated communication tools, and cooperative project management capabilities will be essential in fostering a dynamic and interactive virtual learning experience.

Since VALA NC will implement active learning methodologies such as Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Problem-Based Learning (PrBL), the LMS we choose should incorporate the following key features or, at a minimum, the majority of them to effectively support these instructional approaches:

1. Course and Content Management

- Modular Course Design: Allows teachers to structure lessons into units or modules.
- Multimedia Integration: Supports video, audio, PDFs, interactive simulations, and external links.
- Customizable Learning Paths: Personalized assignments based on student progress.
- Drag-and-Drop Interface: Easy content creation and editing.

2. Collaboration and Communication Tools

- Discussion Forums and Chat: Enables peer-to-peer discussions and teacher-student interactions.
- Group Workspaces: Separate spaces for small teams to collaborate on projects.
- Peer Review Features: Allows students to provide feedback on each other's work.
- Messaging System: Private and group messaging for teacher-student and student-student interactions.

3. Project and Problem-Based Learning Features

- Digital Portfolios: Allows students to showcase their projects, research, and progress.
- Interactive Whiteboard & Brainstorming Tools: Supports visual thinking and team ideation.
- Collaboration on Documents and Presentations: Integrates with Google Docs, Microsoft Office, or built-in collaboration tools.
- Rubric-Based Assessments: Enables assessment of student creativity, critical thinking, and teamwork.
- Real-World Challenges Integration: Allows students to work on case studies or real-world problems.
- Virtual Maker Spaces: Supports STEAM activities with 3D design, coding, and interactive simulations.

4. Assessment and Feedback



- Formative and Summative Assessments: Quizzes, interactive polls, reflections, and long-form projects.
- Competency-Based Grading: Tracks mastery of specific skills instead of traditional grades.
- Real-Time Feedback: Immediate teacher feedback on assignments and projects.
- Student Self-Assessment and Reflection: Tools for students to evaluate their own progress.

5. Live and Synchronous Learning Support

- Integrated Video Conferencing: Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, or built-in virtual classroom.
- Breakout Rooms: Small group discussions and problem-solving sessions.
- Live Polling and Q&A: In-session engagement tools for student participation.
- Recorded Sessions: Allows students to revisit previous lessons.

6. Adaptive Learning and Differentiation

- Learning Analytics Dashboard: Tracks student engagement, progress, and performance.
- AI-Driven Personalization: Recommends activities based on student strengths and weaknesses.
- Multiple Learning Modalities: Supports text, video, audio, and interactive simulations.
- Differentiated Assignments: Allows teachers to customize assignments for different skill levels.

7. Integration with External Tools

- STEAM and Coding Tools: Integration with platforms like Scratch, Tinkercad, Desmos, and PhET Simulations, Pivot Interactives, etc.
- Game-Based Learning: Compatibility with Kahoot!, Quizizz, and Blooket.
- E-Portfolios: Supports Google Sites, Seesaw, or built-in LMS portfolios.

8. Parent and Guardian Engagement

- Parent Portals: Provides access to student progress, assignments, and feedback.
- Automated Notifications: Alerts parents about assignments, grades, and attendance.
- Messaging & Announcements: Direct communication between teachers and parents.

9. Mobile and Accessibility Support

- Mobile-Friendly Design: Fully functional on tablets and smartphones.
- Offline Access: Allows students to download resources and submit work without an internet connection.
- Accessibility Features: Text-to-speech, closed captions, screen readers, and dyslexia-friendly fonts.

10. Security and Privacy

- FERPA & COPPA Compliance: Ensures student data protection.
- Role-Based Access: Different levels of access for students, teachers, administrators, and parents.
- Safe Student Communication: Filters inappropriate content and prevents unauthorized communication.



When selecting an LMS that supports student-centered active learning methodologies like PBL and PrBL, it is essential to choose one that encompasses a comprehensive set of features. Based on the features listed above, the Canvas LMS and Google Workspace for Education Plus platforms stand out:

Canvas LMS:

- **Course and Content Management:** Offers modular course design with a drag-and-drop interface, supporting various multimedia integrations.
- **Collaboration and Communication Tools:** Provides discussion forums, chat functionalities, and group workspaces.
- **Project and Problem-Based Learning Features:** Facilitates digital portfolios, interactive whiteboards, and collaborative document editing.
- **Assessment and Feedback:** Includes rubric-based assessments, real-time feedback mechanisms, and both formative and summative assessment tools.
- **Live and Synchronous Learning Support:** Integrates seamlessly with video conferencing tools for live sessions.
- **Adaptive Learning and Differentiation:** Utilizes learning analytics to tailor personalized learning paths.
- **Integration with External Tools:** Supports integration with various third-party applications and tools.
- **Parent and Guardian Engagement:** Features parent portals and communication channels.
- **Mobile and Accessibility Support:** Designed to be mobile-friendly with offline access and comprehensive accessibility features.
- **Security and Privacy:** Adheres to stringent security protocols and privacy standards.

Google Workspace for Education Plus:

- **Course and Content Management:** Integrates with Google Classroom for structured lesson planning, multimedia content embedding, and customizable learning paths.
- **Collaboration and Communication:** Supports real-time collaboration via Google Docs, Sheets, Slides, Chat, and Spaces, along with virtual meetings through Google Meet.
- **Project and Problem-Based Learning:** Facilitates digital portfolios (Google Sites), interactive whiteboards (Jamboard), and collaborative assignments.
- **Assessment and Feedback:** Offers formative & summative assessments (Google Forms), rubric-based grading, and real-time feedback through Docs and Classroom.
- **Live and Synchronous Learning:** Enhances virtual instruction with Google Meet's breakout rooms, Q&A, polls, attendance tracking, and recording.
- **Adaptive Learning and Differentiation:** Uses Practice Sets for personalized instruction and analytics dashboards to track student progress.
- **Integration with External Tools:** Supports third-party add-ons within Google Classroom for a broader learning experience.
- **Parent and Guardian Engagement:** Provides Guardian Summaries with regular student progress updates and class activity reports.
- **Mobile and Accessibility Support:** Features mobile optimization, offline access, and assistive technologies like voice typing and screen reader support.
- **Security and Privacy:** Includes advanced security features to protect student data and ensure compliance with educational regulations.



The versatility and extensive feature set of these two systems make them strong candidates for institutions aiming to implement PBL and PrBL effectively. We will make a decision on which option to choose in collaboration with our technology team.

Q158.

Provide the source of online content for each grade level and subject area. Use the following format to complete your answers:

- **Grade Level, Subject Area- Content Source**
- **Examples**
- **1st Grade, ELA/Reading - EdMentum**
- **3rd Grade, Social Studies & Science- Teacher-created**



Instructional Use of Digital Tools

VALA NC integrates high-quality digital platforms to support personalized, standards-aligned instruction across all grade levels. Some sample are listed below:

-

Khanmigo (AI Tutor): Used across all subjects to provide real-time feedback, scaffold student thinking, support inquiry-based learning, and guide students through problem-solving without giving direct answers, aligning with VALA NC's Active and Adaptive Learning principles.

-

IXL: Provides standards-aligned, skill-based practice with immediate feedback and data analytics, enabling teachers to monitor mastery and deliver targeted interventions aligned to NCSCOS.

-

Khan Academy: Offers comprehensive instructional videos, practice exercises, and mastery tracking aligned to core academic standards, supporting both direct instruction and independent learning.

-

Amplify: Delivers structured, research-based literacy instruction aligned with the Science of Reading, particularly effective in early grades.

-

Newsela / CommonLit / Achieve3000: Provide differentiated, leveled reading materials and embedded assessments to support literacy development across content areas.

-

Desmos: Supports conceptual understanding of mathematics through interactive graphing and modeling tools aligned with secondary math standards.

-

OpenSciEd / IQWST: Phenomena-based science curricula aligned with NGSS and adapted to NCSCOS, emphasizing inquiry, modeling, and real-world application.

-



Pivot Interactives / PhET: Provide virtual lab simulations and data analysis experiences to support scientific investigation and experimentation.

-

NoRedInk / eGUMPP: Focus on grammar, writing mechanics, and composition skills through adaptive, personalized practice.

-

Discovery Education / iCivics / National Archives: Provide standards-aligned social studies content, primary sources, and civic engagement resources.

-

Duolingo / Rosetta Stone: Support world language acquisition through interactive, adaptive, and immersive language learning experiences.

-

Teacher-Created & VALA NC Content: Ensures alignment with North Carolina standards, incorporates project-based learning, and reflects VALA NC's 5A Framework and CRISP-RISE values.

VALA NC students will have access to dual-enrollment opportunities beginning in the 11th grade through partnerships with North Carolina community colleges and universities (e.g., Career & College Promise). Highly qualified 10th-grade students may be considered on a case-by-case basis, based on academic readiness and institutional requirements.

In addition to VALA NC's internally developed, standards-aligned instructional materials, the school will utilize high-quality, research-based third-party content providers, including AI-supported tools, as outlined below:

Reading / English Language Arts (ELA)

- Kindergarten, ELA/Reading – Amplify, Project Read, Achieve3000, Khanmigo
- 1st Grade, ELA/Reading – Amplify, Project Read, Achieve3000, Khanmigo
- 2nd Grade, ELA/Reading – Amplify, Khanmigo
- 3rd Grade, ELA/Reading – AlphaRead, ReadTheory, Khanmigo
- 4th Grade, ELA/Reading – AlphaRead, ReadTheory, Khanmigo
- 5th Grade, ELA/Reading – AlphaRead, Newsela, CommonLit, Khanmigo
- 6th Grade, ELA/Reading – AlphaRead, Newsela, CommonLit, Khanmigo
- 7th Grade, ELA/Reading – AlphaRead, Newsela, CommonLit, Khanmigo
- 8th Grade, ELA/Reading – AlphaRead, Newsela, CommonLit, Khanmigo
- 9th Grade, ELA/Reading – CommonLit, Newsela, Achieve3000, Khanmigo



- 10th Grade, ELA/Reading – CommonLit, Newsela, Achieve3000, Khanmigo
- 11th Grade, ELA/Reading – CommonLit, AP Classroom, Newsela, Khanmigo
- 12th Grade, ELA/Reading – CommonLit, AP Classroom, dual-enrollment/college-level texts, Khanmigo

Writing

- Kindergarten, Writing – IXL, Khanmigo
- 1st Grade, Writing – IXL, Khanmigo
- 2nd Grade, Writing – IXL, Khanmigo
- 3rd Grade, Writing – IXL, AlphaWrite, Khanmigo
- 4th Grade, Writing – IXL, AlphaWrite, Khanmigo
- 5th Grade, Writing – IXL, AlphaWrite, Khanmigo
- 6th Grade, Writing – IXL, eGUMPP, Khanmigo
- 7th Grade, Writing – IXL, eGUMPP, Khanmigo
- 8th Grade, Writing – IXL, eGUMPP, Khanmigo
- 9th Grade, Writing – IXL, NoRedInk, CommonLit, Khanmigo
- 10th Grade, Writing – IXL, NoRedInk, CommonLit, Khanmigo
- 11th Grade, Writing – NoRedInk, AP Classroom, teacher-created, Khanmigo
- 12th Grade, Writing – NoRedInk, teacher-created, dual-enrollment/college-level composition resources, Khanmigo

Mathematics

- Kindergarten, Math – IXL, Khan Academy, Khanmigo
- 1st Grade, Math – IXL, Khan Academy, XtraMath, Khanmigo
- 2nd Grade, Math – IXL, Khan Academy, XtraMath, Khanmigo
- 3rd Grade, Math – IXL, Khan Academy, XtraMath, Khanmigo
- 4th Grade, Math – IXL, Khan Academy, XtraMath, Khanmigo
- 5th Grade, Math – IXL, Khan Academy, Khanmigo
- 6th Grade, Math – IXL, Khan Academy, Khanmigo
- 7th Grade, Math – IXL, Khan Academy, Khanmigo
- 8th Grade, Math – IXL, Khan Academy, Khanmigo
- 9th Grade, Math (Math I/Algebra I) – Khan Academy, IXL, Desmos, Khanmigo
- 10th Grade, Math (Math II/Geometry) – Khan Academy, IXL, Desmos, Khanmigo
- 11th Grade, Math (Math III/Algebra II) – Khan Academy, IXL, Desmos, AP Classroom, Khanmigo
- 12th Grade, Math (Precalculus/AP/Statistics) – Khan Academy, Desmos, AP Classroom, dual-enrollment resources, Khanmigo

Science

- Kindergarten, Science – IXL, Khanmigo, OpenSciEd
- 1st Grade, Science – IXL, Khanmigo, OpenSciEd
- 2nd Grade, Science – IXL, Khanmigo, OpenSciEd
- 3rd Grade, Science – IXL, Khanmigo, OpenSciEd
- 4th Grade, Science – IXL, Khanmigo, OpenSciEd
- 5th Grade, Science – IXL, Khanmigo, OpenSciEd



- 6th Grade, Science – IXL, Khanmigo, OpenSciEd / IQWST, Pivot Interactives
- 7th Grade, Science – IXL, Khanmigo, OpenSciEd / IQWST, Pivot Interactives
- 8th Grade, Science – IXL, Khanmigo, OpenSciEd / IQWST, Pivot Interactives
- 9th Grade, Science (Biology) – OpenSciEd, Pivot Interactives, Khan Academy, HHMI BioInteractive, Khanmigo
- 10th Grade, Science (Chemistry) – OpenSciEd, Pivot Interactives, PhET, Khan Academy, Khanmigo
- 11th Grade, Science (Physics/Physical Science) – OpenSciEd, Pivot Interactives, PhET, Khan Academy, Khanmigo
- 12th Grade, Science (Advanced/AP) – AP Classroom, OpenSciEd, Pivot Interactives, college-level resources, Khanmigo

Social Studies / History

In grades K–2, Social Studies is delivered through a combination of dedicated instruction and integration within the ELA block and interdisciplinary thematic units. Instruction is supported by teacher-created materials, NC DPI resources, and IXL, ensuring alignment with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study while reinforcing literacy development and real-world connections.

- Kindergarten, Social Studies – Teacher-created, NC DPI resources, IXL
- 1st Grade, Social Studies – Teacher-created, NC DPI resources, IXL
- 2nd Grade, Social Studies – Teacher-created, NC DPI resources, IXL
- 3rd Grade, Social Studies – Teacher-created, NC DPI resources, Studies Weekly, IXL, Khanmigo
- 4th Grade, Social Studies – Teacher-created, NC DPI resources, Studies Weekly, IXL, Khanmigo
- 5th Grade, Social Studies – Teacher-created, NC DPI resources, Studies Weekly, IXL, Khanmigo
- 6th Grade, Social Studies – Teacher-created, NC DPI resources, Discovery Education, iCivics, IXL, Khanmigo
- 7th Grade, Social Studies – Teacher-created, NC DPI resources, Discovery Education, iCivics, IXL, Khanmigo
- 8th Grade, Social Studies – Teacher-created, NC DPI resources, Discovery Education, iCivics, IXL, Khanmigo
- 9th Grade, Social Studies (World History) – Discovery Education, National Geographic, teacher-created, Khanmigo
- 10th Grade, Social Studies (Civics & Economics) – iCivics, Discovery Education, teacher-created, Khanmigo
- 11th Grade, Social Studies (American History) – Discovery Education, National Archives, teacher-created, Khanmigo
- 12th Grade, Social Studies (Advanced/AP) – AP Classroom, primary sources, dual-enrollment resources, Khanmigo

World Languages:

- Kindergarten, World Languages (Exploratory) – Duolingo, Gus on the Go, Little Pim, teacher-created, Khanmigo
- 1st Grade, World Languages (Exploratory) – Duolingo, Gus on the Go, Little Pim, teacher-created, Khanmigo
- 2nd Grade, World Languages (Exploratory) – Duolingo, Gus on the Go, Little Pim, teacher-created, Khanmigo



- 3rd Grade, World Languages – Duolingo, Rockalingua, teacher-created, Khanmigo
- 4th Grade, World Languages – Duolingo, Rockalingua, teacher-created, Khanmigo
- 5th Grade, World Languages – Duolingo, Rockalingua, teacher-created, Khanmigo
- 6th Grade, World Languages – Duolingo, Memrise, Quizlet, teacher-created, Khanmigo
- 7th Grade, World Languages – Duolingo, Memrise, Quizlet, teacher-created, Khanmigo
- 8th Grade, World Languages – Duolingo, Memrise, Quizlet, teacher-created, Khanmigo
- 9th Grade, World Languages Level I – Duolingo, Rosetta Stone, Quizlet, teacher-created, Khanmigo
- 10th Grade, World Languages Level II – Duolingo, Rosetta Stone, Quizlet, teacher-created, Khanmigo
- 11th Grade, World Languages Level III – Duolingo, Rosetta Stone, FluentU, AP Classroom (if applicable), Khanmigo
- 12th Grade, World Languages Level IV / AP – Duolingo, Rosetta Stone, FluentU, LingQ, AP Classroom, Khanmigo

Digital Citizenship

VALANC aims to improve students' competencies in computational thinking, digital citizenship, online safety, and computer fundamentals by using **learning.com** resources. Learning.com is an educational technology company dedicated to equipping K-12 students with essential digital skills necessary for success in today's digital world.

Key Offerings of Learning.com:

- **EasyTech:** A self-paced digital literacy curriculum that covers keyboarding, online safety, introductory coding, and business applications like word processing and spreadsheets. The interactive lessons are designed to engage students in real-life applications, fostering digital fluency.
- **EasyCode:** This program introduces students to coding through interactive challenges, progressing from block-based coding to text-based coding and Python. It emphasizes design thinking and problem-solving, culminating in hands-on projects such as game design.
- **AI Curriculum:** Targeted at 4th and 5th graders, this standards-aligned curriculum introduces students to artificial intelligence concepts. Through interactive games and lessons, students learn about AI's applications and ethical considerations, preparing them for future technological landscapes.

Artificial intelligence (AI) Tutor

An **AI tutor** is a technology-driven educational tool that uses AI to provide personalized instruction, guidance, and feedback to students. AI tutors function as virtual educators, helping learners understand concepts, solve problems, and improve their academic performance by adapting to their individual learning styles and needs.

Key Features of an AI Tutor:

- **Personalized Learning:** AI tutors analyze a student's progress and tailor lessons, explanations, and exercises to match their learning pace.



- **Instant Feedback:** They provide immediate feedback on quizzes, assignments, and practice problems, helping students correct mistakes in real-time.
- **24/7 Availability:** Unlike human tutors, AI tutors are available anytime, allowing students to learn at their convenience.
- **Interactive Engagement:** Many AI tutors use chatbots, voice assistants, and adaptive learning systems to engage students in an interactive way.
- **Data-Driven Insights:** AI-powered platforms track students' progress, strengths, and weaknesses, offering insights to educators and parents.
- **Multimodal Support:** AI tutors can provide explanations through text, video, interactive simulations, or voice assistance, enhancing comprehension.

Examples of AI Tutors:

- Khan Academy's Khanmigo (AI tutor for math and science)
- ChatGPT (AI-powered Q&A and tutoring)
- Socratic by Google (AI-powered homework helper)
- Duolingo (AI-based language learning tutor)
- Carnegie Learning's MATHia (AI math tutor)

How Can AI Tutors Benefit Students:

- Bridges learning gaps by providing individualized support.
- Improves confidence by allowing students to practice without fear of judgment.
- Enhances accessibility for students who may not have access to traditional tutoring.
- Supports diverse learning needs, including students with disabilities.

AI tutors are not meant to replace human teachers but rather to enhance learning experiences, making education more accessible, engaging, and effective for students worldwide.

Q159.

How will learning take place synchronously and asynchronously?



At VALA NC, we will prioritize synchronous learning as a cornerstone of our virtual education model, recognizing that real-time interaction fosters higher engagement, deeper comprehension, and stronger connections between students and educators (Hrastinski, 2008; Martin et al., 2020). Live instruction allows for immediate feedback, active participation, and collaborative discussions, creating a more immersive and interactive learning experience (Garrison et al., 2000; Anderson, 2008). While we also incorporate asynchronous learning to provide flexibility and accommodate diverse learning styles, we emphasize the importance of structured, live sessions where students can engage in meaningful dialogue, ask questions in real-time, and build a sense of community within their virtual classrooms (Moore, 1989; Borup et al., 2012). By leveraging the strengths of synchronous learning, we ensure that students remain motivated, accountable, and actively involved in their educational journey (Fredricks et al., 2004; Dixon, 2015).

Learning at VALA NC will occur through a structured combination of synchronous and asynchronous instruction designed to maximize engagement while also allowing flexibility for students.

Synchronous learning is a central component of the instructional model and will be prioritized as we recognize that real-time interaction fosters higher engagement, deeper comprehension, and stronger connections between students and educators (Hrastinski, 2008; Martin et al., 2020). Live instruction allows for immediate feedback, active participation, and collaborative discussions, creating a more immersive and interactive learning experience (Garrison et al., 2000; Anderson, 2008). Students participate in regularly scheduled live instructional blocks led by teachers using video conferencing platforms. During these sessions, teachers provide direct instruction, facilitate discussion, model concepts, and guide collaborative learning activities. Students engage in questioning, small-group problem solving, and interactive practice with immediate feedback from teachers. These live sessions help build classroom communities and allow teachers to monitor student understanding in real time (Borup et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2020).

Asynchronous learning complements live instruction by allowing students to complete independent practice, project work, and deeper exploration of course content. Students access assignments, recorded mini-lessons, practice activities, and discussion tools through the school's learning management system. This flexible component allows students to reinforce concepts introduced during live instruction and work at an appropriate pace while still receiving guidance and feedback from their teachers (Means et al., 2013; Bernard et al., 2004).

The daily instructional schedule is intentionally designed to integrate these two learning modalities. As described in the "Typical Day" section of the application, students participate in live instructional blocks for core subjects, followed by independent online practice, guided offline learning activities, and project-based application. Additional structures such as the WIN (What I Need) intervention block and interdisciplinary STEAM/project-based learning time allow teachers to provide targeted support and ensure that students can apply what they learn in authentic contexts (Thomas, 2000; Freeman et al., 2014).



This blended approach ensures that students benefit from real-time teacher interaction, structured collaboration, and flexible independent learning, creating a virtual environment that is both engaging and responsive to diverse learning needs (Garrison and Vaughan, 2008; Means et al., 2013).

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Q160.

What measures will be used to ensure that synchronous and asynchronous remote instruction support learning growth that continues towards mastery of the standard course of study?



VALA NC will implement a comprehensive instructional and data-monitoring framework to ensure that both synchronous and asynchronous instruction support continuous learning growth and student mastery of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) (Garrison and Vaughan, 2008). This framework integrates standards-aligned curriculum, ongoing assessment, differentiated instruction, and structured progress monitoring (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Tomlinson, 2014).

Standards-Aligned Curriculum and Instruction

All instructional content delivered through synchronous and asynchronous learning is aligned to the NCSCOS. Teachers design lesson plans, learning activities, and assessments that directly target grade-level standards and learning objectives (Porter, 2002). Synchronous instruction provides direct teaching, modeling, guided practice, and real-time feedback, while asynchronous learning reinforces concepts through independent practice, recorded lessons, and project-based application (Rosenshine, 2012; Hrastinski, 2008).

Comprehensive Assessment System

VALA NC will implement a multi-tiered assessment system to monitor student progress and ensure alignment with state standards. This system includes frequent formative assessments such as exit tickets, quizzes, and polls during live instruction; asynchronous checks for understanding through assignments and discussions; benchmark and diagnostic assessments administered throughout the year; and summative assessments that measure cumulative mastery of grade-level standards (Heritage, 2010; Brookhart, 2017).

Personalized Learning and Differentiation

Student performance data will be used to provide differentiated instruction and targeted academic support. Adaptive learning platforms and learning management system analytics allow teachers to personalize learning pathways, identify skill gaps, and provide targeted remediation or enrichment (Pane et al., 2015). Small-group instruction and targeted support will occur during the daily WIN ("What I Need") block (Vygotsky, 1978).

Ongoing Progress Monitoring and Feedback

Teachers will use assessment data and learning platform analytics to monitor both individual and class-level performance. Students receive frequent, actionable feedback through both synchronous and asynchronous learning activities (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). Instructional teams will review student data regularly to identify trends and ensure timely intervention when students fall behind (Datnow and Park, 2014).

Professional Collaboration and Instructional Support

Teachers participate in regular professional learning community (PLC) meetings to review student data, analyze instructional effectiveness, and adjust instructional strategies (DuFour et al., 2016). School leadership also monitors academic performance through structured data review cycles to ensure fidelity to instructional practices and progress toward school-wide goals.

Through these coordinated systems, VALA NC ensures that both synchronous and asynchronous instruction remain tightly aligned to state standards and continuously support student progress toward



mastery (Garrison and Vaughan, 2008).

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Q161.

Describe the professional development that will be provided to those teaching in the remote academy related to the pedagogy of providing remote instruction.



VALA NC recognizes that effective virtual instruction requires specialized skills in digital pedagogy, student engagement, and instructional design for online environments (Martin et al., 2020). The school will implement a comprehensive professional development framework that prepares teachers to deliver high-quality synchronous and asynchronous instruction aligned with the school's instructional model and the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (Means et al., 2013).

Foundational Pre-Service Training

Prior to the start of each school year, all teachers will participate in a two-week summer professional development institute focused on preparing educators for effective remote instruction. This training will include a structured Teacher Orientation Course delivered through the school's learning management system.

During this program, teachers will receive training in:

- Structured lessons, interactive modules, and assessments
 - Instruction on transitioning from traditional to virtual instruction
 - Tools for navigating the LMS, uploading and managing course materials, creating engaging online activities, utilizing discussion forums, managing online breakout rooms, administering assessments, grading, tracking student progress, communication strategies, providing personalized feedback, etc.
 - Detailed overviews of curriculum, assessment practices, school calendar, and personalizing instruction
 - Instruction on how to modify courses and customize content to meet learner needs
- Utilizing the state and national standards in their course

To complete the course, teachers must earn a score of 80% or higher, demonstrating their readiness to begin instruction. This course ensures a smooth onboarding experience for all new faculty members, with support for those transitioning from brick-and-mortar to online teaching environments.

Ongoing Professional Learning

Professional development at VALA NC will continue throughout the school year through job-embedded professional learning communities (PLCs) and scheduled training sessions (DuFour et al., 2016).

Teachers will participate in regular collaborative meetings focused on:

- Effective use of synchronous and asynchronous instruction
- Active learning strategies (e.g., Team-Based Learning, Project-Based Learning, etc.) (Freeman et al., 2014)
- Differentiated instruction and culturally responsive practices in virtual environments
- Utilizing adaptive learning tools such as Khan Academy, Achieve3000, and IXL
- Using data and formative assessments to personalize instruction and provide timely interventions

Coaching, Mentorship, and Feedback

New teachers will be paired with experienced mentors who provide ongoing guidance through co-planning, classroom observations, and feedback sessions. School leadership will also conduct regular virtual classroom observations to support instructional improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).



Teachers will receive actionable feedback based on instructional quality, student engagement, and learning outcomes. Professional growth goals will be established through individualized professional development plans aligned with teacher evaluations.

Continuous Improvement and Reflection

Teachers will maintain digital portfolios that document instructional practices, professional learning experiences, and evidence of student growth. These portfolios support reflective practice and provide artifacts that may be used during mentoring, evaluation, and professional development planning (Schön, 1983).

Through this comprehensive professional learning system, VALA NC ensures that teachers are fully prepared to deliver engaging, standards-aligned instruction in a virtual environment and continuously refine their instructional practices to support student success (Means et al., 2013; Martin et al., 2020).

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Q162.

What are the criteria for admission to the remote academy?



At **VALA NC**, admission to our remote K-12 public charter academy is governed by applicable federal laws, North Carolina state statutes, and local policies to ensure that the process is equitable, transparent, and accessible to all eligible students. Our commitment is to provide a high-quality, tuition-free, remote public education to North Carolina residents, in full alignment with the North Carolina General Statutes (NCGS) and State Board of Education policies governing charter schools and virtual instruction.

General Eligibility Criteria

In accordance with **NCGS § 115C-218.45**, the following criteria will be applied:

- **Residency:** The applicant must be a legal resident of North Carolina.
- **Age Requirement:** Students must meet the state's age requirements for public school enrollment, as defined in **NCGS § 115C-364** (e.g., students must be five years old on or before August 31 to enroll in kindergarten).
- **Grade-Level Placement:** Students must apply for a grade level appropriate to their age and academic background, subject to documentation and transcript verification.

VALA NC does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, religion, disability, or socioeconomic status, consistent with Title VI, Title IX, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Application and Admission Process

- **Open Enrollment Period:** VALA NC will hold an annual enrollment window, publicly advertised on its website and in community outlets, as required by NCGS § 115C-218.45(f).
- **Lottery System:** a lottery will be conducted in accordance with state requirements, including a weighted lottery component for economically disadvantaged students, to ensure fairness and promote equitable access consistent with the school's mission.
- **Waitlist Maintenance:** Students not selected in the lottery will be placed on a waitlist in the order their names were drawn and may be admitted as seats become available.

Special Populations and Student Services

- Students with disabilities are eligible to apply and will receive special education and related services through an IEP, as mandated by IDEA.
- English Learners (ELs) will receive language support services in alignment with Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).
- Students experiencing homelessness are granted immediate access to enrollment per the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and may receive additional supports.

Documentation Required for Enrollment

Families will be asked to provide the following documentation, consistent with state guidelines:

- Proof of residency in North Carolina
- Proof of age (e.g., birth certificate)
- Immunization and health records as required by NCGS § 130A-155



- Previous academic records (if applicable)

All data collected during the application process will be managed in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to protect student privacy and confidentiality.

Admission Transparency and Accessibility

- Application forms will be accessible online, and paper copies will be made available upon request.
- Information sessions and outreach will be conducted to promote awareness among underrepresented populations.
- Language assistance and accommodations will be available for families with limited English proficiency or disabilities.

Q163.

What are the identified characteristics for successful remote learning in the remote academy?



Research on effective K–12 online learning, including the systematic review by Johnson et al. (2023) and foundational analyses such as the U.S. Department of Education’s meta-analysis of online learning (2010), identifies several consistent characteristics of successful remote learning environments. These characteristics include strong course design, meaningful interaction, accessibility, differentiated instruction, and ongoing formative assessment. More recent research further emphasizes the importance of strong teacher presence, active engagement, coherent instructional systems, and the development of self-regulation and digital literacy skills in virtual settings (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Gastaldi et al., 2026; UNESCO, 2026).

VALA NC’s remote learning model is intentionally designed around these principles and integrates them into daily instruction, student supports, and schoolwide systems, as reflected in its instructional model and “Why VALA NC” framework. Rather than relying on isolated strategies, VALA NC implements a coherent, student-centered system in which curriculum, instruction, assessment, engagement, and support structures work together to ensure student success.

1. Clear, Standards-Aligned Course Design and Coherent Systems

Successful remote learning begins with well-structured courses that are intentionally aligned to academic standards and clearly organized for students. At VALA NC, all courses are aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and structured within the learning management system to provide clear learning targets, predictable pacing, and consistent navigation. Lessons combine synchronous instruction, guided practice, and asynchronous reinforcement to support mastery.

Beyond individual courses, research shows that student success depends on system-wide coherence across curriculum, instruction, assessment, and support structures (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). VALA NC is intentionally designed as an integrated system in which all instructional components work together to provide consistency, clarity, and equity across grade levels and subjects. This coherent design helps students remain organized, understand expectations, and progress toward mastery.

2. Strong Teacher–Student and Student–Student Interaction

Research consistently shows that interaction and connection are essential for student engagement and success in online learning environments. VALA NC prioritizes regular synchronous instruction through live virtual classes where students interact with teachers and peers, ask questions in real time, and collaborate on learning activities.

Teachers use structured discussion, breakout rooms, group projects, and collaborative tools to foster meaningful peer interaction and a strong virtual learning community. Teacher presence and guided interaction are critical for engagement and improved outcomes in online learning (Gastaldi et al., 2026). This approach ensures that students are active participants rather than passive observers.

3. Accessible and Inclusive Learning Environments

Successful remote learning environments must ensure that all students can access instruction and learning materials. VALA NC implements principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to provide multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression (CAST, 2024). Instructional materials are



delivered through diverse formats such as video, text, audio, and interactive tools to meet varied learning needs.

The school also provides accommodations and assistive technologies to support students with disabilities and multilingual learners. This flexible and inclusive approach ensures equitable access and participation for all students.

4. Strong School–Family Partnerships

Family engagement is a critical factor in student success in virtual education. VALA NC establishes clear communication systems to support strong partnerships between families and the school. Parents and guardians participate in orientation sessions and receive ongoing access to student progress through the learning management system, teacher communication, and scheduled conferences.

Research confirms that family involvement significantly enhances student success in online learning environments (Johnson et al., 2023). VALA NC’s model emphasizes shared responsibility, transparency, and consistent communication to support each student’s learning journey.

5. Personalized, Differentiated, and Responsive Instruction

Remote learning environments provide unique opportunities to personalize instruction based on student needs. VALA NC uses formative assessments, platform analytics, and teacher observations to monitor progress and adjust instruction in real time.

Teachers provide targeted interventions, enrichment opportunities, and flexible pacing to ensure all students progress toward mastery. The daily WIN (“What I Need”) block provides dedicated time for individualized support, small-group instruction, and enrichment. This responsive approach aligns with research highlighting differentiation as a key factor in effective online learning (Johnson et al., 2023).

6. Active Learning and Authentic Application

Successful remote learning requires students to be active participants in the learning process. VALA NC emphasizes active learning strategies such as discussion, team-based learning, inquiry-based exploration, and project-based learning.

Students regularly collaborate, apply concepts to real-world challenges, and create meaningful products that demonstrate understanding. Research shows that active and authentic learning experiences improve engagement and knowledge transfer in online environments (Means et al., 2010). This approach ensures that learning is relevant, engaging, and connected to real-life applications.

7. Continuous Assessment, Feedback, and Improvement

Ongoing assessment and timely feedback are essential for monitoring student progress in a virtual learning environment. VALA NC teachers use a variety of formative assessments—including exit tickets, quizzes, discussions, and performance tasks—to evaluate student understanding.



Assessment data guides instructional decisions and ensures timely intervention and support. Teachers provide frequent feedback and opportunities for reflection and goal-setting, helping students take ownership of their learning. This continuous improvement cycle is a defining feature of effective online education (Johnson et al., 2023).

8. Development of Self-Regulation and Digital Literacy

Successful remote learning requires students to develop independence, self-regulation, and digital literacy. Research shows that online learners must manage time, set goals, monitor progress, and persist through challenges (Johnson et al., 2023).

VALA NC supports these skills through structured routines, guided practice, and reflection. Students also develop digital literacy, including responsible technology use, online communication, and ethical use of digital tools and AI (UNESCO, 2026; ISTE, 2026). These competencies prepare students for success in both academic and real-world contexts.

9. Structured Learning with Strong Teacher Guidance

Effective remote learning environments balance independence with strong instructional guidance. Research demonstrates that minimally guided or purely self-directed approaches often lead to lower engagement and achievement (Kirschner et al., 2006; Means et al., 2010).

VALA NC addresses this by providing structured schedules, clear expectations, and consistent teacher-led instruction. Students engage in guided learning experiences that include direct instruction, collaborative work, and supported independent practice. This structure ensures that students are supported at every stage of learning.

10. Strong Relationships, Mentoring, and Student Support Systems

Student success in online learning is strongly influenced by relationships and a sense of belonging. VALA NC prioritizes relationship-building through consistent teacher interaction, mentoring, small-group instruction, and regular check-ins.

Research shows that mentoring and student support systems improve engagement, persistence, and academic outcomes in virtual environments (Borup et al., 2020). VALA NC ensures that students are known, supported, and connected within a strong learning community.

11. Student Motivation and Engagement Systems

Student motivation is a critical factor in successful remote learning. VALA NC addresses this through meaningful, interactive, and relevant learning experiences that connect to students' interests and goals.

Active learning, collaboration, and real-world applications increase engagement and reduce disengagement often seen in virtual settings (Fredricks et al., 2004). By designing learning experiences that are purposeful and engaging, VALA NC fosters sustained student participation and motivation.



12. Educator Capacity and Continuous Professional Improvement

High-quality remote learning depends on well-prepared educators and ongoing professional development. VALA NC supports teachers through training, collaboration, and data-informed instructional refinement.

Research emphasizes that continuous professional learning and teacher collaboration improve effectiveness in online teaching environments (Trust & Whalen, 2020). VALA NC's commitment to educator capacity ensures that instructional practices remain responsive, effective, and aligned with student needs.

In summary, together, these characteristics create the foundation for a high-quality remote learning environment at VALA NC. The model is intentionally designed as a coherent, student-centered system that integrates strong instructional design, active engagement, personalized support, continuous assessment, meaningful relationships, and professional capacity.

By combining research-based practices with a structured, interactive, and supportive learning environment, VALA NC ensures that students are not only engaged in their learning but also equipped with the skills, knowledge, and habits necessary for long-term academic success and lifelong learning.

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Q164.

Describe all training and/or resources that will be provided as an orientation for students to encourage success.



To ensure a strong and equitable start to the school year, VALA NC will implement a comprehensive Student and Family Orientation Program prior to the beginning of classes. Research on virtual learning environments highlights the importance of early student preparation in digital platform navigation, self-regulation, digital literacy, and family engagement to support student success in online settings (Pulham & Graham, 2018; Borup et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2023). More recent studies further emphasize that structured onboarding, clear expectations, and early relationship-building significantly improve student engagement, persistence, and achievement in virtual schools (Gastaldi et al., 2026; OECD, 2024).

The VALA NC orientation program is designed to equip students and families with the technical, academic, and social-emotional skills necessary to succeed in a virtual learning environment. The orientation will take place during the weeks leading up to the start of school and will include a combination of live virtual sessions, interactive workshops, guided tutorials, and self-paced resources tailored to different grade levels.

Digital Platform Navigation and Technology Readiness

Students and families will receive hands-on training on the school's Learning Management System (LMS) and core digital tools. Orientation sessions will guide students through how to:

- Access course materials and assignments
- Submit assignments and participate in discussion boards
- Join live virtual classes
- Use the school calendar and communication tools
- Access technical support resources

Students will also receive step-by-step video tutorials and written guides that remain available in the school's online resource center throughout the year. Research indicates that early familiarity with digital platforms reduces cognitive load and increases student confidence and participation in online learning (Mayer, 2021; Johnson et al., 2023).

Digital Citizenship, Digital Literacy, and Online Etiquette

Students will participate in sessions adapted from Common Sense Education and Ribble's Nine Elements of Digital Citizenship, including:

- Cyber safety
- Responsible device and internet use
- Understanding digital footprints
- Online communication norms ("netiquette")
- Media and information literacy

In addition, students will develop foundational digital literacy skills, including evaluating online information, responsible use of AI tools, and effective communication in digital environments. Research highlights digital literacy as a critical competency for success in modern online and hybrid learning environments (UNESCO, 2023; ISTE, 2023).



These sessions help establish a positive digital culture and ensure that students understand expectations for participation in live virtual classrooms.

Time Management, Study Skills, and Self-Regulation

Successful online learners must manage their time effectively and demonstrate self-regulation. Orientation sessions will help students develop essential study and organizational skills. Students will learn how to:

- Set academic goals for the year
- Organize assignments and deadlines using LMS tools
- Develop daily and weekly learning routines
- Manage distractions and maintain focus in a home learning environment

Students will complete goal-setting and planning activities that help them establish strong learning habits from the beginning of the year. Research consistently identifies self-regulated learning as a key predictor of success in online education (Zimmerman, 2002; Broadbent & Poon, 2015; Johnson et al., 2023).

Academic Expectations and Virtual Classroom Culture

Students will participate in practice sessions that simulate the virtual classroom experience. These sessions will introduce students to:

- Expectations for participation in live instruction (camera use, engagement signals, speaking protocols)
- Use of breakout rooms and collaborative tools
- Participation in discussions and group work
- Providing and receiving peer feedback
- Academic integrity in a virtual setting

These structured practice experiences reflect research showing that clear expectations and guided participation improve engagement and reduce anxiety in online learning environments (Gastaldi et al., 2026).

Introduction to Instructional Tools

Students will be introduced to the instructional platforms and digital tools they will use throughout the school year. Teachers will demonstrate how these tools support learning and provide guided opportunities for exploration. Examples include:

- Khan Academy and Khanmigo (math and science support)
- Duolingo (language learning)
- TypingClub (keyboarding skills)
- IXL (math and ELA practice)
- PhET, Pivot Interactives (science simulations)



These sessions include demonstrations and guided practice to ensure students can confidently use tools that support active and personalized learning (Means et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2023).

Equity and Accessibility

Students and families will be supported through VALA NC's Digital Equity Initiative, which includes:

- Distribution of Chromebooks or tablets
- Mobile hotspots for families without internet access
- One-on-one technical support sessions
- Availability of content in multiple languages

This ensures that all students can access instructional materials and participate in live learning sessions from the first day of school. Research underscores that equitable access to devices, connectivity, and support is essential for closing opportunity gaps in virtual education (OECD, 2024; UNESCO, 2023).

Family Engagement and Support

Families play a critical role in student success in virtual learning environments. VALA NC will host family orientation sessions that provide guidance on:

- Monitoring student progress through the parent portal
- Understanding grading, attendance, and participation expectations
- Supporting students with time management and organization
- Communicating effectively with teachers and school staff

Families will also have the opportunity to meet their student's advisory teacher, who will serve as a key point of contact throughout the school year. Research shows that strong family engagement significantly improves student outcomes and persistence in online learning (Borup et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2023).

Ongoing Support and Continuous Transition Support

In addition to orientation week, VALA NC will provide:

- A "Virtual Student Help Desk" staffed by technical and academic support specialists
- Monthly family engagement workshops
- Regular advisory check-ins to monitor student progress and well-being
- A student resource library with guides, videos, and self-help tools

Ongoing support systems are essential for sustaining student success in virtual environments, particularly during transitions and throughout the academic year (Trust & Whalen, 2020; OECD, 2024).

This comprehensive, proactive orientation approach ensures that students begin the school year prepared, confident, and supported, and that families are equipped to partner effectively in the virtual learning journey.



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Q165.

How will information about remote academy admission requirements be communicated to parents and guardians?



VALA NC will implement a comprehensive, transparent, and multi-channel communication strategy, aligned with its Marketing Plan, to ensure that all parents and guardians clearly understand admission requirements, timelines, and processes. As a statewide virtual school, VALA NC is committed to providing equitable access to enrollment information for families across North Carolina, including urban, suburban, and rural communities.

The school's website (www.vala.academy (<http://www.vala.academy>)) will serve as the central hub for all enrollment-related information. A dedicated "Enrollment" page will clearly outline eligibility requirements, application steps, required documentation, enrollment timelines, lottery procedures (if applicable), and frequently asked questions. All information will be presented in clear, family-friendly language to ensure accessibility and transparency.

Consistent with the outreach strategies described in Q65, VALA NC will communicate admission requirements through multiple coordinated channels, including:

- **Targeted digital outreach and advertising** (e.g., Facebook campaigns, community groups, and search-based platforms) to reach families statewide
- **Email communications and newsletters** to families who have expressed interest through surveys and outreach efforts
- **Virtual information sessions and webinars**, providing opportunities for families to learn about the admissions process and interact directly with school leadership
- **Community-based outreach**, including partnerships with local organizations, homeschool networks, and community groups to expand reach
- **Printed and digital flyers** distributed across regions of North Carolina, including bilingual (English and Spanish) materials

All communications will be designed to be **inclusive and accessible**, including translation into multiple languages and formats aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. Families will also have access to direct support through email, phone, and live virtual assistance to ensure that questions are addressed promptly.

During the enrollment period, VALA NC will provide **regular reminders and updates** regarding key deadlines, application steps, and required documentation. Clear guidance will also be provided regarding the lottery process, enrollment confirmation, and next steps following acceptance.

In alignment with best practices from high-performing schools, VALA NC emphasizes **clarity, consistency, and responsiveness** in all communications, ensuring that families are well-informed and supported throughout the admissions process (Hill and Tyson, 2009). This coordinated and mission-aligned approach ensures that all families have equitable access to information and the opportunity to apply.

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Q166.

How will information about the characteristics of successful remote learning be communicated to parents and guardians?



VALA NC will communicate the characteristics of successful remote learning to parents and guardians through a clear, consistent, and multi-layered approach that is directly aligned with the school's instructional model and the core characteristics of effective virtual learning environments. These characteristics include clear course structure, strong teacher–student interaction, active learning, personalized support, continuous feedback, self-regulation, digital literacy, structured routines, strong relationships, and family engagement (Johnson et al., 2023; Borup et al., 2020).

Beginning prior to the start of the school year, families will be introduced to these characteristics through the Student and Family Orientation Program. Orientation sessions will explicitly model and explain what successful remote learning looks like in practice, including how students engage in structured daily schedules, participate actively in live instruction, collaborate with peers, manage their time, and use digital tools responsibly. Families will also receive guidance on creating effective home learning environments and supporting student routines, engagement, and accountability.

This foundation will be reinforced through Parent University, which serves as the school's primary structure for ongoing family learning and engagement. Workshops will be intentionally aligned to the key characteristics of successful remote learning, helping families understand how to support areas such as self-regulation, motivation, digital citizenship, and participation in both synchronous and asynchronous learning. Sessions will also address how personalized instruction, intervention (WIN blocks), and continuous assessment support student growth.

To ensure ongoing access to information, families will utilize the Family Resource Hub, which will house recorded sessions, guides, checklists, and practical tools organized around the core characteristics of successful remote learning. Resources will include tutorials on digital platforms, strategies for supporting independent learning, and guidance on interpreting student progress data.

VALA NC will further reinforce these expectations through ongoing, two-way communication. Teachers will provide regular updates, feedback, and progress monitoring through the learning management system, while parent-teacher conferences and advisory meetings will offer individualized guidance aligned to each student's needs. Advisory teachers will serve as key points of contact, helping families understand how the core characteristics—such as engagement, consistency, and self-management—apply to their child's learning experience.

In addition, the school will emphasize the importance of strong relationships, structured learning with teacher guidance, and student motivation as essential components of success in a virtual environment. Families will be supported in understanding how these elements contribute to student persistence, confidence, and achievement.

Through this cohesive, transparent, and continuous communication approach, VALA NC ensures that families not only understand the characteristics of successful remote learning, but are also equipped to actively reinforce them at home. This alignment between school practices and family support systems strengthens student engagement, promotes accountability, and supports long-term academic success in the virtual learning environment.



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Q167.

Describe any school nutrition services provided to students.



VALA NC recognizes that access to adequate nutrition is essential for student health, cognitive development, and academic success. In alignment with expectations of the North Carolina Charter School Review Board, the school has developed a comprehensive plan to ensure that all students—regardless of geographic location—are supported in accessing reliable food resources.

As a fully virtual public charter school without a physical campus, VALA NC does not operate a traditional school nutrition program (e.g., on-site meal preparation or cafeteria services). However, the school will actively support student well-being by establishing partnerships, providing resource navigation, and implementing proactive outreach systems to address food insecurity among enrolled families.

Partnership with Zakat Foundation of America (ZFA)

VALA NC will collaborate closely with ZFA, a nationally and internationally recognized humanitarian nonprofit organization dedicated to alleviating poverty and hunger through sustainable and emergency relief programs. A member of the VALA NC Governing Board serves as the Executive Director of ZFA, strengthening coordination, accountability, and responsiveness in delivering support to families.

ZFA has an active presence in North Carolina, where it has organized large-scale food distribution events, Ramadan food box programs, refugee assistance initiatives, and emergency relief campaigns in communities such as Raleigh, Charlotte, and Greensboro. These efforts have included partnerships with local mosques, community centers, and nonprofit organizations to distribute thousands of pounds of food to families in need, particularly during high-demand periods and times of crisis.

Through this partnership, VALA NC families may benefit from:

- **Monthly Food Assistance:** Distribution of nutritious food packages (e.g., grains, proteins, canned goods, and fresh produce when available) through coordinated delivery or regional pick-up points.
- **Emergency Relief Support:** Rapid assistance for families experiencing sudden hardship due to job loss, medical emergencies, or natural disasters.
- **Seasonal and Holiday Programs:** Expanded food distribution during Ramadan, Thanksgiving, and winter months, including ready-to-eat meals and grocery boxes.
- **Community-Based Food Distribution:** Access to ZFA-supported local food drives and pop-up distribution events across North Carolina.
- **Support for Vulnerable Populations:** Targeted services for refugee and underserved families who may face additional barriers to accessing public assistance programs.

Additional Support Provided by VALA NC

To ensure compliance with state expectations for student support services and to proactively address barriers to learning, VALA NC will implement the following systems:

- **Statewide Food Resource Directory:** A centralized, regularly updated directory accessible via the VALA NC website and family portal, including North Carolina food banks, local pantries, school meal sites, and federal nutrition programs such as SNAP and WIC.
- **Individualized Family Support and Referrals:** The Family Engagement and Student Support Teams will provide one-on-one assistance to families in identifying and accessing food resources, including support with applications and eligibility navigation.



- **Family Education and Outreach:** VALA NC will offer virtual workshops in partnership with community organizations and health professionals on topics such as nutrition, meal planning, budgeting, and accessing public assistance programs.
- **Proactive Identification and Intervention:** Staff will be trained to recognize indicators of food insecurity through ongoing communication and engagement with families, allowing for timely referrals and support.
- **Confidential and Culturally Responsive Services:** All supports will be delivered in a manner that prioritizes privacy, dignity, and cultural sensitivity, ensuring equitable access for all families.

Research and Evidence Base

VALA NC's approach is grounded in well-established research demonstrating the critical link between nutrition and student outcomes:

- The United States Department of Agriculture reports that food insecurity is associated with lower academic performance, increased absenteeism, and reduced concentration among school-aged children (USDA, 2023).
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention highlights that proper nutrition supports brain development, cognitive function, and overall student health, all of which are essential for learning (CDC, 2022).
- Research further indicates that students experiencing food insecurity are more likely to face behavioral challenges and diminished academic engagement (Gundersen & Ziliak, 2015; Jyoti et al., 2005).

By proactively addressing these challenges through partnerships and support systems, VALA NC aims to remove barriers to learning and promote equitable student outcomes.

Commitment to Student Well-Being

While VALA NC does not provide direct meal services due to its virtual structure, the school is fully committed to ensuring that no student's educational experience is hindered by lack of access to adequate nutrition. Through strategic partnerships—particularly with the Zakat Foundation of America—and a comprehensive system of family support, VALA NC will meet and exceed expectations for student services by prioritizing the holistic well-being of every learner.

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Q168. Describe any transportation services provided to students.

VALA NC operates as a fully virtual public charter school, and as such, does not provide daily, routine transportation services. Students participate in instruction remotely from their homes or other locations with internet access, eliminating the need for daily commutes and removing transportation as a barrier to enrollment and participation. This model increases accessibility and flexibility for students and families across the state (Barbour and Reeves, 2009).

While daily transportation is not required, VALA NC will provide structured transportation support for required in-person activities, such as state-mandated testing, special education services when applicable, and select school-sponsored events. Students will be assigned to testing or service locations based on geographic proximity whenever possible.

To ensure equitable access, the school will implement a flexible, needs-based approach to transportation for these activities. This may include:

- Parent or guardian transportation
- Reimbursement to families when transportation presents a financial barrier
- Coordination with contracted transportation providers when appropriate
- Identification of alternative, more accessible locations when feasible

For students with disabilities, transportation will be provided as a related service when required by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). These services will be arranged through qualified, licensed transportation providers and determined through the IEP team process to ensure safe and appropriate access.

VALA NC is committed to ensuring that no student is unable to participate in required academic activities due to transportation challenges. This approach reflects the school's commitment to equity, accessibility, and statewide inclusion, ensuring that all students, regardless of geographic or socioeconomic circumstances, can fully engage in all required components of the educational program (Watson et al., 2014).

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10. Mission Purposes, and Goals

The mission and vision statements, taken together, should:

1. Identify the students and community to be served;
2. Illustrate what success will look like; and
3. Align with the purposes of the NC Charter School Law.

10.1. Mission and Vision

The mission and vision statements, taken together, should:

- Identify the students and community to be served;
- Illustrate what success will look like; and
- Align with the purposes of the NC Charter School Law.

Q169. Please state the mission statement of the proposed charter school (recommend 35 words or less). A school's mission statement should be a concise, formal declaration that articulates the school's fundamental purpose, core values, and educational philosophy. It serves as a guiding statement that defines what the institution stands for, whom it serves, and what it aims to accomplish.

The mission of VALA NC is to empower students across North Carolina through engaging AI-enhanced virtual learning, STEAM education, real-world experiences, strong character development, and family partnership for success in school, work, and life.

Q170. Please state the vision statement of the proposed school. A school vision statement is a forward-looking declaration that describes the school's aspirational goals and paints a picture of what the institution hopes to become or achieve in the future. While a mission statement focuses on the school's current purpose and how it operates, a vision statement articulates the desired future state and long-term impact.

VALA NC envisions a future where active, adaptive, and accessible AI-enhanced virtual learning empowers every student across North Carolina to learn with purpose, build strong character, and thrive in a connected world.

Q171. In narrative form, please describe how you have assessed parental demand for the school.



Parental demand for VALA NC was assessed through a multi-faceted outreach strategy designed to engage families across diverse communities in North Carolina. The primary method of data collection was a Parent Interest Survey, distributed in both English and Spanish through the school's website, social media platforms, and community networks. The survey was designed to gather input on family interest in virtual learning, desired program features, and student needs..

To complement survey data, VALA NC conducted direct community engagement efforts, including presentations at community gatherings, outreach through religious and community organizations, and distribution of informational materials. These efforts provided opportunities for two-way communication, allowing families to ask questions, share concerns, and express interest in a high-quality virtual learning option.

Digital outreach included Facebook advertising campaigns and postings in community groups, which helped reach a broader audience, including families actively seeking alternative education options. Printed flyers in both English and Spanish were distributed at community events and posted in accessible public locations to ensure inclusivity.

As of April 21, VALA NC has received 71 completed survey responses (70 in English and 1 in Spanish), with responses continuing to be collected. Based on current trends and ongoing outreach, the school anticipates exceeding 200 responses prior to the interview phase with the North Carolina Charter Schools Review Board.

Collectively, survey data, community engagement, and ongoing outreach efforts demonstrate clear and growing parent interest in a structured, high-quality, and student-centered virtual learning model such as VALA NC.

Q172. Attach Appendix A: Evidence of Community/Parent Support. Please summarize your evidence in a narrative format with evidence such as the number of community events, flyers associated with events, etc..

1. Evidence should include, at a minimum, the following information:
2. Type of contact (e.g. survey, community event, speaking event)
3. Date of contact
4. Number of attendees
5. Indication of demand based on contact (e.g. 120 survey responses indicating interest; 1000 followers on social media account)

*****Do not include personal information of interested families. Do not include surveys/petitions/signatures. Please summarize your evidence rather than provide personal information from survey responses or forms.**



VALA NC has implemented a comprehensive and multi-channel outreach strategy to assess and build community and parent support across North Carolina. These efforts include surveys, community presentations, flyer distribution, and digital outreach campaigns. Collectively, these activities demonstrate strong and growing statewide demand for a high-quality virtual public school option.

1. Parent Interest Survey

- **Type of Contact:** Online survey (English and Spanish)
- **Dates:** Ongoing (Spring 2026)
- **Responses (as of April 24, 2026):** 74 total (73 English, 1 Spanish)

Key Findings of the Surveys

- **Strong demand:**
Approximately **97% of respondents** indicated interest in enrolling their child in VALA NC, selecting either “Yes, definitely” or “Possibly.”
- **Strong application intent:**
Approximately **70–75% of respondents** rated their likelihood of applying as **4 or 5 on a 5-point scale**, indicating a high level of commitment beyond general interest.
- **Demand extends beyond current online learners:**
Approximately **half of respondents (~50%)** reported that their child has **not previously participated in virtual or online learning**, indicating that VALA NC is attracting both experienced online learners and families new to virtual education.
- **Parents are seeking a different learning model:**
The most frequently cited reasons for interest include:
 - Personalized and flexible learning opportunities (~75–80%)
 - A safer and more supportive learning environment (~60%+)
 - Comfort with learning from home (~60%+)
 - Access to a tuition-free public option (~50%+)
- **Families strongly value VALA NC’s proposed model:**
The most-selected priorities include:
 - Personalized pacing (~75–80%)
 - Real-world, project-based learning (~75%+)
 - Active, engaging instruction (~70%+)
 - Flexible scheduling (~60%+)
 - Frequent teacher interaction and support (~60%+)
- **Access is strong, with continued need for support:**
 - Nearly all respondents (~98%) reported reliable or mostly reliable internet access
 - A large majority (~90%+) reported access to a device
 - However, a significant portion (~80%+) indicated they would benefit from or might benefit from school-provided technology



- **Broad grade-level demand:**

Survey responses represent a wide range of grade levels, including elementary, middle, and high school students, with particularly strong interest in **elementary and high school grades**.

Collectively, respondents represent **over 140 school-aged children**, indicating meaningful enrollment potential.

In summary, the survey results indicate strong and diverse statewide interest in VALA NC, particularly among families seeking a more personalized, engaging, and flexible alternative to traditional schooling. The data also highlight the importance of maintaining strong teacher support, structured learning environments, and accessible technology resources.

Indication of Demand:

Survey results demonstrate strong interest in VALA NC:

- Approximately **97%** of respondents indicated they would “definitely” or “possibly” enroll
- Approximately **70–75%** reported a high likelihood (4 or 5 on a 5-point scale) of applying
- Approximately **50%** of families are new to virtual learning, indicating demand beyond current online school users

Families expressed strong interest in:

- Personalized and flexible learning
- Increased teacher interaction and academic support
- Safe, structured, and engaging learning environments
- Tuition-free, high-quality public education options

2. Community Presentations / Speaking Events

- **Type of Contact:** In-person presentations at community gatherings
- **Dates:** Multiple events (Spring 2026)
- **Attendance:**
 - Event 1 in Raleigh: Approximately 300 attendees
 - Event 2 in Fayetteville: Approximately 100 attendees

Indication of Demand:

Presentations generated strong engagement, including active participation, follow-up questions, and requests for additional information. Families expressed a clear need for more structured, engaging, and supportive virtual learning options.

3. Flyer Distribution (English & Spanish)

- **Type of Contact:** Printed outreach materials
- **Dates:** Ongoing (Spring 2026)
- **Scope:** Hundreds of flyers distributed
- **Locations:** Community events, community centers, and faith-based organizations



Indication of Demand:

Flyer distribution contributed to increased survey participation, website visits, and direct inquiries from families seeking enrollment information.

4. Digital Outreach and Social Media Campaigns

- **Type of Contact:** Social media campaigns (e.g., Facebook), online parent/community groups
- **Dates:** Ongoing (Spring 2026)
- **Reach:** According to the Facebook statistics, approximately 17,000 individuals in the state of North Carolina reached through targeted Facebook advertising campaigns

Indication of Demand:

Digital outreach significantly expanded awareness statewide and generated measurable engagement, including link clicks, shares, and survey responses. Campaigns successfully reached diverse audiences, including families seeking alternative, flexible, and virtual education options.

Summary of Demand

Across all outreach efforts, VALA NC has observed consistent and growing interest from families across North Carolina. Families are seeking:

- More engaging and structured virtual learning environments
- Strong teacher interaction and consistent academic support
- Personalized instruction tailored to individual student needs
- Flexible, high-quality, tuition-free public education options

Survey results further indicate:

- Strong interest across **elementary, middle, and high school grade levels**
- Representation of **over 130 school-aged children**
- High levels of **technology access**, with continued need for optional school-provided support

5. Geographic Distribution of Interest

Survey responses were received from families across multiple regions of North Carolina, representing a diverse mix of urban, suburban, and rural communities.

In the **Triangle Region (Central North Carolina)**, responses were received from **Wake County** (Raleigh, Cary, Apex, Garner, Clayton, Fuquay-Varina, Holly Springs, Morrisville), **Durham County** (Durham), **Orange County** (Chapel Hill), and **Chatham County** (Moncure).

In the **Piedmont / Triad Region**, families responded from **Mecklenburg County** (Charlotte, Concord, Cornelius), **Guilford County** (High Point), **Alamance County** (Elon), **Stokes County** (Germanton), and **Rockingham County** (Ruffin).

In the **Sandhills / South-Central Region**, responses were received from **Cumberland County** (Fayetteville, Spring Lake, Hope Mills) and **Harnett County** (Cameron).



In the **Western / Foothills Region**, participating families were located in **Caldwell County** (Collettsville) and **Gaston County** (Gastonia).

In the **Eastern / Coastal Plain Region**, responses were received from **Pitt County** (Greenville, Winterville), **Johnston County** (Smithfield), **Carteret County** (Morehead City), and **Pasquotank County** (Elizabeth City).

This broad geographic representation demonstrates that interest in VALA NC spans all major regions of North Carolina—from highly populated metropolitan areas to smaller towns and rural communities—reinforcing the need for a statewide virtual charter school that provides equitable access to high-quality educational opportunities regardless of location.

Collectively, these outreach efforts provide strong and credible evidence of community and parent demand for VALA NC. Interest spans diverse regions, grade levels, and student backgrounds, with families consistently expressing a need for a more personalized, engaging, and flexible virtual learning option. These findings demonstrate that VALA NC is well-positioned to meet a clear and growing demand for high-quality, student-centered virtual education in North Carolina.

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Applicant Evidence :

		
Appendix A- Evidence of ...	Appendix A - Marketing ...	Appendix A - Parent Inter...
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Q173.If applicable, provide evidence of any committed business, civic, or other community support.



VALA NC has demonstrated meaningful early community and institutional support through formal letters of endorsement from higher education leaders, as well as ongoing outreach with families, educators, and community organizations.

Notably, VALA NC has received formal letters of support from:

- The Dean of Mathematics and Sciences at Fayetteville Technical Community College (FTCC)
- The Chair of the Department of Chemistry, Physics, and Materials Science at Fayetteville State University (FSU)

These letters provide strong evidence of committed academic support and alignment with VALA NC's instructional vision.

The FSU department chair highlights Dr. Akbay's proven leadership in implementing evidence-based, student-centered instructional models, including National Science Foundation (NSF)-funded initiatives such as the Studio Classroom and the S-STEM S8 Program. These initiatives have demonstrated measurable improvements in student engagement, retention, and academic success, and serve as a strong foundation for the proposed VALA NC model. The letter further affirms that VALA NC's emphasis on active learning, structured support systems, and meaningful teacher-student interaction addresses a critical need in virtual education.

Similarly, the Dean of Mathematics and Sciences at FTCC emphasizes the effectiveness of active, student-centered learning approaches—particularly in online environments—and expresses strong support for VALA NC's model of personalized, data-informed instruction. The letter also identifies clear opportunities for collaboration between VALA NC and community colleges, including dual enrollment pathways, early college exposure, and workforce readiness initiatives, which can significantly enhance student outcomes and long-term success.

In addition to these formal endorsements, VALA NC has engaged in ongoing outreach efforts that include presentations at community gatherings, engagement with families through religious and local organizations, and conversations with stakeholders in education, public service, and community networks. These interactions have generated positive feedback and indicate strong interest in a high-quality, structured virtual learning option that emphasizes active learning, personalization, and strong teacher support.

VALA NC is actively exploring and developing partnerships with:

- **Higher education institutions** to support dual enrollment, academic enrichment, and guest instruction
- **Industry and workforce partners** to provide career awareness, mentorship, and real-world learning opportunities
- **Community organizations** to strengthen family engagement, student services, and outreach

As the school progresses through the approval and planning phases, these relationships will be formalized through memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and partnership agreements to further enhance academic programming, student support services, and postsecondary pathways.



Overall, the combination of formal higher education endorsements and broad-based community engagement demonstrates strong and growing support for VALA NC. These partnerships provide a solid foundation for collaboration, innovation, and long-term sustainability as the school moves toward implementation.

Applicant Evidence :


VALA NC_Letters of Supp...

Uploaded on **4/23/2026** by
Lauren Watters

Q174. Select one or more of the six legislative purposes the proposed charter will achieve.

- ☒ Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunities to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.
- ☒ Hold schools accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.
- ☒ Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public-school system.
- ☒ Improving student learning
- ☒ Increasing learning opportunities for all students, with a special emphasis on at-risk or gifted students.
- ☒ Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods.

Q175. For each purpose selected above, provide a brief narrative explaining how this school will meet that objective and the associated goals of the applicant.



Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunities to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.

VALA NC creates expanded professional opportunities for teachers through its innovative virtual learning model. The school provides educators with the opportunity to teach in a fully virtual public school environment, expanding access to the profession for highly qualified educators across North Carolina who may seek flexible or remote instructional roles.

Within this model, teachers play an active role in designing and facilitating learning experiences rather than delivering prepackaged curriculum. Educators collaborate to develop interdisciplinary projects, implement team-based learning, and use real-time student data to personalize instruction. Teachers also participate in regular instructional design meetings and data review cycles, allowing them to take shared responsibility for improving the school's academic program. This structure promotes professional autonomy, collaboration, and continuous improvement (DuFour, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Hold schools accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.

VALA NC establishes a strong culture of accountability through clearly defined academic expectations, data-driven decision-making, and continuous monitoring of student progress. The school utilizes a comprehensive assessment system that includes frequent formative assessments, benchmark evaluations, and mastery-based measures aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.

Student performance data (including academic progress, engagement, and attendance) are reviewed regularly by teachers and school leaders to identify trends and guide instructional decisions. Structured data meetings and targeted intervention planning ensure that learning gaps are addressed promptly. Governance oversight, including regular reporting to the Board of Directors, further strengthens accountability and ensures alignment with state performance expectations. Research supports that formative assessment and data-informed instruction significantly improve student outcomes (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie, 2009).

Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public-school system.

VALA NC expands public school choice by offering a high-quality, statewide virtual learning option that combines flexibility with structured, teacher-led instruction. This model allows students to access rigorous academic programs regardless of geographic location while maintaining consistent engagement and support.

This option is particularly valuable for families seeking alternatives to traditional school settings due to scheduling needs, health considerations, individualized learning preferences, or access to advanced and specialized coursework. Expanding access to diverse educational options has been shown to improve alignment between student needs and learning environments, increasing engagement and satisfaction (Bettinger et al., 2017; Gill et al., 2015).

Improving student learning



Improving student learning is central to VALA NC's mission and instructional design. The school's educational model emphasizes active learning, collaborative problem-solving, and real-world application through project-based and inquiry-driven approaches. Students engage in meaningful learning experiences supported by frequent formative assessment and timely feedback.

Personalized learning pathways, targeted interventions, and structured academic supports—such as the daily WIN (“What I Need”) block—ensure that students receive the instruction and support necessary to achieve mastery of state standards. Research demonstrates that active learning, retrieval practice, and feedback significantly enhance student understanding and retention (Freeman et al., 2014; Dunlosky et al., 2013).

Increasing learning opportunities for all students, with a special emphasis on at-risk or gifted students.

VALA NC increases learning opportunities for all students through a flexible, inclusive, and personalized instructional model grounded in Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Instruction is differentiated to meet diverse needs, ensuring equitable access for students who are at risk of academic difficulty as well as those who require advanced challenges.

Students needing additional support benefit from small-group instruction, tutoring, mentoring, and targeted interventions delivered through structured systems such as the WIN block. Early identification and progress monitoring ensure timely support. Advanced learners are provided with enrichment opportunities, interdisciplinary projects, and access to advanced coursework. Research indicates that differentiated instruction and early intervention systems improve outcomes and reduce achievement gaps (Tomlinson, 2014; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).

Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods.

VALA NC promotes innovative teaching methods through the integration of team-based learning, project-based learning, interdisciplinary instruction, and AI-supported adaptive learning tools within its 5A Learning Framework. These approaches emphasize inquiry, collaboration, and real-world problem-solving.

Teachers use instructional data to adapt learning experiences, ensuring responsiveness to student needs while maintaining high academic expectations. Technology enhances instruction, but strong teacher-student relationships remain central. Research shows that combining active learning strategies with well-designed technology integration improves student engagement and achievement (Means et al., 2013; Pane et al., 2017).

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Q176. Educational Need and Targeted Student Population of the Proposed Charter School Does the school plan to provide services to certain targeted subgroup(s), if so please explain? Provide a description of the Targeted Population in terms of demographics. In your description, include how this population will reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the school system in which it is located. Additionally, how it will reflect the socioeconomic status of the LEA, SWD population, and MLL population of the district? See G.S. 115C-218.45(e) (https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_115C/GS_115C-218.45.pdf).



Since VALA NC will be a statewide virtual charter school, enrollment will be open to all eligible North Carolina students. However, the school's instructional model is intentionally designed to support several groups of learners who often benefit from flexible and personalized learning environments.

These include:

- Students who benefit from individualized pacing and adaptive instruction.
- Students who thrive in project-based or technology-enhanced learning environments.
- Students who have struggled in traditional classroom settings and require more personalized academic support.
- Students seeking accelerated learning opportunities or expanded coursework not available in their local district.
- Students with disabilities who benefit from adaptive technologies and flexible learning environments.
- Multilingual learners who can benefit from differentiated instruction and language-support tools embedded in digital platforms.
- Students living in rural or geographically isolated communities who may have limited access to specialized programs or advanced coursework.
- Students with health, social, or family circumstances that make a traditional daily school schedule difficult.

The school's design reflects the needs of these learners through its instructional and support model. VALA NC's 5A Framework: Active Learning, Adaptive Instruction, Accountable Systems, Authentic Experiences, and Accessible Education, creates a highly personalized learning environment supported by data monitoring, family engagement, and differentiated instruction.

Since VALA NC will serve students statewide, the targeted student population is expected to closely reflect the demographic composition of North Carolina's overall public school population rather than that of a single district. Enrollment projections were developed using statewide demographic data from the North Carolina School Report Card and enrollment trends from existing statewide virtual charter schools.

Based on these data sources, VALA NC anticipates enrolling a diverse student population that mirrors statewide racial and ethnic demographics. Projected enrollment includes approximately **41.6% White, 22.8% Black or African American, 24.2% Hispanic/Latino, 4.5% Asian, 5.8% identifying as Two or More Races, 1% American Indian/Native American, and 0.1% Pacific Islander.**

The school also anticipates serving a student population that reflects statewide socioeconomic patterns. VALA NC projects that approximately **55% of enrolled students will qualify as economically disadvantaged**, which is consistent with enrollment trends in existing statewide virtual charter schools.

VALA NC further anticipates serving a diverse population of students with specialized learning needs. Based on statewide data and enrollment trends in current virtual charter schools, the school projects that approximately **18% of enrolled students will be identified as Students with Disabilities (SWD)** and approximately **8% will be identified as Multilingual Learners (MLL).**



Through this model, VALA NC aims to serve a diverse statewide population while providing a high-quality virtual learning environment that supports academic growth, engagement, and long-term student success.

Q177. What are the enrollment trends and academic performance outcomes of surrounding schools in the selected community? What elements of your educational model will meet the needs of your target student population?



North Carolina currently has three statewide virtual charter schools serving students across the state: North Carolina Cyber Academy, North Carolina Virtual Academy, and Dogwood Virtual Academy (formerly Pine Springs Preparatory Remote Academy). These schools provide the most relevant comparison for analyzing enrollment trends and academic outcomes in the virtual charter sector.

These schools demonstrate sustained statewide demand for virtual learning options. Current statewide virtual charter schools collectively enroll several thousand students across North Carolina, indicating that many families are actively seeking alternatives to traditional brick-and-mortar schools.

However, publicly available North Carolina School Report Card data indicates that academic outcomes across the existing statewide virtual sector remain inconsistent. For the 2024–2025 school year:

- North Carolina Virtual Academy received a School Performance Grade of D (score 48) and did not meet expected academic growth.
- North Carolina Cyber Academy received a School Performance Grade of D (score 51) and did not meet overall growth expectations, although the school did meet growth in reading.
- Dogwood Virtual Academy (formerly Pine Springs Prep Remote Academy) received a School Performance Grade of F (score 29) and did not meet expected growth.

These outcomes reflect national research findings that many traditional virtual school models rely heavily on passive asynchronous instruction, limited real-time engagement, and inconsistent monitoring of student progress (Molnar et al., 2019; Rice, 2006). While enrollment demand for virtual education remains strong, these performance trends demonstrate a clear opportunity for a more rigorous and engaging model of virtual learning.

VALA NC's educational model was intentionally designed to address these challenges. The educational philosophy of Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina is grounded in the belief that virtual learning should be active, adaptive, accountable, authentic, and accessible. As articulated in the school's mission, VALA NC exists to empower students to actively create, think, and grow through real-world projects, AI-driven technology, and purposeful learning for college, career, and life.

Unlike traditional virtual models that rely primarily on passive content consumption, VALA NC is designed as an Active Learning Ecosystem in which students engage in inquiry, collaboration, and meaningful application of knowledge (Freeman et al., 2014).

Several key elements of the VALA NC model directly address the needs of the school's targeted student population:

Active Learning

Students learn by doing. Instruction is intentionally designed to move beyond passive content consumption by engaging students in inquiry-based learning, team-based learning, and project-based experiences. During synchronous sessions, students participate in structured discussions, problem-solving tasks, simulations, and collaborative activities that require them to apply concepts in real time. Asynchronous components reinforce this learning through practice, reflection, and application. Retrieval practice, peer instruction, and frequent opportunities for student explanation are embedded to strengthen long-term retention and deeper understanding (Freeman et al., 2014; Brown et al., 2014).



Adaptive Instruction

Instruction is personalized to meet the diverse needs of learners. VALA NC utilizes data from formative assessments, learning management systems, and adaptive platforms (e.g., AI-supported tools) to continuously adjust instruction based on student performance, pace, and interests. Teachers provide differentiated supports through small-group instruction, targeted interventions during the WIN (“What I Need”) block, and enrichment opportunities for advanced learners. This ensures that each student receives the appropriate level of challenge and support to progress toward mastery (Pane et al., 2015; Tomlinson, 2014).

Accountable Systems

VALA NC establishes a culture of shared responsibility for student success through transparent and data-driven systems. Teachers, students, families, and school leadership regularly monitor academic progress, attendance, and engagement using real-time data dashboards and progress reports. Frequent formative assessments, benchmark assessments, and performance tasks provide actionable insights that inform instruction and intervention. Clear expectations, consistent communication, and structured feedback loops ensure that all stakeholders remain actively engaged in supporting student learning outcomes (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie, 2009).

Authentic Experiences

Learning is grounded in real-world relevance. Students engage in interdisciplinary, project-based learning experiences that connect academic content to real-life problems, community issues, and career pathways. These experiences may include virtual labs, case studies, research projects, internships, and collaboration with industry or community partners. By applying their knowledge in meaningful contexts, students develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills essential for college, career, and civic life (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008).

Accessible Education

VALA NC is committed to ensuring that all students can access high-quality instruction. Courses are designed using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression. Instruction incorporates flexible pacing, varied instructional modalities (live, recorded, visual, and interactive), and scaffolded supports for diverse learners, including students with disabilities and multilingual learners. The virtual environment also allows for personalized accommodations and expanded access to resources, ensuring equity and inclusion for all students (CAST, 2018).

Through this design, VALA NC aims to meet the needs of North Carolina students seeking flexible learning options while also addressing the instructional weaknesses that have historically limited the effectiveness of many virtual school programs.

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Q178. What will be the total projected enrollment at the charter school and what percentage of the Average Daily Membership (ADM) does that reflect when compared to the Local Education Agency (LEA) of the same offered grade levels? (i.e. If the proposed school will be grades 9-12, only compare the total enrollment to the total enrollment of the LEA in grades 9-12).



VALA NC projects an initial enrollment of approximately 330 students in Year 1, with steady growth to approximately 930 students by Year 6 and in subsequent years at full implementation. Enrollment will increase gradually through a phased implementation model in which the school will open serving grades K–5 and add additional grade levels each year until reaching full K–12 implementation. This measured growth approach ensures that academic programs, staffing structures, and student support systems are developed with fidelity and sustainability as the school expands.

As a statewide virtual charter school, VALA NC will enroll students from across North Carolina rather than a single Local Education Agency (LEA). For contextual comparison, Wake County Public School System—the largest LEA in the state—serves over 160,000 students across grades K–12. VALA NC's projected full enrollment of approximately 930 students represents less than 0.6% of this LEA's total enrollment.

Additionally, when compared to the statewide public school population of approximately 1,516,282 students (NC School Report Card, 2025), VALA NC's enrollment represents approximately 0.061% of total Average Daily Membership (ADM). This demonstrates that the proposed charter school will serve a very small proportion of students and will have minimal impact on enrollment in any individual LEA across the state.

This modest enrollment level reflects the school's intentional phased growth model and ensures that VALA NC can provide a high-quality virtual learning environment while maintaining operational sustainability and limited fiscal impact on traditional public school districts.

Q179. Summarize what the proposed school will do differently than the surrounding schools serving the same population of students. What will make this school unique and more effective than the currently available public-school options?



North Carolina currently offers a limited number of full-time virtual public-school options, primarily consisting of three statewide virtual charter schools: North Carolina Cyber Academy, North Carolina Virtual Academy, and Dogwood Virtual Academy. While these schools provide important access to online learning, many families continue to seek a more engaging, personalized, and outcomes-driven virtual education model.

Families increasingly choose virtual schooling for flexibility, safety, and access to broader opportunities; however, research shows that many virtual programs rely heavily on passive, self-paced learning with limited interaction, which can lead to lower engagement and weaker academic outcomes (Borup et al., 2020; Rice, 2022; Molnar et al., 2023). VALA NC was intentionally designed to address these limitations by redefining what high-quality virtual education should look like.

As articulated in the VALA NC academic framework, the school is built on the 5A Learning Framework: Active Learning, Adaptive Instruction, Accountable Systems, Authentic Experiences, and Accessible Education, ensuring strong academics, meaningful engagement, and measurable results.

Rather than functioning as a passive content-delivery platform, VALA NC operates as a structured, student-centered Active Learning Ecosystem in which every component—from curriculum to assessment to family engagement—is intentionally designed to support student success.

1. Strong Academic Foundations and Coherent Learning Progression

A defining strength of VALA NC is its intentional focus on building strong foundational skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and digital literacy—skills essential for success across all disciplines. Instruction is grounded in clear learning objectives, explicit teaching, and guided practice to develop both procedural fluency and conceptual understanding.

The curriculum is vertically aligned across grade levels, ensuring that each year builds coherently on prior knowledge and skills. This structured progression reinforces key concepts, prevents learning gaps, and supports cumulative mastery. Teachers intentionally connect new learning to previously learned material, enabling students to deepen understanding and apply knowledge in increasingly complex contexts.

VALA NC also emphasizes regular opportunities for practice, retrieval, and application, ensuring that learning is retained and transferable. Research shows that coherent curriculum design and systematic progression significantly improve student achievement and reduce learning loss (Schmidt et al., 2005; National Research Council, 2012; Steiner et al., 2021). As a result, students develop deep, durable, and transferable understanding rather than surface-level knowledge.

2. Data-Driven Instruction, Early Intervention, and Continuous Monitoring

VALA NC distinguishes itself through robust, real-time monitoring and proactive intervention systems. Students engage in frequent, low-stakes formative assessments that provide immediate insight into their understanding, while teachers continuously analyze participation, performance, and engagement data to adjust instruction and provide targeted support.



Unlike traditional and many virtual models that respond after failure occurs, VALA NC emphasizes early identification and intervention, ensuring that small challenges are addressed before they become significant barriers.

VALA NC implements a structured student progress monitoring and early warning system, enhanced through its **RADAR** (Real-time Analytics for Detection, Action, and Response) framework/system. Borrowing from scientific quality control principles, this framework continuously detects and responds to early signs of academic risk.

Within the RADAR System:

- **Continuous Monitoring:** Student performance, engagement, and growth are tracked across multiple indicators, including attendance, assignment completion, formative assessments, participation, and growth trends.
- **Early Detection:** Data signals identify deviations from expected learning trajectories, such as declining engagement, inconsistent performance, or slowed progress.
- **Targeted Intervention:** Timely, tiered supports are implemented through WIN blocks, small-group instruction, one-on-one support, tutoring, mentoring, and family outreach.
- **Dynamic Adjustment:** Instruction is continuously refined based on real-time data to meet individual student needs.

Rather than relying solely on periodic grades, this system evaluates both current performance and growth trends over time. When early warning signals are identified, immediate and targeted interventions are deployed.

By integrating continuous monitoring with structured intervention, VALA NC ensures that support is proactive rather than reactive, enabling students to remain on track while maintaining high academic expectations alongside strong support systems.

Research supports the effectiveness of formative assessment, early warning systems, and timely feedback in improving student outcomes and preventing long-term academic decline (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Hattie, 2009; Faria et al., 2017; Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012; Klute et al., 2021).

3. Active, Engaging, and Structured Learning Design

VALA NC moves beyond passive online instruction by implementing a highly interactive, structured learning model where students actively engage in discussions, collaboration, and real-world problem-solving. Instruction is delivered through live, teacher-led sessions supported by a structured learning cycle:

Guided Readiness → Mini-Lesson → Readiness Check → Collaborative Application → Assessment

Prior to live instruction, students complete **Guided Readiness** activities such as short videos, readings, and targeted tasks that introduce key concepts, activate prior knowledge, and reduce cognitive load, allowing for deeper engagement during synchronous sessions.



During live instruction, teachers deliver focused mini-lessons followed by immediate readiness checks. Students then engage in collaborative application through discussion and problem-solving, culminating in short assessments that provide actionable feedback.

This model ensures that synchronous time is used for active learning and higher-order thinking rather than passive content delivery. It aligns with research demonstrating that pre-training, retrieval practice, and active engagement improve student performance, retention, and transfer of learning (Freeman et al., 2014; Prince, 2004; Deslauriers et al., 2019; Mayer, 2009; Roediger and Karpicke, 2006).

4. Personalized and Adaptive Learning Pathways

VALA NC provides true personalization by continuously adjusting instruction based on each student's progress, strengths, and learning needs. Through a combination of adaptive technologies and teacher-driven differentiation, students experience individualized learning pathways that allow for flexible pacing, targeted support, and meaningful enrichment.

Rather than following a one-size-fits-all model, instruction is responsive to real-time student performance, enabling students to progress when ready, revisit concepts as needed, and engage with content at an appropriate level of challenge. This ensures that advanced learners are appropriately challenged while students needing additional support can build mastery without falling behind.

This approach directly addresses a key limitation of traditional education—uniform pacing—and supports more efficient and effective learning. Research shows that personalized and adaptive learning models can lead to measurable gains in student achievement, engagement, and motivation (Pane et al., 2017; VanLehn, 2011; Walkington and Bernacki, 2020).

5. Strong Accountability Systems and Teacher Presence

A critical differentiator of VALA NC is its emphasis on structured schedules, consistent teacher presence, and clearly defined accountability systems. Students participate in live, teacher-led instruction where expectations for attendance, participation, and academic engagement are explicitly communicated and consistently reinforced.

Teachers maintain an active instructional presence by providing real-time guidance, facilitating discussions, monitoring student participation, and delivering immediate, actionable feedback. This structured environment ensures that students remain engaged, supported, and accountable throughout the learning process.

Research consistently identifies teacher presence and structured interaction as key predictors of success in online learning environments (Garrison et al., 2010; Borup et al., 2020; Martin et al., 2020), highlighting the importance of sustained teacher-student interaction in promoting engagement and academic achievement.



6. Engagement, Belonging, and Whole-Child Development

VALA NC intentionally addresses one of the most common challenges of virtual education—student isolation—by fostering sustained engagement, intrinsic motivation, and a strong sense of belonging. Students regularly participate in collaborative learning experiences, interactive discussions, clubs, mentoring, and advisory structures designed to build meaningful peer and teacher connections.

These opportunities promote not only academic engagement but also social interaction and community building, which are essential in a virtual environment. Through consistent participation and relationship-building, students develop a sense of identity, ownership, and connection to the school community.

In addition, VALA NC integrates the CRISP–RISE character framework to support whole-child development, emphasizing essential life skills such as responsibility, perseverance, empathy, respect, and self-discipline. Research demonstrates that student engagement and social-emotional development are strongly linked to academic achievement, motivation, and long-term success (Fredricks et al., 2004; Durlak et al., 2011; OECD, 2021).

7. Strong Relationships, Mentoring, and Family Partnership

VALA NC places a strong emphasis on relationships and communication, ensuring that students receive consistent mentoring and guidance while families remain active partners in the learning process. Teachers and staff build meaningful connections with students through regular interactions, personalized support, and ongoing communication.

Families are provided with clear, timely access to student progress, expectations, and learning goals, enabling them to actively support their child’s academic journey. Transparent communication and structured opportunities for family involvement strengthen the home–school partnership and promote shared responsibility for student success.

Research highlights that family engagement is a critical factor in student achievement, particularly in virtual and hybrid learning environments (Hill and Tyson, 2009; Kraft and Rogers, 2015).

8. Teacher Excellence, Sustainability, and Innovation

VALA NC invests intentionally in teacher development, collaboration, and support to ensure consistent, high-quality instruction across all classrooms. Teachers engage in ongoing, job-embedded professional learning focused on effective online pedagogy, active learning strategies, and data-informed instruction, enabling them to continuously refine their practice.

The model emphasizes collaboration, reflective practice, and instructional innovation, creating a culture of continuous improvement and professional growth. This approach supports both instructional consistency and long-term sustainability by equipping teachers with the skills needed to adapt to evolving student needs and virtual learning environments.



Effective teaching remains the most significant school-based factor influencing student achievement (Hattie, 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020), and VALA NC's model ensures that teachers are well-prepared, supported, and continuously improving.

9. Real-World Learning and Future-Ready STEAM Education

VALA NC connects learning to real-world applications through project-based learning, integrated STEAM experiences, and career-connected opportunities. Students engage in authentic problem-solving tasks that require critical thinking, collaboration, and the application of interdisciplinary knowledge.

These experiences expose students to real-world challenges, industry-relevant skills, and pathways in higher education and the workforce, helping them make meaningful connections between academic content and future goals. By emphasizing relevance and application, VALA NC prepares students not only for academic success but also for college, careers, and informed civic participation.

Research shows that real-world, project-based learning enhances critical thinking, problem-solving, and long-term retention (Krajcik and Blumenfeld, 2006; Condliffe et al., 2017; Grossman et al., 2021).

In summary, VALA NC expands high-quality virtual learning options in North Carolina by offering a comprehensive, research-based, and student-centered alternative to both traditional schools and existing virtual programs.

By integrating strong academic foundations, active and personalized learning, real-time data use, structured accountability—including a proactive student progress monitoring and early warning system—meaningful relationships, and real-world relevance, VALA NC addresses the most common limitations of current educational models.

As a result, VALA NC is uniquely positioned to deliver higher levels of student engagement, stronger academic outcomes, and a more meaningful, future-ready educational experience for students across North Carolina.

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10.2. Goals for the Proposed Charter School

Q180. Provide specific and measurable goals for the proposed school for the first 5 years of operation outlining expectations for the proposed school's operations, academics, finance, and governance. Address how often, who, and when the information will be communicated to the governing board and other stakeholders.



VALA NC will implement a comprehensive, data-driven performance framework aligned to its mission, instructional model, and the North Carolina Charter School Performance Framework. At the highest level, VALA NC is committed to becoming the highest performing and most desired virtual school in North Carolina, as measured by academic outcomes, student engagement, family satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness.

The school's goals are intentionally designed to reflect both the realities of a start-up virtual school and the opportunity to outperform existing virtual models in North Carolina. Performance targets are informed by state growth expectations, virtual school performance trends, and research on student engagement and persistence in online learning environments.

In the area of academic performance, VALA NC will prioritize student growth as the leading indicator of success in its early years, with a strategic progression toward increased proficiency over time. Given that many virtual schools serve highly mobile and academically diverse populations, this phased approach ensures both rigor and realism.

Student Growth:

Year 1-2: Meet expected growth schoolwide

Years 3-5: Exceed expected growth annually

Proficiency:

Year 1: Establish baseline performance

Years 2-3: Increase overall proficiency by approximately 3-5 percentage points annually

Years 4-5: Continue annual growth and outperform comparable NC virtual schools

Subgroup Performance:

By Year 3: All subgroups meet or exceed expected growth

Years 4-5: Demonstrate measurable narrowing of achievement gaps

Recognizing that student engagement and persistence are critical success factors in virtual education, VALA NC will set clear, measurable goals for course completion and student retention. These indicators reflect a student's ability to remain actively engaged, successfully complete coursework, and persist in a virtual learning environment. Targets are informed by national virtual school benchmarks and are intentionally designed to exceed typical virtual school performance while remaining ambitious and attainable for a start-up model.

Course Completion:

Year 1-2: Establish systems, monitor trends, and set a baseline for completion rates

Years 3-5: Achieve and maintain at least 95% course completion annually



Student Retention:

Years 1–2: 90%

Years 3–5: Maintain above 90%

VALA NC will prioritize strong implementation and operational excellence from the outset, ensuring that systems, structures, and supports are in place to deliver a high-quality virtual program.

- **Enrollment & Stability:**

- Year 1: $\geq 95\%$ of enrollment target by Day 20
- Years 2–5: Maintain 95–100% of projected enrollment

- **Instructional Model Fidelity:**

- Year 1: Full implementation of instructional model
- Years 2–5: $\geq 90\%$ fidelity based on internal reviews

- **Compliance & Systems:**

- All Years: 100% on-time compliance submissions
- Year 1+: $\geq 95\%$ student onboarding (devices/connectivity) within first 10 days

- **Family Engagement:**

- By Year 3: $\geq 90\%$ family satisfaction

VALA NC will maintain a conservative and sustainable financial model aligned to enrollment and operational growth.

- **Budget & Audit:**

- All Years: Balanced budget and clean annual audit

- **Cash Reserves:**

- All Years: 3% annually into cash
- Year 3: Have at least \$500,000 in reserves
- Year 5: Have at least \$750,00 in reserves

The governing board will ensure strong oversight, accountability, and alignment to the school's mission through structured practices and continuous improvement.

- **Board Capacity:**

- All Years: 100% annual board training completion
- Annual board self-assessment

- **Oversight:**

- Monthly review of academic, financial, and operational dashboards
- All Years: Meet or exceed NC Charter Performance Framework expectations



- **Strategic Alignment:**

- Annual strategic review tied to mission and performance data

VALA NC will implement a structured and transparent system for monitoring progress and communicating results to the governing board and stakeholders.

- **Monthly:** Executive Director provides performance dashboards (academics, finance, operations)
- **Quarterly:** Deep-dive review of progress, subgroup performance, and strategic priorities
- **Annually:** Comprehensive performance report shared with board and stakeholders

Ongoing: Family communication through newsletters, reports, and school updates

Q181. How will the governing board know that the proposed public charter school is working toward attaining their mission statement?

The VALA NC governing board will determine whether the school is achieving its mission through a comprehensive performance management system that aligns directly with the school's instructional model and key indicators of success in a virtual learning environment. The board will monitor key indicators including student growth outcomes, progress toward proficiency, attendance and participation rates, course completion, and retention. Additional indicators such as the effectiveness of intervention systems (including WIN blocks), family satisfaction, staff performance, and financial stability will provide a comprehensive view of organizational health and mission alignment.

Monthly: Review of performance dashboard across all domains

Quarterly: Trend analysis, goal monitoring, and strategic adjustments

Annually: Full evaluation using state accountability data, audits, and internal reports

Through this structured cycle of data review, reflection, and decision-making, the board will maintain a clear and evidence-based understanding of whether VALA NC is fulfilling its mission and delivering strong outcomes for students and families.



11. Educational Plan

11.1. Instructional Program

Q182. Provide a detailed description of the overall instructional program of the proposed charter school, including major instructional methods and assessment strategies, and explain how this program meets the needs of the targeted student population.



VALA NC's instructional program is designed to provide a high-quality, engaging, and equitable virtual learning experience that meets the diverse academic, social, and developmental needs of students across North Carolina. The program integrates the school's 5A Learning Framework (i.e., Active Learning, Adaptive Instruction, Accountable Systems, Authentic Experiences, and Accessible Education) with STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) integration to ensure students develop both strong academic foundations and real-world competencies.

VALA NC's instructional program is grounded in its 5A Learning Framework:

- **Active Learning:** Students engage daily through discussion, collaboration, and problem-solving rather than passive instruction.
- **Adaptive Instruction:** Teaching is personalized using real-time data to meet each student's needs and pace.
- **Accountable Systems:** Clear expectations, ongoing assessment, and data-driven decisions ensure student progress.
- **Authentic Experiences:** Learning is connected to real-world applications through projects, inquiry, and STEAM integration.
- **Accessible Education:** Instruction is designed using inclusive practices (UDL) to ensure all students can succeed.

Instructional Model and Major Methods

VALA NC utilizes a structured blended virtual model that combines daily synchronous instruction with purposeful asynchronous learning. Research indicates that effective virtual programs balance flexibility with strong instructional support and active engagement (Freidhoff et al., 2025).

Active Learning through Live Instruction: Students participate in daily live, teacher-led classes that emphasize discussion, collaboration, and real-time feedback. Instruction incorporates guided inquiry, peer interaction, and problem-solving tasks. Active learning strategies have been shown to significantly improve student engagement and academic outcomes (Beimel et al., 2024).

Adaptive Instruction through Flexible Learning: Students engage in asynchronous learning activities that allow for individualized pacing and deeper practice. Teachers use real-time student data to adjust instruction, provide feedback, and differentiate support. Personalized learning environments, when combined with strong teacher guidance, have been shown to improve achievement and engagement (Pane et al., 2017; Means et al., 2013).

Small-Group and Targeted Instruction: Students receive differentiated support through small-group instruction, including reteaching, intervention, enrichment, and acceleration. Data-informed grouping ensures that instruction is responsive and timely. Targeted interventions are especially effective for improving outcomes among struggling learners (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Tomlinson, 2014).

Authentic Learning through Projects and Inquiry: VALA NC emphasizes project-based and inquiry-driven learning experiences that connect academic content to real-world applications. Students conduct research, collaborate with peers, and present their findings, developing critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills. Research supports that authentic, inquiry-based learning enhances motivation and deeper understanding (National Research Council, 2012).



STEAM Integration Across the Curriculum: STEAM is embedded across all subject areas to promote interdisciplinary thinking and innovation. Students participate in virtual labs, simulations, and design challenges that reflect real-world problem-solving. Recent research highlights that immersive STEM experiences enhance engagement and prepare students for future careers (Ward et al., 2025).

Curriculum and Standards Alignment

The curriculum is fully aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) and is delivered through a combination of teacher-developed materials, high-quality instructional resources, and research-based digital platforms. Instruction emphasizes conceptual understanding, application of knowledge, and interdisciplinary connections, ensuring students are prepared for academic progression and real-world challenges.

Assessment Strategies

VALA NC employs a comprehensive, balanced assessment system to support learning and ensure accountability:

- **Formative Assessment:** Frequent checks for understanding provide immediate feedback and guide instruction.
- **Mastery-Based Assessment:** Students demonstrate learning through performance tasks, projects, and digital portfolios that reflect growth over time.
- **Benchmark and Summative Assessments:** Periodic assessments aligned with state standards measure progress and readiness.
- **Data-Driven Instruction:** Teachers regularly analyze student data to inform instructional decisions and interventions.
- **WIN ("What I Need") Block:** A dedicated daily intervention and enrichment period provides targeted, responsive support.

Research consistently shows that formative assessment and timely feedback are among the most effective strategies for improving student achievement (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie, 2009).

Supporting Diverse Learners

VALA NC's instructional program is intentionally designed to meet the needs of a diverse student population:

- **Personalized Learning:** Instruction is tailored to individual student needs through adaptive tools and teacher-guided differentiation.
- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** Multiple pathways for engagement, representation, and expression ensure accessibility.
- **Targeted Supports:** Students benefit from small-group instruction, tutoring, mentoring, and structured interventions.
- **Advanced Learning Opportunities:** Enrichment and advanced coursework challenge high-performing students.



Recent virtual learning research highlights the importance of structured supports to ensure equitable outcomes for diverse learners (Freidhoff et al., 2025).

Student Engagement and Accountability

VALA NC prioritizes strong teacher-student relationships, clear expectations, and consistent routines. Teachers monitor participation beyond attendance, provide ongoing feedback, and maintain regular communication with families. Engagement is measured through active participation, demonstrated understanding, and consistent progress.

Character Development and Whole-Child Education

VALA NC intentionally integrates character development into all aspects of the instructional program through its CRISP–RISE framework (i.e., Curiosity, Responsibility, Integrity, Service, Perseverance, Respect, Innovation, Self-Discipline, and Empathy). These values are embedded in daily instruction, collaborative learning, and student interactions rather than taught as isolated lessons. Students engage in reflection, goal setting, and real-world projects that reinforce ethical decision-making, teamwork, and personal responsibility.

Teachers and mentors model and reinforce these values through consistent expectations, feedback, and relationship-building. Advisory structures, mentoring, and student-led conferences further support students' social-emotional growth and sense of belonging. Research shows that integrating social-emotional learning and character development into academic instruction improves student engagement, behavior, and long-term success (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017).

Meeting the Needs of the Target Population

The VALA NC instructional program is specifically designed to address common challenges in online learning, such as disengagement, lack of personalization, and limited support, while leveraging the strengths of virtual education.

- Students benefit from **structured flexibility** that balances independence with accountability.
- Struggling students receive **timely, data-driven interventions**.
- Advanced learners are challenged through **enrichment and real-world applications**.
- All students benefit from **strong teacher interaction, active learning, and a supportive virtual community**.

By integrating research-based instructional strategies, personalized learning pathways, and strong support systems, VALA NC ensures that students are not only academically successful but also prepared for college, careers, and lifelong learning.

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Q183. Will the proposed charter school serve a single-sex student population?



☐ Yes

☒ No

Q187. What is your school's educational philosophy and how does it translate into your daily classroom practices and curriculum design?



The educational philosophy of the Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA NC) is grounded in the belief that students learn best when they are actively engaged, appropriately challenged, meaningfully supported, and connected to real-world learning experiences. In contrast to passive, compliance-driven models often found in traditional virtual settings, VALA NC is intentionally designed as an Active Learning Ecosystem where students think, create, collaborate, and apply knowledge with purpose.

This philosophy is informed by contemporary research in the learning sciences, which emphasizes that deep understanding develops through active engagement, retrieval practice, feedback, and application rather than passive content consumption (Dunlosky et al., 2013; Freeman et al., 2014). In virtual environments, strong teacher presence, structured interaction, and intentional design are especially critical to prevent disengagement and support student success (Borup et al., 2020; Freidhoff et al., 2025).

VALA NC operationalizes this philosophy through its 5A Learning Framework:

- **Active Learning:** Students construct understanding through discussion, collaboration, and problem-solving.
- **Adaptive Instruction:** Teaching is responsive to individual needs using real-time data and flexible pathways.
- **Accountable Systems:** Clear expectations and ongoing assessment ensure continuous growth and responsibility.
- **Authentic Experiences:** Learning is connected to real-world contexts through projects and inquiry.
- **Accessible Education:** Instruction is designed from the outset to support all learners through inclusive practices (UDL).

These principles guide both daily classroom practices and curriculum design.

In daily instruction, teachers prioritize interaction over delivery. Live lessons are structured around questioning, guided practice, and collaboration rather than lecture. Students regularly work in teams, explain their thinking, and apply concepts, reinforcing both understanding and engagement. Instruction is further supported through ongoing formative assessment and retrieval practice, which research identifies as essential for long-term learning (Dunlosky et al., 2013).

The philosophy also shapes how time and support are structured. Dedicated opportunities such as targeted small-group instruction and flexible support blocks ensure that learning is responsive rather than uniform, allowing teachers to meet students where they are while maintaining high expectations.

In curriculum design, VALA NC emphasizes depth over coverage and application over memorization. Content is aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study but delivered through interdisciplinary, inquiry-based, and project-based approaches. Students engage in tasks that require them to analyze, design, evaluate, and create—skills that are critical for college, careers, and civic life. This approach reflects research demonstrating that authentic, applied learning improves motivation and knowledge transfer (National Research Council, 2012).



Technology plays an important role in enabling personalization and access; however, VALA NC maintains a human-centered instructional model in which teachers interpret data, guide learning, and build strong relationships. Research consistently shows that technology is most effective when paired with high-quality teaching and intentional pedagogy (Means et al., 2013).

Finally, VALA NC's philosophy extends beyond academics to include character development and student agency. Through structured reflection, collaboration, and real-world learning experiences, students develop responsibility, perseverance, and ethical decision-making—skills essential for long-term success.

In summary, VALA NC's educational philosophy ensures that learning is not passive or one-size-fits-all, but engaging, personalized, purposeful, and inclusive. This philosophy is consistently translated into daily instruction and curriculum design, creating a learning environment where all students are supported to succeed and prepared for the demands of a rapidly changing world.

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Q188. Describe a typical day for students at different grade levels in your school, including how core subjects are integrated and what instructional methods teachers will primarily use.



A) A TYPICAL DAY FOR K-3 STUDENTS AT VALA NC

1) Instructional Design: Chunked Learning Cycles with Team-Based Learning and Adaptive Assessment

While minor adjustments may be made based on students' grade levels and developmental needs, the daily instructional schedule is intentionally designed around **chunked learning cycles** (typically 10–15 minutes). In this model, instruction is delivered in short, focused segments that integrate direct instruction, immediate assessment, peer collaboration, and data-driven differentiation. Instruction is also carefully structured around frequent modality shifts, enabling young learners to sustain attention, deepen understanding, and remain cognitively engaged throughout the day (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015). This structure helps prevent cognitive overload (a condition in which the amount or complexity of information exceeds students' working memory capacity) by breaking complex content into manageable units. As a result, students are better able to process, understand, and retain new information, leading to deeper and more effective learning (Sweller, 1988; Mayer, 2014).

Instructional Time and Learning Expectations

VALA NC ensures a minimum of 6.0 instructional hours (360 minutes) per day through a structured combination of teacher-directed learning, guided instructional activities, and monitored independent learning, consistent with expectations of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) for instructional hours in virtual settings. The daily instructional model (8:30 AM – 3:30 PM) includes 180 minutes of synchronous teacher-led instruction consisting of live lessons, guided practice, and discussion; 30-60 minutes of guided readiness and instructional preparation through teacher-assigned videos, readings, and monitored readiness checks; and 90 minutes of adaptive and independent online learning in which students engage in standards-aligned, mastery-based work using digital platforms under teacher supervision. In addition, 60 minutes is dedicated to WIN (What I Need) time for targeted small-group instruction, reteaching, or enrichment based on individual student needs, and 30-45 minutes is allocated for project-based or applied learning aligned with daily objectives. Collectively, these integrated components ensure a comprehensive, balanced, and compliant instructional day that meets or exceeds required instructional time expectations while supporting personalized and effective learning.

Developmentally Appropriate Readiness and Preparation

The instructional model incorporates developmentally appropriate readiness and preparation activities. In upper elementary, middle, and high school grades, students may engage in brief pre-class activities such as readings, instructional videos, or readiness checks that prepare them for active participation in live instruction. These activities are teacher-directed, standards-aligned, and monitored, and therefore are considered part of instructional time rather than optional homework. For K-3 students, however, readiness activities are intentionally embedded within the instructional day and supported by teachers and families as appropriate, ensuring equitable access and minimizing reliance on independent pre-class preparation.

Instructional Cycle Structure



Within each instructional block, such as English Language Arts, mathematics, science, or social studies, learning follows a consistent, research-based sequence:

a) Live Mini-Lesson (Synchronous Instruction): Instruction begins with a brief, focused, teacher-led mini-lesson delivered live, during which key concepts are introduced through explicit instruction and modeling to ensure clarity and cognitive efficiency. The use of such mini-lectures—short, focused instructional segments—is supported by cognitive science, as they help manage cognitive load by presenting content in smaller, digestible units, thereby improving student attention, engagement, and retention (Sweller, 1988; Mayer, 2014). Aligned with the segmenting principle, this approach is particularly effective in online environments, especially when followed by immediate practice or assessment, enabling students to actively process, apply, and retain new knowledge more effectively (Dunlosky et al., 2013).

b) Individual, Non-Graded Adaptive Assessment (Readiness Check): Immediately following the mini-lesson, students complete an individual, low-stakes, non-graded assessment using adaptive learning platforms (e.g., Khanmigo, IXL, ALEKS, DreamBox, TutorAI). This step serves as both a retrieval practice activity and formative assessment, enabling students to actively recall newly learned content while providing the teacher with immediate insight into each student's level of understanding. Because these platforms adapt to student responses, they can offer personalized questions and real-time feedback, helping students identify misconceptions and adjust their thinking in the moment. This readiness check plays a critical role in making learning visible early in the instructional cycle, allowing for timely instructional adjustments before misconceptions become entrenched. Research shows that low-stakes, frequent retrieval practice significantly improves long-term retention, strengthens memory, and helps uncover learning gaps at an early stage (Roediger and Karpicke, 2006; Brown et al., 2014).

c) Team-Based Learning (Peer Instruction and Collaboration): Students then transition to breakout rooms within the learning management system, where they work in teams of at least three to complete the same or a similar set of questions. During this collaborative phase, students actively engage in discussion, explanation, and reasoning, allowing them to articulate their thinking, challenge misconceptions, and learn from one another. This process fosters peer instruction and knowledge co-construction, as students deepen their understanding by explaining concepts and evaluating alternative approaches. Structured collaboration also promotes accountability, communication skills, and collective problem-solving, which are essential for long-term academic success. Research on team-based and active learning demonstrates that such approaches significantly enhance conceptual understanding, retention, and student engagement compared to passive learning environments (Michaelson et al., 2004; Freeman et al., 2014).

d) Individual Graded Adaptive Assessment (Mastery Check): Finally, students complete a short, graded individual assessment using adaptive learning tools. This step serves as a mastery check, allowing students to independently demonstrate their understanding after engaging in both individual and collaborative learning. Adaptive platforms provide immediate, targeted feedback, reinforcing correct responses while clearly identifying remaining gaps or misconceptions. Because the assessment is individualized and responsive to student performance, it ensures that evaluation is both accurate and personalized, supporting fair measurement of student learning. The results also generate actionable data for the teacher, informing subsequent instruction and targeted support during the What I Need



(WIN) block. Research shows that frequent formative and summative assessments, combined with timely and specific feedback, are strongly associated with improved academic achievement and deeper learning (Black and Wiliam, 1998).

2) Movement and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Breaks

The SEL breaks are intentionally embedded within the daily schedule to support students' cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, and overall well-being. These short, structured intervals include activities such as stretching, guided movement, mindfulness exercises, breathing techniques, and brief social-emotional check-ins. Research shows that integrating physical movement into the school day improves attention, on-task behavior, and academic performance, particularly for young learners who benefit from frequent opportunities to reset and re-engage (Donnelly et al., 2016).

In parallel, SEL-focused activities help students develop essential competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These skills are strongly associated with improved academic outcomes, positive behavior, and long-term success (Durlak et al., 2011). When combined, movement and SEL breaks provide a powerful mechanism for reducing stress, enhancing focus, and maintaining engagement throughout the day, ensuring that students are both emotionally supported and cognitively ready to learn.

3) What I Know (WIN) Block – Targeted Support and Enrichment

A central component of the VALA NC instructional model is the **What I Need (WIN) block**. The WIN block is a dedicated instructional period in which learning is differentiated based on real-time student data, ensuring that each student receives targeted support or enrichment aligned with their needs. Students are flexibly grouped according to formative assessment results: those needing support receive small-group, targeted instruction focused on addressing misconceptions, reinforcing foundational skills, and closing identified learning gaps through reteaching, scaffolding, and guided practice. Instruction is continuously adjusted based on evidence of student understanding, allowing for immediate intervention before misunderstandings become persistent (Black and Wiliam, 1998).

Students who demonstrate mastery engage in enrichment and extension activities designed to deepen understanding, promote higher-order thinking, and support the transfer of learning to new contexts. These opportunities may include applying concepts to complex, real-world problems, advancing to upcoming units within the same course, or exploring appropriately scaffolded above-grade-level content. This flexible, competency-based progression reflects principles of mastery learning and differentiated instruction, where students progress based on demonstrated understanding rather than fixed pacing, leading to improved achievement and more equitable outcomes (Bloom, 1968; Tomlinson, 2014). Overall, the WIN block serves as a critical component of a responsive instructional model that ensures all students are supported, challenged, and progressing toward mastery.

4) Reflection and Exit Retrieval

The reflection and exit retrieval block serves as a structured closure to the instructional day, providing students with an opportunity to consolidate learning, strengthen memory, and develop metacognitive awareness. During this time, students engage in brief, focused activities such as summarizing key



concepts, responding to targeted exit questions, explaining their reasoning, or identifying areas of confusion. These practices encourage students to reflect on what they learned, how they learned it, and what they still need to improve, thereby promoting self-regulated learning and deeper understanding.

A central component of this block is retrieval practice, which requires students to actively recall information rather than passively review it. Research consistently shows that retrieval practice significantly enhances long-term retention, transfer of knowledge, and overall academic performance (Roediger and Karpicke, 2006; Dunlosky et al., 2013). When combined with metacognitive reflection, students become more aware of their learning processes, enabling them to monitor their progress and adjust their strategies accordingly (Brown et al., 2014). Additionally, exit retrieval activities provide teachers with real-time formative data, allowing them to quickly identify patterns of misunderstanding and adjust instruction for subsequent lessons or WIN interventions. This immediate feedback loop supports more responsive, data-driven teaching and ensures that students continue progressing toward mastery.

5) STEAM and Project-Based Learning

In the afternoon, students engage in STEAM and project-based learning (PBL), where students apply knowledge in authentic, interdisciplinary contexts connected to concepts introduced earlier in the day. During this block, students participate in hands-on, inquiry-driven activities that require them to actively construct understanding through elaboration strategies, such as explaining concepts in their own words, making connections to prior knowledge, and applying learning to real-world situations. This “learning by doing” approach reinforces and extends foundational skills, strengthens conceptual understanding, and increases student engagement and motivation (Brown et al., 2014; National Research Council, 2000).

These projects are intentionally designed around real-world problems and challenges, integrating science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics into cohesive learning experiences. Students may work individually or collaboratively to investigate questions, design and test solutions, analyze data, and present their findings. Through this process, they develop critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills, while also building ownership of their learning. Project-based learning complements the structured morning instruction by enabling students to transfer and apply knowledge in meaningful contexts, engage in sustained inquiry, and demonstrate learning through authentic assessments. Research shows that inquiry-driven, student-centered approaches significantly enhance conceptual understanding, problem-solving skills, and overall engagement (Krajcik and Blumenfeld, 2006; Freeman et al., 2014), while supporting college, career, and real-world readiness.

6) Character Development Through VALA NC’s CRISP–RISE Core Virtues

Character development is intentionally embedded throughout the daily schedule through the CRISP–RISE Core Virtues (curiosity, responsibility, integrity, service, perseverance, respect, innovation, self-discipline, empathy), with each month focusing on one virtue to ensure sustained attention and meaningful application. Rather than being taught in isolation, character development is integrated across instructional blocks, an approach shown to be more effective in promoting social-emotional and ethical growth (Durlak et al., 2011). For example, literacy and morning warm-ups incorporate read-



alouds and reflective discussions tied to the monthly virtue, while small-group and team-based learning provide opportunities for students to practice collaboration, responsibility, and respect through structured peer interactions (Johnson and Johnson, 2009).

7) The After-school Enrichment Opportunities

The after-school enrichment opportunities (virtual clubs and virtual tutoring groups) take place after 3:30 PM, Monday through Thursday. VALA NC offers a structured, engaging afterschool program for grades K–3 designed to promote social connection, creativity, and skill development while reinforcing the school's instructional model. Clubs are intentionally short (30–45 minutes), interactive, and non-lecture-based, meeting 2–3 days per week, with students selecting 1–2 clubs based on their interests. Research shows that well-designed out-of-school-time programs improve student engagement, social skills, and academic outcomes, particularly when they emphasize active participation and student choice (Durlak et al., 2010; Vandell et al., 2015). Offerings include Social & Community Clubs (e.g., Story Time, Show & Tell, Friendship Club), Creative & Arts-Based Clubs (Art, Music, Drama, Craft/Maker), STEM & Maker Clubs (LEGO, Coding, Science Exploration, Robotics basics), Academic Enrichment Clubs (Math Games, Reading/Book Club, Homework Help, Vocabulary), Skill-Building Clubs (Public Speaking, Leadership, Digital Citizenship, basic Entrepreneurship), and Interest-Based Clubs (Animal Club, Space Club, Drawing, Minecraft). These experiences emphasize collaboration, hands-on learning, and student voice, which are critical for fostering engagement and a sense of belonging in virtual environments (Freeman et al., 2014).

A signature feature is the Monthly CRISP–RISE Club Series, where each month focuses on one core character trait (e.g., Curiosity, Responsibility, Empathy, Innovation), reinforced through themed clubs such as “Why Things Work,” “My Daily Habits,” “Kindness Club,” and “Inventor Club.” This integrated approach ensures that character development is intentional, consistent, and embedded in authentic experiences, rather than taught in isolation—an approach shown to be more effective in promoting social-emotional growth (Durlak et al., 2011). Overall, VALA NC’s afterschool program extends learning beyond academics by fostering confidence, creativity, collaboration, and character, contributing to a well-rounded and enriching virtual school experience that supports both academic success and whole-child development.

8) Friday Schedule: Assessment, Feedback, and Planning

VALA NC’s Friday schedule is designed as a cycle of assessment, feedback, reflection, and preparation, reinforcing weekly learning while informing next steps. Students engage in spiral review, low-stakes assessments, retrieval practice, and performance-based tasks, allowing them to revisit key concepts, demonstrate understanding, and apply learning in meaningful contexts. Low-stakes assessments, including released state and national test items, help students build familiarity with assessment formats while reducing anxiety and increasing confidence. In parallel, frequent retrieval practice (“testing as learning”) strengthens long-term retention, improves transfer of knowledge, and helps identify learning gaps (Roediger and Karpicke, 2006; Dunlosky et al., 2013). Performance tasks further promote deeper understanding by requiring students to apply concepts to authentic and interdisciplinary problems (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005).



A central feature of the Friday schedule is a rotational structure that integrates student–teacher conferencing and embedded WIN (What I Need) support. While students engage in independent or small-group tasks—such as adaptive practice, enrichment activities, or targeted review—teachers conduct brief, focused conferences with individuals or small groups. During these conferences, teachers review assessment data, provide personalized feedback, address misconceptions, and offer immediate intervention or enrichment as needed. This embedded approach ensures that targeted support and extension occur in real time, rather than in a separate block, aligning with research emphasizing the impact of timely feedback and formative assessment on student achievement (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Hattie, 2009).

The session concludes with reflection, goal setting, and generation activities, where students evaluate their progress, identify strengths and areas for growth, and set goals for the upcoming week. Students may also preview upcoming concepts by attempting to explain ideas or solve problems before formal instruction, activating prior knowledge and promoting deeper learning. These practices foster metacognitive awareness and self-regulated learning, which are strongly associated with improved academic outcomes (Zimmerman, 2002; Brown et al., 2014).

9) Friday Teacher Planning and Data-Driven Instructional Design

Following the student session, teachers use Friday (12:00 AM–3:30 PM) as a dedicated professional work block focused on data analysis, instructional planning, and targeted intervention design. During this time, teachers systematically review results from weekly assessments, adaptive learning platforms, and observational data to identify patterns of student understanding, misconceptions, and learning gaps. This process enables teachers to make evidence-based instructional decisions, including adjusting pacing, refining instructional strategies, and forming flexible student groups for the upcoming week.

Teachers also collaborate in data-informed professional learning communities (PLCs) to analyze trends across classrooms, share effective practices, and co-design lessons and interventions. Research shows that structured teacher collaboration and data use significantly improve instructional quality and student outcomes, particularly when educators engage in ongoing cycles of inquiry and reflection (DuFour et al., 2006; Hattie, 2009). In addition, this planning time is used to design targeted WIN block interventions, enrichment opportunities, and differentiated instructional materials aligned with student needs.

Importantly, dedicating protected time for planning and reflection enhances teachers’ ability to deliver high-quality, responsive instruction and reduces cognitive overload for both teachers and students. Studies on effective teaching emphasize that formative assessment, timely feedback, and intentional instructional planning are among the most impactful factors influencing student achievement (Black and Wiliam, 1998). By embedding this structured planning block into the weekly schedule, VALA NC ensures that instruction remains data-driven, personalized, and continuously improving, ultimately supporting stronger student learning outcomes.

Conclusion



Overall, the VALA NC K–3 instructional model represents a comprehensive, research-based approach to virtual education that integrates active learning, adaptive instruction, continuous assessment, and authentic application. By combining structured daily routines with flexibility, personalization, and strong teacher support, the model ensures that learning is engaging, equitable, and aligned with both state requirements and best practices in the science of learning. Students are not passive recipients of information but active participants in a dynamic learning process that prepares them for long-term academic success, college and career readiness, and lifelong learning.

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B) A TYPICAL DAY FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL (4-8) STUDENTS AT VALA NC

Building upon the K–3 instructional schedule, the middle school schedule maintains the same core design principles (chunked learning cycles, active learning, and data-driven differentiation) while adjusting for developmental readiness, increased academic rigor, and longer attention spans. Instructional blocks are extended (e.g., 45–60 minutes), allowing for deeper content exploration, sustained academic discourse, and more complex problem-solving. Within these longer blocks, chunking is preserved through internal instructional sequences (guided readiness → mini-lesson → practice → collaboration → assessment), ensuring continued cognitive load management while supporting higher-order thinking. Recent research in secondary education confirms that cognitively structured learning strategies and evidence-based techniques (e.g., retrieval practice, spacing, and chunking) are strongly associated with improved academic achievement and durable learning outcomes (Ruiz-Martín et al., 2024).



Collaborative learning evolves into more structured team-based learning and academic discourse, where students engage in explanation, argumentation, and analysis, particularly in seminar-style science and social studies and extended ELA and math blocks. Emerging research highlights that combining collaboration with metacognitive awareness enhances group problem-solving, communication, and conceptual understanding (Duruaku et al., 2024; Järvelä et al., 2024). Similarly, reflection practices become more sophisticated, incorporating written responses, self-assessment, and goal tracking aligned with learning objectives. Evidence shows that metacognition plays a distinct and critical role in developing students' critical thinking abilities beyond working memory capacity, particularly in middle school learners (Meneses et al., 2024).

Movement and SEL breaks, while less frequent than in K–3 grades, remain strategically placed to support focus, emotional regulation, and sustained engagement during longer instructional periods. The WIN block continues to provide targeted support and enrichment, but includes increased student independence, integrating small-group instruction, adaptive learning, and goal-oriented intervention aligned with course progression. Research on adaptive and self-regulated learning environments suggests that data-driven scaffolding and personalized support improve learning behaviors and help close performance gaps among diverse learners (Munshi et al., 2022).

Afternoon learning expands into more rigorous project-based and service-learning experiences, where students engage in extended inquiry, research, design, and presentation. These experiences emphasize real-world application, collaboration, and civic engagement, further reinforcing both academic and character development. Recent studies in middle school learning environments indicate that interactive, inquiry-based, and technology-supported learning approaches significantly enhance engagement, motivation, and higher-order thinking skills (Pan et al., 2024). Afterschool opportunities also reflect this progression, offering more advanced, interest-driven options such as leadership, debate, coding, and career exploration.

Finally, Friday structures remain aligned with the K–3 model but incorporate greater student responsibility and complexity, including extended performance tasks, deeper reflection, and more student-led conferencing and goal setting. Collectively, these adjustments ensure that the instructional model remains developmentally appropriate while preserving the integrity of VALA NC's core design principles and aligning with current research on metacognition, collaboration, and evidence-based secondary learning practices.

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C) A TYPICAL DAY FOR HIGH SCHOOL (9-12) STUDENTS AT VALA NC

Building upon the middle school schedule, the high school model maintains the same foundational principles (structured instructional blocks, active learning, and data-driven differentiation) while advancing toward greater academic depth, flexibility, and student autonomy. Instruction continues within extended course blocks; however, learning becomes more discipline-specific and pathway-oriented, with students enrolling in a range of core, elective, advanced, and dual-enrollment courses aligned with college and career goals. Within these blocks, internal chunking (guided readiness → mini-lesson → application → collaboration → assessment) remains essential, but with increased emphasis on analysis, synthesis, and independent problem-solving. Research indicates that secondary students benefit from structured yet flexible instructional models that combine cognitive science principles with opportunities for deeper inquiry and application (Weinstein et al., 2018; Agarwal and Bain, 2021).

Collaborative learning evolves from structured group work in middle school to more advanced disciplinary discourse and peer critique, where students engage in argumentation, evidence-based reasoning, and collaborative problem-solving across subject areas. These practices are particularly emphasized in seminar-style courses and advanced coursework, supporting college-level expectations. Studies show that interactive and discussion-based learning environments significantly enhance critical thinking and conceptual understanding in secondary education (Chi and Wylie, 2014; Järvelä et al., 2024).

The WIN block expands beyond middle school intervention and enrichment to support personalized academic pathways, including credit recovery, acceleration, dual-enrollment support, and college readiness (e.g., writing, SAT/ACT preparation). Students engage with greater independence, utilizing adaptive platforms, targeted tutoring, and self-directed learning plans. Research on personalized and competency-based learning demonstrates that flexible pacing and targeted support improve student outcomes, particularly at the secondary level (Pane et al., 2017).

Independent learning expectations increase significantly. The schedule incorporates structured time for independent coursework, lab work, seminar preparation, and external learning experiences, requiring students to manage time, set goals, and take ownership of their progress. Reflection practices also become more advanced, incorporating portfolio development, progress monitoring, and academic advising, which are critical components of self-regulated learning and long-term academic success (Zimmerman, 2002; Dent and Koenka, 2016).



A major shift from middle school is the integration of real-world, career-connected learning experiences. Afternoon instructional blocks expand to include capstone projects, internships (virtual or in-person), research opportunities, and partnerships with higher education and industry. These experiences allow students to apply academic knowledge in authentic contexts while developing professional and transferable skills. Research shows that work-based learning and authentic application significantly enhance student engagement, career readiness, and postsecondary success (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; OECD, 2020).

Additionally, the high school model places a stronger emphasis on college, career, and life readiness, integrating skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy across all instructional components. Advisory and reflection structures are leveraged to support goal setting, graduation planning, and postsecondary pathway development, ensuring that students are prepared for life beyond high school.

Finally, while the Friday structure remains aligned with the middle school model, it reflects greater student ownership and accountability, including extended performance tasks, portfolio-based reflection, and individualized conferencing focused on academic progress and future planning. Teachers continue to engage in data-driven instructional planning and professional collaboration, ensuring that instruction remains responsive and aligned with both academic standards and student goals. Collectively, these enhancements ensure that the VALA NC instructional model evolves appropriately from middle school to high school while maintaining its foundation in evidence-based, student-centered learning.

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Q189. How will your curriculum address the diverse learning needs and academic levels of students, and what systems will you have in place to monitor and adjust instruction based on student progress?



VALA NC's curriculum is intentionally designed to meet the diverse academic, cognitive, linguistic, and social-emotional needs of a statewide student population through an integrated system of Adaptive Instruction, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and continuous data-driven improvement. This approach ensures that all students—regardless of prior achievement level, learning differences, or background—can access rigorous, grade-level content while receiving appropriate support or acceleration.

At the core of this model is VALA NC's Adaptive Instruction framework, which leverages AI-supported tools, real-time data analytics, and flexible instructional design to personalize learning pathways for each student. Instruction is aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) and delivered through multiple modalities—visual, auditory, interactive, and text-based—consistent with UDL principles that emphasize multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression. These structures are particularly important in virtual environments and have been shown to improve accessibility and outcomes for diverse learners, including students with disabilities and English Learners (CAST, 2018; Chiu, 2025).

Teachers differentiate instruction through a combination of intentional planning and real-time responsiveness. During synchronous instruction, teachers use flexible grouping to provide targeted reteaching, enrichment, and small-group support. Students engage in personalized learning pathways through adaptive platforms (e.g., IXL, Khan Academy, and AI-supported tutoring tools), which adjust in real time based on performance. In addition, VALA NC incorporates daily WIN ("What I Need") Blocks, providing structured time for intervention, tutoring, enrichment, conferencing, and acceleration. Students are also given multiple ways to demonstrate mastery—such as projects, presentations, written work, and digital products—supporting deeper learning and honoring diverse strengths (Rose and Meyer, 2002; Freeman et al., 2014).

To ensure that instruction remains responsive and effective, VALA NC will implement a comprehensive multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) anchored in continuous progress monitoring. Student learning and engagement will be tracked through multiple data streams, including:

- Real-time learning management system (LMS) analytics (attendance, engagement, assignment completion)
- Frequent formative assessments embedded in daily instruction (e.g., exit tickets, quizzes, collaborative tasks)
- Benchmark and diagnostic assessments aligned to NCSCOS standards
- Performance trends across adaptive learning platforms

These data will feed into VALA NC's RADAR (Real-time Analytics for Detection, Action, and Response) system, which synthesizes academic, behavioral, and engagement indicators to identify students who may be at risk of falling behind. RADAR system enables early identification and timely intervention, shifting the model from reactive remediation to proactive support—an approach strongly supported by research on early warning systems and on-track indicators (Faria et al., 2018; Holzman et al., 2024).

Data use is embedded into the school's instructional culture through structured collaboration cycles. Teachers will participate in weekly Data Huddles, where grade-level or content teams analyze student performance, identify learning gaps, and plan targeted instructional adjustments. In addition, school



leadership will conduct monthly data reviews to evaluate schoolwide trends, monitor intervention effectiveness, and ensure alignment with academic goals. Research consistently shows that collaborative data use and formative assessment practices significantly improve student achievement when implemented systematically (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Datnow and Park, 2018).

This continuous feedback loop ensures that instruction is timely, targeted, and equitable. Rather than treating differentiation as an add-on or after-the-fact intervention, VALA NC embeds it into daily instruction, supported by structured systems and real-time data. As a result, all students are provided with meaningful access to grade-level learning, while receiving the individualized support or acceleration necessary to succeed in a rigorous virtual environment.

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Q190. Identify how this curriculum aligns with the proposed charter school's mission, targeted student population, and North Carolina Accountability Model. Provide evidence that the chosen curriculum has been successful with the target student population, how the plan will drive academic improvement for all students, and how it has been successful in closing achievement gaps.



VALA NC's curriculum is intentionally designed as a standards-aligned, research-based instructional ecosystem that integrates adaptive technologies, high-quality digital resources, and interdisciplinary project-based learning. This model ensures strong alignment with the school's mission, responsiveness to its diverse statewide student population, and full compliance with the North Carolina Accountability Model, including proficiency, growth (EVAAS), and subgroup performance expectations.

The curriculum directly advances VALA NC's mission to provide an empowering virtual learning environment where students actively create, think critically, and grow through real-world experiences, AI-supported technologies, and purposeful preparation for college, career, and life. This mission is operationalized through the school's 5A Framework (Active Learning, Adaptive Instruction, Accountable Systems, Authentic Experiences, and Accessible Education), which guides all aspects of curriculum design, instruction, and assessment.

Rather than relying on a single static program, VALA NC implements a coherent, flexible ecosystem of high-quality instructional resources to ensure both rigor and personalization. Core components include adaptive learning platforms (e.g., IXL, Khan Academy, Achieve3000, Newsela/CommonLit, etc.) to support mastery of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS); AI-supported tools (e.g., Khanmigo) that provide real-time feedback and scaffolding; inquiry-based STEM resources; and teacher-developed, interdisciplinary project-based learning modules. This integrated approach ensures alignment to state standards while enabling instruction to be continuously adjusted based on student performance data.

VALA NC's design is informed by both the growing demand for virtual education and the documented challenges of traditional virtual school models. Research has shown that many virtual schools underperform when instruction lacks engagement, personalization, and strong teacher-student interaction (Woodworth et al., 2015). In contrast, VALA NC is intentionally structured to address these limitations through active learning, structured collaboration, and continuous data-informed instruction. Studies indicate that well-designed online learning environments—particularly those incorporating interaction, feedback, and support—can produce outcomes comparable to or exceeding traditional settings (Means et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

This model is particularly well-suited to VALA NC's target population, which includes students who require flexible learning environments, benefit from individualized pacing, or need additional academic and technological support. Through the integration of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and multiple instructional modalities, the curriculum ensures equitable access for students with disabilities, English Learners, and students from historically underserved backgrounds. Personalized learning pathways, real-time feedback, and embedded intervention structures ensure that differentiation is proactive and continuous. Research demonstrates that personalized learning approaches can significantly improve achievement, particularly for students who are behind grade level (Pane et al., 2015; Pane et al., 2017).

Alignment with the North Carolina Accountability Model is ensured through explicit standards alignment, a balanced assessment system, and continuous progress monitoring. Students will participate in formative, interim, and summative assessments aligned to End-of-Grade (EOG) and End-



of-Course (EOC) expectations. Instructional effectiveness will be evaluated through both proficiency outcomes and student growth measures (EVAAS), with particular attention to subgroup performance.

To support this work, VALA NC will implement its RADAR system, which integrates data from the learning management system, adaptive platforms, and assessments to identify early warning indicators and guide timely instructional responses. This system enables educators to monitor student progress in real time, implement targeted interventions, and adjust instruction to ensure continuous growth. Research on data-driven instruction and early warning systems highlights their effectiveness in improving outcomes and preventing academic failure (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Faria et al., 2018).

The effectiveness of this curriculum model is supported by a robust body of research. Adaptive learning technologies enhance student outcomes by personalizing pacing, content, and feedback (Pane et al., 2015). Active and project-based learning approaches significantly improve engagement, retention, and conceptual understanding (Freeman et al., 2014; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Literacy-focused, differentiated instructional tools have demonstrated measurable gains for students performing below grade level. Additionally, integrated systems of support—including formative assessment and targeted intervention—have been shown to reduce achievement gaps and accelerate learning for historically underserved student groups (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Faria et al., 2018).

By integrating adaptive learning, active instruction, real-time data systems, and a strong commitment to equity, VALA NC establishes a curriculum model designed to accelerate achievement, improve growth outcomes, and close persistent opportunity gaps. This comprehensive, research-based approach not only addresses the limitations of traditional virtual schooling but also positions VALA NC to meet and exceed the expectations of the North Carolina Accountability Model while ensuring meaningful academic success for all students.

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Q191. Describe the primary instructional strategies that the school will expect teachers to master and explain why these strategies will result in increased academic achievement for the targeted student population for each grade span (i.e. elementary, middle, high) the school would ultimately serve.



VALA NC's instructional model is grounded in research-based, high-impact instructional strategies that promote active engagement, personalization, and mastery of content across all grade levels. Teachers are expected to master a coherent set of practices aligned with the school's 5A Framework (Active Learning, Adaptive Instruction, Accountable Systems, Authentic Experiences, and Accessible Education). Instruction is further informed by cognitive science principles such as retrieval practice, spaced learning, interleaving, and low-stakes assessment, all of which have been shown to significantly improve long-term retention and transfer of learning (Brown et al., 2014; Cepeda et al., 2006; Agarwal and Bain, 2019).

Across all grade spans, instruction follows a structured learning cycle intentionally designed for virtual environments: guided readiness, brief teacher-led mini-lessons, retrieval-based readiness checks, collaborative learning (e.g., Team-Based Learning), short formative assessments, and targeted intervention or enrichment during daily WIN ("What I Need") blocks. Guided readiness occurs prior to live instruction and includes carefully designed activities such as short instructional videos, targeted readings, and adaptive pre-checks that activate prior knowledge, introduce key concepts, and reduce cognitive load, allowing students to engage more meaningfully during synchronous sessions.

This instructional sequence ensures that students are continuously engaged, receive immediate and actionable feedback, and have consistent opportunities for both support and acceleration. Teachers serve as facilitators of learning, guiding students through inquiry, collaboration, and application rather than relying on passive content delivery. This model maximizes the effectiveness of live instructional time by shifting foundational learning to guided preparation and reserving synchronous sessions for higher-order thinking and interaction. Research demonstrates that active learning approaches significantly improve student performance and reduce failure rates compared to traditional lecture-based models (Freeman et al., 2014), particularly when combined with structured preparation and formative assessment.

To ensure continuous responsiveness, instruction is supported by VALA NC's RADAR Framework/System, which integrates data from multiple sources, including the school's Student Information System (Infinite Campus), learning platforms, assessments, and student engagement metrics. While Infinite Campus serves as the centralized system for managing student records, attendance, grades, and compliance reporting, RADAR functions as the school's data-to-action engine—analyzing real-time inputs to identify emerging learning gaps, engagement concerns, and early warning indicators.

This integrated system enables teachers and school leaders to monitor student progress holistically, adjust instruction in real time, and provide timely, targeted interventions. By transforming data into actionable insights, VALA NC ensures that instructional decisions are proactive rather than reactive. Research on data-driven instruction and early warning systems demonstrates that such integrated approaches significantly improve student outcomes, increase on-track rates, and reduce the risk of academic failure, particularly for students in virtual and at-risk populations (Faria et al., 2018; Datnow and Park, 2018).

At the elementary level (K–5), instructional strategies focus on building strong foundational skills in literacy and mathematics through explicit, systematic instruction combined with personalized practice. Structured literacy approaches and explicit mathematics instruction are highly effective in early grades,



particularly for students at risk of academic difficulties (Foorman et al., 2016). Teachers use small-group instruction, guided practice, and adaptive platforms to meet individual needs, while frequent formative assessment and retrieval practice strengthen retention and confidence (Roediger and Karpicke, 2006).

At the middle school level (6–8), instruction emphasizes conceptual understanding, critical thinking, and collaboration. Strategies such as Team-Based Learning, inquiry-based learning, and project-based learning promote deeper engagement and application of knowledge. Research indicates that collaborative and inquiry-driven environments enhance problem-solving skills and conceptual understanding during adolescence (Hmelo-Silver et al., 2007). Teachers use adaptive data to differentiate instruction and apply spaced practice to reinforce learning over time (Cepeda et al., 2006), helping maintain engagement and prevent academic decline during the middle grades.

At the high school level (9–12), instruction focuses on independence, real-world application, and college and career readiness. Students engage in advanced project-based learning, interdisciplinary coursework, and authentic performance tasks aligned with postsecondary expectations. Instruction incorporates problem-based learning, seminar-style discussions, and personalized pathways. Research on deeper learning shows that integrating critical thinking, collaboration, and real-world application leads to improved academic outcomes and college readiness (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Students also engage in reflection and self-assessment, strengthening metacognitive skills essential for lifelong learning (Hattie, 2009).

Across all grade spans, VALA NC integrates adaptive learning technologies, AI-supported tools, and continuous progress monitoring to provide personalized instruction. Personalized learning has been shown to significantly improve achievement, particularly for historically underserved students (Pane et al., 2015; Pane et al., 2017). In addition, the school's Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) ensures that students receive timely, data-informed interventions, which are critical for closing achievement gaps (Burns et al., 2016).

Importantly, these strategies are specifically designed to address known challenges in virtual education. Research shows that online learning is most effective when it includes strong teacher-student interaction, structured routines, and timely feedback (Means et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). VALA NC's model intentionally integrates these elements through synchronous instruction, collaborative learning, and real-time data systems to ensure that students remain engaged, supported, and accountable.

In summary, VALA NC's instructional strategies combine active learning, cognitive science principles, adaptive technologies, and data-driven systems (RADAR + MTSS) within a structured instructional cycle. This comprehensive approach is designed to increase academic achievement across all grade spans while ensuring equitable outcomes and closing persistent achievement gaps.

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Q192.Explain how the proposed instructional plan and graduation requirements will ensure student readiness to transition from grade to grade and to the next grade span upon program completion.



VALA NC's instructional plan and graduation requirements are intentionally designed to ensure that students are academically prepared to transition successfully from grade to grade and across grade spans (elementary to middle, middle to high school), ultimately culminating in college, career, and life readiness. This is achieved through a coherent system that integrates standards-aligned instruction, mastery-based progression, continuous assessment, and targeted supports within the school's 5A Framework (Active, Adaptive, Accountable, Authentic, Accessible learning).

At the core of VALA NC's instructional model is alignment to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) and the North Carolina Accountability Model. Clearly defined, vertically aligned learning progressions ensure that students build knowledge and skills systematically across grade levels. Teachers use these progressions to ensure that prerequisite skills are mastered before advancing to more complex content. Research demonstrates that coherent curriculum alignment significantly improves student achievement and readiness for subsequent grade levels (Schmidt et al., 2005).

VALA NC implements a mastery-based instructional approach, in which student progression is based on demonstrated proficiency rather than seat time alone. Students are expected to meet clearly defined performance benchmarks—supported by formative assessments, benchmark assessments, and performance tasks—before advancing. This ensures that learning gaps are addressed early and do not accumulate over time. Evidence indicates that mastery-based systems improve retention, increase student confidence, and lead to stronger long-term academic outcomes when paired with timely feedback and opportunities for revision (Guskey, 2007; Hattie, 2009).

To ensure continuous monitoring and timely instructional response, VALA NC integrates its RADAR Framework with its Student Information System (Infinite Campus) and learning platforms. Infinite Campus serves as the official repository for student records, attendance, grades, and compliance reporting, while RADAR functions as a real-time analytics layer that synthesizes academic performance, engagement data, and formative assessment results. This system enables educators to identify early warning indicators, monitor student progress holistically, and implement proactive interventions. Research on early warning systems and data-driven instruction shows that such integrated approaches significantly improve student outcomes and increase on-track progression rates, particularly for students at risk of falling behind (Faria et al., 2018; Datnow and Park, 2018; Holzman et al., 2024).

VALA NC further supports student progression through a robust Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework. All students receive high-quality Tier I instruction, while those needing additional support receive targeted Tier II and intensive Tier III interventions. Daily WIN ("What I Need") blocks provide dedicated time for intervention, enrichment, and personalized learning. Research demonstrates that MTSS and timely interventions are highly effective in improving academic outcomes and preventing students from falling behind, particularly for historically underserved populations (Burns et al., 2016).

Transition readiness across grade spans is supported through developmentally aligned instructional practices and structured transition systems. At the elementary level, instruction emphasizes foundational literacy, numeracy, and learning habits—key predictors of long-term academic success (Foorman et al., 2016). In middle school, instruction increasingly emphasizes critical thinking, conceptual



understanding, and student independence, preparing students for the rigor of high school coursework. At the high school level, students engage in advanced coursework, project-based learning, and authentic experiences aligned with postsecondary expectations.

To ensure smooth transitions between grade spans, VALA NC will implement formal transition supports, including orientation programs (e.g., Grade 5–6 and Grade 8–9 transitions), academic advising, and individualized learning plans. Students receive guidance on course selection, goal setting, and skill development, ensuring alignment between academic progress and future aspirations. Research on on-track indicators shows that structured transition supports and early monitoring are critical predictors of high school success and graduation (Holzman et al., 2024).

VALA NC's graduation requirements align fully with North Carolina state requirements and include successful completion of required coursework, demonstrated proficiency on End-of-Course (EOC) assessments, and participation in college and career readiness experiences. In addition, students will develop digital portfolios that demonstrate mastery of academic standards, critical thinking, collaboration, and real-world problem-solving skills. Research indicates that authentic, performance-based assessments are strong predictors of postsecondary success (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Equity is central to VALA NC's instructional design. Through personalized learning pathways, continuous progress monitoring, and targeted interventions, the school ensures that all students—including those from historically underserved groups—receive the support needed to achieve grade-level proficiency and beyond. Research consistently shows that data-driven instruction combined with personalized learning can significantly reduce achievement gaps and improve outcomes across diverse student populations (Hattie, 2009; Pane et al., 2015).

In addition to academic readiness, VALA NC integrates character development through its CRISP-RISE framework (Curiosity, Respect, Integrity, Service, Perseverance, Responsibility, Innovation, Self-Discipline, Empathy). These competencies are embedded across instructional practices and learning experiences. Research demonstrates that social-emotional learning is strongly associated with improved academic performance, increased engagement, and long-term success (Durlak et al., 2011; Farrington et al., 2012).

In summary, VALA NC ensures readiness for grade-level progression and graduation through a comprehensive, integrated system that combines standards alignment, mastery-based progression, real-time data systems (RADAR + Infinite Campus), targeted supports (MTSS + WIN), and authentic learning experiences. This model not only ensures smooth transitions across grade spans but also equips students with the academic knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for success in college, careers, and lifelong learning.

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Q193. Describe in a brief narrative how the yearly academic calendar coincides with the tenets of the proposed mission and education plan.



The VALA NC academic calendar is intentionally designed to support the school's mission of delivering high-quality, student-centered virtual education through personalized learning, data-driven instruction, and the development of 21st-century skills. The calendar includes 175 instructional days and 18 teacher workdays and is structured to meet and exceed North Carolina's minimum instructional time requirement of 1,025 hours. With a daily schedule from 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM, VALA NC provides approximately 6 instructional hours per day, excluding noninstructional time, resulting in approximately 1,050 core instructional hours annually.

In addition, students engage in daily guided readiness activities (approximately 30–60 minutes), including pre-lesson videos, readings, and adaptive preparation tasks. When combined with the core instructional day, this results in over 1,100–1,200 total learning hours annually. This ensures full compliance with state requirements while providing extended opportunities for preparation, reinforcement, and deeper learning in alignment with the school's instructional model.

The calendar reflects a purposeful instructional rhythm aligned with VALA NC's 5A Framework (Active, Adaptive, Accountable, Authentic, Accessible learning) and its virtual instructional model. Each instructional week follows a consistent cycle: Monday through Thursday emphasize guided readiness, teacher-led mini-lessons, collaborative learning (e.g., Team-Based Learning), and adaptive practice, followed by daily WIN ("What I Need") blocks for targeted intervention and enrichment. Fridays are intentionally structured for assessment, retrieval practice, reflection, and instructional adjustment, ensuring that student progress is continuously monitored and instruction is responsive to individual learning needs.

This weekly structure is reinforced through strategically scheduled teacher workdays and professional development days, which are essential for implementing VALA NC's data-driven approach. During these periods, teachers engage in collaborative planning, data analysis, and instructional refinement using the school's RADAR (Real-time Analytics for Detection, Action, and Response) System in conjunction with Infinite Campus and learning platforms. This systematic use of data enables timely instructional adjustments and targeted interventions. Research demonstrates that formative assessment and collaborative data use significantly improve student achievement and instructional effectiveness (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Datnow and Park, 2018).

The calendar also incorporates intentional pacing and scheduled breaks to support student well-being and sustained engagement in a virtual learning environment. Cognitive science research highlights the importance of spaced learning and mental rest in improving retention and reducing cognitive overload (Cepeda et al., 2006; Mayer, 2020). These design elements are particularly critical in online settings, where sustained attention requires structured pacing and balance.

Importantly, VALA NC's calendar supports continuous progress monitoring and instructional responsiveness. The integration of weekly assessment cycles, ongoing formative feedback, and structured intervention time ensures that instruction is continuously aligned with student performance. Research on effective online learning environments indicates that structured routines, timely feedback, and strong teacher-student interaction are essential for improving student outcomes (Means et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).



Overall, the VALA NC academic calendar is not simply a schedule of instructional days, but a strategic implementation framework that operationalizes the school's mission and instructional model. By exceeding state instructional hour requirements and aligning time structures with evidence-based practices, VALA NC creates the conditions necessary for sustained engagement, personalized learning, and continuous academic growth in a high-quality virtual environment.

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Q194. Describe the structure of the school day and week. Include the number of instructional hours/minutes in a day for core subjects such as language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Note the length of the school day, including start and dismissal times. Explain why the school's daily and weekly schedule will be optimal for student learning.



VALA NC operates on a structured school day from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., providing approximately 6 hours of instructional time daily, excluding noninstructional periods. The schedule includes two 15-minute breaks and one 30-minute lunch period to support student focus, engagement, and well-being.

The daily schedule is intentionally divided into morning core instruction and afternoon applied learning. Core academic subjects are prioritized in the morning, when students are most cognitively alert. Students receive approximately 60 minutes each of English Language Arts and mathematics, along with dedicated science instruction integrated into the morning block, and social studies as appropriate by grade level. These core subjects are delivered through a blend of synchronous (live, teacher-led) and asynchronous learning experiences, as outlined in Appendix E, ensuring both direct instruction and opportunities for practice, reinforcement, and personalization.

Afternoons are dedicated to STEAM and Project-Based Learning (PBL), where students apply concepts from core instruction through interdisciplinary, hands-on, and real-world learning experiences. These blocks emphasize problem-solving, collaboration, creativity, and authentic application, directly supporting VALA NC's 5A Framework. Research shows that project-based and applied learning approaches significantly improve student engagement and deeper understanding (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Instruction across the day integrates four instructional modalities:

- (1) Live Teacher-Led Instruction (Synchronous),
- (2) Guided Offline/Experiential Learning,
- (3) Independent Online Learning (Asynchronous) using adaptive platforms, and
- (4) Guided Readiness and Instructional Preparation prior to lessons.

The instructional day follows a structured learning cycle: guided readiness → brief live mini-lesson → readiness check (retrieval practice) → collaborative learning (e.g., Team-Based Learning) → independent/adaptive practice → formative assessment → targeted intervention or enrichment through daily WIN ("What I Need") blocks. This cycle ensures continuous engagement, immediate feedback, and differentiated support.

The weekly schedule follows a consistent Monday–Thursday instructional model, while Fridays are dedicated to assessment, retrieval practice, intervention, enrichment, and teacher planning, enabling systematic progress monitoring and responsive instructional adjustments.

This daily and weekly structure is optimal for student learning because it aligns with research on cognitive load, distributed practice, and active learning. Prioritizing core instruction in the morning enhances focus and retention, while applying learning in the afternoon strengthens transfer and deeper understanding. Active learning approaches significantly improve student performance (Freeman et al., 2014), and distributed practice enhances long-term retention (Cepeda et al., 2006). Additionally, structured and interactive online learning environments with strong teacher presence are associated with improved student outcomes (Means et al., 2010).

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Q195. Describe a typical day for a teacher and a student in the school's first year of operation.



A Typical Day for a Student

At VALA NC, the student experience is structured, engaging, and personalized, reflecting the school's 5A Framework (Active, Adaptive, Accountable, Authentic, Accessible learning). The school day runs from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and follows a coherent instructional cycle designed for virtual environments: guided readiness → live instruction → retrieval practice → collaborative learning → independent application → formative assessment → targeted support (WIN).

Morning Block (8:30–11:30 a.m.) – Core Instruction: Before the start of the virtual instructional day, students complete guided readiness activities, including brief instructional videos, targeted readings, and adaptive practice, designed to activate prior knowledge and prepare them for new learning. Core instruction is prioritized in the morning and includes English Language Arts, mathematics, and science/social studies. Lessons are delivered through brief, interactive mini-lessons followed by retrieval-based readiness checks, collaborative learning (e.g., Team-Based Learning and breakout discussions), and frequent formative assessments. This structured approach reflects research on active learning, retrieval practice, and cognitive load management, which significantly improve student achievement and long-term retention (Freeman et al., 2014; Roediger and Karpicke, 2006; Mayer, 2020).

Midday Block – Practice and Inquiry-Based Learning: Students continue learning through science and social studies instruction with an emphasis on inquiry, analysis, and real-world connections. Independent and small-group work using adaptive platforms reinforces core skills and supports differentiation. Built-in movement breaks and offline activities help sustain attention and reduce screen fatigue, which is essential for effective online learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

WIN Block (What I Need): Students participate in a daily WIN block, where they receive targeted small-group instruction for intervention, enrichment, or acceleration based on real-time performance data. Flexible grouping ensures instruction is continuously adjusted to meet individual needs, consistent with Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) practices shown to improve academic outcomes (Burns et al., 2016).

Afternoon Block – STEAM and Project-Based Learning (PBL): Afternoons are dedicated to STEAM and interdisciplinary project-based learning, where students apply knowledge to authentic, real-world problems. These experiences promote collaboration, critical thinking, and deeper learning, while supporting the development of college, career, and life-ready skills (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

End of Day (by 3:30 p.m.): Students conclude the day with reflection and retrieval activities to consolidate learning and set goals. Optional virtual clubs, tutoring, and enrichment opportunities provide additional academic and social engagement.

This structured and interactive design promotes consistent student engagement and attendance, which are critical predictors of success in virtual learning environments (Borup et al., 2020), while also supporting the development of college, career, and life-ready skills. The flexible and personalized structure further ensures equitable access and support for diverse learners, including students with disabilities, English Learners, and those requiring flexible learning environments.



A Typical Day for a Teacher

Teachers at VALA NC serve as facilitators of learning and maintain a strong instructional presence throughout the day, ensuring engagement, accountability, and timely support.

Morning Preparation and Data Review: Teachers begin the day by reviewing data from VALA NC's RADAR Framework, which integrates information from the learning management system, adaptive platforms (e.g., IXL, Khan Academy), and student information systems (e.g., Infinite Campus). This enables teachers to identify learning gaps, group students strategically, and plan targeted instruction. Data-driven instructional practices have been shown to significantly improve student outcomes (Datnow and Park, 2018).

Live Instruction (Morning Core Block): Teachers deliver live, synchronous instruction using a structured cycle: guided readiness, mini-lesson, retrieval practice, collaborative learning, and formative assessment. Instruction includes direct modeling, questioning, breakout room facilitation, and real-time checks for understanding. Strong teacher presence and interaction are essential components of effective online learning environments (Means et al., 2010).

Midday Monitoring and Support: Teachers actively monitor student progress during independent and small-group work, provide immediate feedback, and adjust instruction based on real-time data. Continuous feedback and progress monitoring are among the highest-impact instructional practices for improving student achievement (Hattie, 2009).

WIN Block (Intervention and Enrichment): During the WIN block, teachers provide targeted, data-driven small-group instruction tailored to individual student needs. Flexible grouping and timely intervention support mastery and prevent learning gaps from widening (Burns et al., 2016).

Afternoon Facilitation (STEAM/PBL): Teachers facilitate STEAM and project-based learning experiences, guiding inquiry, collaboration, and application of knowledge. In this role, teachers act as coaches and mentors, supporting deeper learning and student ownership (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Ongoing Feedback, Accountability, and Communication: Throughout the day, teachers:

- Maintain an active instructional presence, ensuring accountability and engagement
- Provide timely, actionable feedback
- Monitor mastery and adjust pacing
- Maintain ongoing communication with families through the LMS, messaging systems, and scheduled conferences to support student progress and accountability

This continuous feedback and communication loop is critical for student success in virtual environments (Means et al., 2010).

Friday Instructional Cycle and Professional Collaboration: Fridays are dedicated to assessment, student conferencing, intervention, and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Teachers collaboratively analyze data, refine instructional strategies, and plan targeted supports for the upcoming



week. Collaborative data use among educators has been shown to improve instructional effectiveness and student outcomes (Datnow and Park, 2018).

Teachers maintain an active instructional presence and ongoing communication with families, ensuring accountability, timely feedback, and equitable support for all learners.

Together, these structures create a coherent, data-driven, and student-centered instructional system in which students engage in a consistent learning cycle and teachers continuously adapt instruction based on real-time data. This integrated model ensures strong engagement, personalized learning, and high levels of academic achievement for all students.

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Q196. Will this proposed school include a high school?

- ☒ Yes
☐ No

Q197. Describe the high school's educational model and explain how the board will ensure that all NC graduation requirements will be met.



VALA NC's high school program is designed as a rigorous, structured, and student-centered virtual model that combines strong live instruction, personalized learning pathways, real-time progress monitoring, and meaningful college- and career-connected experiences. Consistent with VALA NC's 5A Learning Framework—Active Learning, Adaptive Instruction, Accountable Systems, Authentic Experiences, and Accessible Education—the high school model is not built around passive content delivery. Instead, it is organized around synchronous teacher-led instruction, structured learning cycles, frequent formative assessment, daily support opportunities, and strong student-teacher-family communication. Research on online and secondary learning consistently shows that engagement, structure, and teacher presence are critical for high-quality online learning and student persistence (Borup et al., 2020; Moskovich and Shalem, 2024; Chui, 2025).

Instruction in grades 9–12 will include live core classes, targeted small-group instruction, asynchronous practice and application, and a scheduled WIN (“What I Need”) block for intervention, enrichment, tutoring, conferencing, and acceleration. Students will move through a recurring instructional sequence such as guided readiness, mini-lesson, readiness check, collaborative application, feedback, and assessment. This structure supports retention, accountability, and higher-order learning while preserving the flexibility families seek in a virtual setting. VALA NC's emphasis on active learning, collaboration, project-based learning, and authentic problem solving is especially important for high school students preparing for postsecondary pathways, because these approaches are associated with stronger engagement and readiness for college- and career-level expectations (Freeman et al., 2014; Boardman et al., 2024).

The high school curriculum will be aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and organized to ensure that students meet the Future-Ready Course of Study (FRC) graduation requirements in effect for their entering ninth-grade cohort. According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, students in the FRC must earn at least 22 credits, including 4 English credits, 4 mathematics credits, 3 science credits, 4 social studies credits, 1 Health and Physical Education credit, and a combination of required and additional electives. NC DPI also notes that, for students entering grade 9 in 2026–27 and later, there is an additional Computer Science credit requirement, and the number of electives is reduced accordingly. Because VALA NC's high school grades will open after these statewide changes, the school will build its course catalogs, staffing plans, and student graduation plans around the cohort-specific requirements then in effect.

VALA NC's board will ensure that all NC graduation requirements are met through a set of governance, policy, and monitoring mechanisms. First, the board will adopt policies requiring alignment of all high school course offerings, credit values, and graduation plans with NC DPI requirements and applicable State Board of Education policies. Second, the board will approve a high school course catalog and staffing plan that includes all required state courses, graduation pathways, and appropriate advanced and elective options. Third, the board will require an annual compliance review of any state changes to graduation requirements, course codes, testing requirements, and dual-credit allowances so that VALA NC remains aligned with the graduation expectations for each entering cohort. NC DPI explicitly states that graduation requirements are tied to the student's ninth-grade cohort, making annual policy review essential for a school opening in phases.



At the school level, VALA NC will implement several operational systems to ensure students remain on track for graduation. Each high school student will have an individualized four-year graduation plan beginning in grade 9 and reviewed at least each semester by school counselors, administrators, and families. The school will use transcript audits, credit tracking, and diploma-progress reviews to verify completion of required credits and sequencing.

VALA NC recognizes that a high-functioning virtual school requires both a robust Student Information System and an advanced data-to-action framework. VALA NC will use North Carolina's state-supported NCSIS, powered by Infinite Campus, as the school's official Student Information System (SIS), providing a centralized platform for managing student records, attendance, grades, schedules, and compliance reporting. However, while an SIS effectively captures and displays what has already occurred, it does not inherently provide the real-time analysis or proactive intervention needed to ensure student success in a dynamic online environment.

To address this gap, VALA NC will implement the RADAR System, which continuously analyzes multiple data streams—including SIS data, learning platform activity, and formative assessments—to detect early warning signals and guide timely instructional responses. By integrating NCSIS (Infinite Campus) with the RADAR System, VALA NC ensures that student data is not only collected, but actively leveraged to drive early intervention, personalized support, and continuous academic improvement—an approach aligned with research emphasizing the importance of data-informed instruction and early warning systems in improving student outcomes (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012; Hattie, 2009).

The board will also ensure that graduation readiness is supported by a broad and high-quality high school program, not merely by minimum compliance. In addition to required courses, VALA NC plans to offer honors, Advanced Placement, career and technical education, world languages, fine arts, and college/career readiness electives. Where feasible and appropriate, VALA NC will also leverage North Carolina's Career and College Promise (CCP) program so eligible students can take college courses through community colleges and universities while still in high school. NC DPI describes CCP as North Carolina's dual-enrollment program and notes that students can earn college credit and, in many cases, dual credit that also satisfies high school graduation requirements.

Finally, the board will receive regular reports on high school implementation, including course enrollment, credit accumulation, graduation progress, intervention data, attendance, and postsecondary readiness indicators. Through integration of SIS reporting systems and the RADAR Framework, the board will not simply approve a compliant high school program; it will actively govern a quality-assured, data-driven, and continuously monitored model that is aligned with North Carolina requirements and responsive to student needs.

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North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. *Student Information System (NCSIS)*; NC DPI: Raleigh, NC, 2025.

Q198. Explain how the graduation requirements will ensure student readiness for college or other postsecondary opportunities (trade school, military service, or entering the workforce).



VALA NC's graduation program is intentionally designed so that meeting graduation requirements also ensures readiness for college, technical training, military service, and the workforce. The school builds upon North Carolina's Future-Ready Course of Study by embedding rigor, relevance, and real-world application into every student's academic experience.

For college readiness, students complete a rigorous sequence of core courses aligned with NCSCOS, including four levels of English, mathematics through advanced coursework, laboratory science, and social studies. VALA NC encourages and supports participation in honors, Advanced Placement (AP), and dual enrollment opportunities (e.g., Career and College Promise), allowing students to experience college-level expectations while still in high school. Research shows that exposure to advanced coursework and academic rigor improves college readiness, persistence, and success (Adelman, 2006; College Board, 2020).

For career and technical pathways, VALA NC integrates Career and Technical Education (CTE) electives, project-based learning, and career exploration opportunities. Students can pursue pathways in STEM, business, health sciences, and technology, supported by real-world projects and potential partnerships. Research indicates that career-connected learning and work-based experiences significantly improve student engagement and workforce readiness (Plasman, 2025; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

For students pursuing military service, VALA NC emphasizes discipline, responsibility, leadership, communication, and goal setting—skills developed through structured learning, participation expectations, and the school's CRISP-RISE character framework.

For students entering the workforce directly, the program emphasizes transferable skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, digital literacy, time management, and problem solving. These competencies are developed through active learning, project-based experiences, and authentic assessments. Research consistently shows that these durable skills are essential for long-term career success (National Research Council, 2012).

A key component of ensuring readiness is VALA NC's continuous monitoring and advising system, supported by the RADAR System. Students receive ongoing guidance through:

- Individualized graduation plans
- Academic advising and counseling
- Monitoring of attendance, grades, and course progression
- Early identification of risks and targeted support

Research on "on-track" indicators demonstrates that monitoring attendance, course performance, and engagement helps schools identify and support students before they fall off track for postsecondary success (Allensworth, 2025).

Through this comprehensive approach, VALA NC ensures that graduation is not merely completion of credits, but a meaningful preparation for life after high school.

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Q199. Explain what systems and structures the school will implement for students at risk of dropping out and/or not meeting the proposed graduation requirements.



VALA NC will implement a multi-tiered prevention and intervention system for students at risk of dropping out or failing to meet graduation requirements. Because high school risk typically develops gradually through patterns such as absenteeism, low course performance, disengagement, and missed credits, VALA NC's approach will focus on early identification, timely support, and sustained follow-up rather than waiting until students are far off track. This philosophy is strongly aligned with North Carolina's dropout-prevention guidance, which highlights the use of early warning systems, At Risk reporting, and diploma-assessment tools to identify and support students before problems become irreversible.

At the center of this effort will be VALA NC's structured student progress monitoring and early warning system, the RADAR Framework. The school will continuously monitor indicators such as live attendance, log-in consistency, assignment completion, formative assessment results, course grades, benchmark performance, credit accumulation, participation in intervention sessions, and teacher concerns. RADAR integrates data from North Carolina's NCSIS (powered by Infinite Campus) along with learning platform activity and formative assessments to provide a comprehensive, real-time view of each student's progress. Students will be flagged when trends indicate they are drifting from expected progress, not only when they have already failed.

This mirrors the logic behind early warning systems supported by NC DPI and by current research, which shows that on-track indicators and early warning structures improve targeting of support and can improve grades, behavior, and readiness for long-term success (Faria et al., 2018; University of Washington Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, 2024; NC DPI Dropout Prevention and Intervention).

Once identified, students will receive support through a tiered intervention model. Tier 1 supports will include high-quality core instruction, regular teacher check-ins, progress visibility for families, and a structured schedule that emphasizes active participation and accountability. Tier 2 supports will include targeted WIN block intervention, small-group reteaching, tutoring, mentoring, attendance contracts, more frequent advisor meetings, and family conferences. Tier 3 supports will include individualized intervention plans, counselor-led coordination, intensive credit-recovery planning, wraparound services, and, where appropriate, referral to outside supports. This tiered model is especially important in online settings, where student disengagement can become invisible unless the school intentionally builds routines for noticing and responding quickly. Research on online engagement and online learning effectiveness highlights the importance of behavioral engagement, family support, motivation, and structured teacher response in sustaining student success (Moskovich and Shalem, 2024; Chui, 2025).

VALA NC will place special emphasis on ninth grade and transition points, because research consistently identifies the first year of high school as a crucial predictor of eventual graduation. Studies of early warning and on-track systems show that course failures, attendance, and transition success in grade 9 are highly associated with later graduation outcomes and that systematic monitoring during this period improves schools' ability to direct support to students who need it most (University of Washington Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, 2024; Allensworth, 2025).



Students who begin to fall behind in credits will be supported through a combination of credit recovery, schedule adjustment, personalized pacing, and revised graduation plans. Counselors and administrators will review each at-risk student's transcript and diploma progress using SIS-based reporting tools within NCSIS (Infinite Campus) to identify missing requirements and map the most efficient recovery pathway without lowering standards.

Family partnership will be a major component of the school's dropout-prevention strategy. VALA NC's model assumes that families are essential partners in virtual schooling, especially when students begin showing signs of disengagement. The school will provide regular progress updates, early alerts, conferences, coaching on routines and accountability, and coordinated communication among teachers, counselors, and caregivers. Research indicates that family support and student engagement are positively associated with effectiveness and satisfaction in online environments (Chui, 2025).

Finally, the board and school leadership will treat dropout prevention and graduation progress as governance priorities. The board will receive regular reports on attendance, course pass rates, credit accumulation, intervention participation, and graduation trajectory. Through integration of RADAR analytics and SIS reporting systems, VALA NC will establish a proactive, high-support, and data-driven system that prevents students from falling behind rather than simply reacting after failure occurs.

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Q200.Attach Appendix : 9-12 Core Content and Electives. Provide a visual description of the high school's graduation requirements including core content and electives. Please ensure the projected staff and budget aligns with the course offerings and that all graduation requirements meet or exceed NC graduation requirements per state policy. (Link here: GRAD 004

([S=10399&revid=FYhmTd6kbflgnNa4JKS8jg==&ptid=muNUIKiR2jsXcslsh28JpBkiw==&secid=jwg5jo6sS2LBCiGslshpXYbqQ==&PG=6&IRP=0&isPndg=false\)\)**](https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Policy/ViewPolicy.aspx?S=10399&revid=FYhmTd6kbflgnNa4JKS8jg==&ptid=muNUIKiR2jsXcslsh28JpBkiw==&secid=jwg5jo6sS2LBCiGslshpXYbqQ==&PG=6&IRP=0&isPndg=false))</p></div><div data-bbox=)**

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Applicant Evidence :


Appendix C - 9-12 Core C...

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Lauren Watters

Q201. Attach Appendix B: Curriculum Outline per Grade Span (for each grade span the school would ultimately serve). One sample curriculum outline (in graph form) in the Appendices for one core subject (specific to the school's purpose) for each grade span the school would ultimately serve.

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Applicant Evidence :


Appendix B- Curriculum ...

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Q202. Attach Appendix D: Yearly Academic Calendar (minimum of 185 instructional days or 1,025 hours)

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Applicant Comments :

Academic Calendar and Instructional Hours Compliance (Justification)

VALA NC's academic calendar is designed to **fully comply with North Carolina instructional requirements** by exceeding the required **1,025 instructional hours annually** pursuant to **N.C.G.S. §115C-84.2**. While VALA NC's calendar includes **175 instructional days**, the school exceeds the statutory minimum through an intentionally structured instructional model that combines synchronous teacher-led instruction with monitored asynchronous learning, intervention, tutoring, project-based learning, and supervised independent academic work appropriate for a high-quality virtual learning environment.

During the school year, **140 instructional days occur Monday through Thursday**, and **35 instructional days occur on Fridays**. On **Mondays through Thursdays**, students participate in a structured instructional day from **8:30 AM to 3:30 PM**, which includes approximately **6.0 hours of direct instructional time**, consisting of live teacher-led instruction, guided practice, collaborative learning, intervention/enrichment (WIN), and standards-aligned independent learning. In addition, students engage in **a minimum of 30–60 minutes of monitored asynchronous learning beyond regular instructional hours**, including teacher-assigned instructional activities, adaptive online learning, tutoring, project-based learning, enrichment, assignments, and supervised independent work aligned with course objectives. As a result, students receive approximately **6.5 instructional hours per day on Mondays through Thursdays**, totaling approximately **910 instructional hours annually**:

$$(140 \text{ days/year}) \times (6.5 \text{ hours/day}) = 910 \text{ hours per year}$$

On **Fridays**, students participate in structured instructional activities from **8:30 AM to 12:00 PM**, totaling **3.5 instructional hours**, focused on assessments, review, targeted intervention, student conferencing, goal-setting, and academic support. In addition, students complete **at least 30 minutes of monitored asynchronous instructional activities**, including tutoring, enrichment, adaptive learning, office hours, project-based learning, and standards-aligned assignments. Accordingly, Fridays provide a minimum of **4.0 instructional hours per day**, totaling approximately **140 instructional hours annually**:

$$(35 \text{ days/year}) \times (4 \text{ hours/day}) = 140 \text{ hours per year}$$

Collectively, VALA NC students will receive a minimum of approximately **1,050 instructional hours annually**, exceeding North Carolina's required minimum of **1,025 instructional hours**:

$$910 \text{ hours/year} + 140 \text{ hours/year} = 1050 \text{ hours per year}$$

VALA NC's instructional model reflects best practices for high-quality virtual education by combining **synchronous teacher-led instruction, monitored asynchronous learning, targeted intervention (WIN), tutoring, project-based learning, enrichment opportunities, and personalized academic support** to ensure meaningful student engagement, academic rigor, and individualized learning. Therefore, although VALA NC operates on **175 instructional days**, the school **fully satisfies and exceeds North Carolina's statutory instructional hour requirement**.



Applicant Evidence :



Appendix D- Academic Ca...

Uploaded on **5/22/2026** by
Cevdet Akbay

Q203. Attach Appendix E: Daily and Weekly Schedule Provide a sample daily and weekly schedule for each grade band (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12) the school ultimately plans to serve.

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Applicant Evidence :



Appendix E- Daily and We...

Uploaded on **4/23/2026** by
Lauren Watters

11.2. Special Populations and “At-Risk” Students

Q204. Explain how the school will identify and meet the learning needs of students who are performing below grade level and monitor their progress. Specify the programs, strategies, and supports you will provide for these students.



VALA NC implements a comprehensive and data-driven Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to ensure that students performing below grade level are identified early, supported effectively, and monitored continuously for measurable academic growth. This system aligns with the school's 5A Framework, particularly Adaptive Instruction and Accountable Systems, and is designed to provide timely, personalized, and responsive support for all learners.

Early Identification and Data-Driven Decision Making

Students in need of support are identified through a multi-source data system that includes baseline diagnostic assessments, prior academic records, and ongoing formative assessments embedded within daily instruction. In addition, VALA NC's RADAR System integrates real-time data from adaptive platforms (e.g., Khanmigo, IXL, Achieve3000, etc.), the learning management system, and student information systems (e.g., Infinite Campus), along with engagement indicators such as attendance, participation, and assignment completion.

This comprehensive approach allows instructional teams to detect learning gaps early and intervene promptly. Research shows that early identification combined with continuous progress monitoring significantly improves outcomes for students at risk of academic failure (Fuchs and Fuchs, 2006; Burns et al., 2016). Structured data cycles and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) ensure that data are regularly analyzed and translated into actionable instructional decisions (Datnow and Park, 2018).

Tiered System of Instruction and Intervention

VALA NC's MTSS framework provides a continuum of supports:

Tier 1 – Core Instruction (All Students): All students receive high-quality, standards-aligned instruction delivered through a structured learning cycle: guided readiness, live instruction, retrieval practice, collaborative learning, independent application, formative assessment, and WIN intervention. Instruction is differentiated through small-group support, adaptive learning technologies, and real-time feedback. High-quality Tier 1 instruction is the most critical factor in reducing the number of students requiring additional intervention (Hattie, 2009).

Tier 2 – Targeted Intervention (Some Students): Students identified as needing additional support receive targeted small-group instruction focused on specific skill gaps. These interventions are embedded within daily WIN ("What I Need") blocks, allowing for timely and focused remediation without removing students from core instruction. Supports include structured literacy interventions, scaffolded mathematics instruction, additional guided practice, and targeted use of adaptive platforms. Evidence indicates that targeted, small-group interventions are highly effective in accelerating learning for struggling students (Gersten et al., 2009; Burns et al., 2016).

Tier 3 – Intensive Support (Few Students): Students with significant or persistent learning needs receive intensive, individualized support, which may include one-on-one instruction, individualized learning plans, increased instructional time, and specialized interventions. Exceptional Children (EC) teachers, interventionists, and related service providers collaborate closely with classroom teachers to deliver coordinated support. When appropriate, VALA NC may partner with external providers



experienced in virtual service delivery to ensure access to specialized services. Intensive, individualized interventions have been shown to produce significant gains when aligned with ongoing progress monitoring (Vaughn et al., 2012).

Programs, Strategies, and Supports

VALA NC utilizes a range of research-based programs and instructional strategies to support students performing below grade level:

- **Adaptive learning platforms** (e.g., Khanmigo, IXL, Achieve3000) that personalize instruction, provide immediate feedback, and adjust difficulty based on student performance (Pane et al., 2015; Pane et al., 2017)
- **Structured literacy and scaffolded reading supports** to build foundational skills in comprehension and fluency (Foorman et al., 2016)
- **AI-assisted tutoring tools** that provide real-time feedback and individualized guidance
- **Retrieval practice, spaced learning, and frequent formative assessment**, which strengthen retention and mastery (Roediger and Karpicke, 2006; Cepeda et al., 2006)
- **Peer-assisted learning and collaborative strategies**, which enhance engagement and reinforce understanding (Gillies, 2016)

These strategies provide multiple, flexible pathways for students to access content and achieve mastery.

Progress Monitoring and Instructional Adjustment

Student progress is continuously monitored through formative assessments, benchmark assessments, and real-time platform analytics. Students receiving Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports have clearly defined learning goals and are monitored more frequently to ensure responsiveness to intervention.

Instructional teams regularly review progress data during PLC meetings and adjust interventions as needed. Research demonstrates that frequent progress monitoring combined with data-driven instructional adjustments leads to significantly improved academic outcomes (Stecker et al., 2005; Burns et al., 2016).

Families are active partners in this process. Teachers maintain ongoing communication with families through the LMS, messaging systems, and scheduled conferences, ensuring transparency and shared responsibility for student success.

In summary, through this integrated system of early identification, tiered intervention, and continuous progress monitoring, VALA NC ensures that students performing below grade level receive timely, personalized, and effective support. By combining high-quality instruction, adaptive technologies, and data-informed decision-making, the school creates a structured pathway for students to close learning gaps, build confidence, and achieve sustained academic success.



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Q205. Describe the extent to which one or more of the founding board members has experience working with special populations (students with disabilities, students with 504 Plans, MLs, students identified as gifted, and students at risk of dropping out). If no founding board members have experience working with special populations, describe the school's pre-opening plan to prepare for special populations.



The VALA NC founding board includes members with meaningful experience supporting a wide range of special populations, including students with disabilities (IEPs), students with 504 Plans, multilingual learners (MLs), gifted learners, and students at risk of academic disengagement or dropping out. This expertise is reflected in both individual board member backgrounds and the board's collective commitment to inclusive, student-centered practices aligned with the school's mission.

Altovise Parks brings approximately 25 years of K–12 educational experience, including direct work with Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), intervention frameworks, and restorative practices. Her experience includes supporting students performing below grade level, students with behavioral and social-emotional needs, and those at risk of disengagement or dropout. Her background in instructional leadership and data-informed intervention systems provides critical insight into how schools can proactively identify and support diverse learners.

Naimah Rashad, a licensed mental health professional, contributes deep expertise in clinical assessment, behavioral health services, and trauma-informed care. Her experience is particularly relevant to students with social-emotional needs, students experiencing trauma, and those facing barriers to academic success. She brings a strong understanding of the connection between mental health, student engagement, and academic achievement, which is essential for supporting at-risk populations.

Ana da Silva, an experienced educator with over two decades of teaching in in-person, online, and hybrid environments, has worked extensively with multilingual learners, students with diverse academic needs, and students requiring differentiated instruction. Her expertise in curriculum design and accessible instruction supports the development of inclusive learning environments, particularly in virtual settings.

Collectively, the board also brings experience working with students and families across urban, suburban, and rural communities, including historically underserved populations. This broad perspective strengthens the board's ability to ensure equitable access, culturally responsive practices, and inclusive programming across VALA NC's statewide virtual model.

Beyond individual experience, the board is committed to strong governance and oversight of services for special populations. The board will ensure that the school operates in full compliance with IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Title III requirements, and that appropriate staffing, resources, and systems are in place to support all learners. This includes oversight of Exceptional Children (EC) services, multilingual learner supports, and programs for academically or intellectually advanced students.

As part of its pre-opening plan, VALA NC will:

- Recruit qualified EC teachers, ML coordinators, and support staff
- Establish policies and procedures for IEP and 504 plan implementation in a virtual environment
- Provide targeted professional development in Universal Design for Learning (UDL), differentiation, MTSS, and virtual service delivery
- Implement systems for progress monitoring, compliance, and family engagement



Research supports the importance of inclusive instructional practices such as UDL, MTSS, and differentiated instruction in improving outcomes for diverse learners and reducing achievement gaps (CAST, 2018; Burns et al., 2016).

Through this combination of board expertise, governance oversight, and intentional pre-opening planning, VALA NC is well-positioned to effectively serve and support all students, including those with diverse learning needs.

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Q206.Explain how the instructional plan and curriculum will meet the needs of Multilingual Learners (ML), including the following:

1. Methods for identifying ML students (and avoiding misidentification).
2. Specific instructional programs, practices, and strategies the school will employ to ensure academic success and equitable access to the core academic program for ML students.
3. Plans for monitoring and evaluating the progress and success of ML students, including exiting students from ML services.
4. Means for providing qualified staffing for ML students.



VALA NC is committed to ensuring that Multilingual Learners (MLs) have equitable access to high-quality instruction and the supports necessary to achieve both English language proficiency and academic success. This approach is grounded in the school's 5A Framework—particularly Accessible and Adaptive Instruction—and is aligned with WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards and North Carolina requirements.

Identification and Prevention of Misidentification

Upon enrollment, all families complete a Home Language Survey (HLS) in accordance with state requirements. If a language other than English is indicated, students are screened using a WIDA-approved screener to determine English language proficiency. VALA NC will also review prior school records, including previous ML identification and services, to ensure continuity.

To avoid misidentification, the school uses multiple data sources, including screening results, academic records, and teacher input, ensuring that language acquisition needs are not confused with learning disabilities. When necessary, collaboration between ESL staff, EC staff, and general education teachers will ensure appropriate identification and placement (National Academies of Sciences, 2017).

Instructional Programs, Practices, and Service Delivery

ML students will receive instruction through an integrated service delivery model, including:

- **Push-in support** within core instruction
- **Small-group targeted instruction** during WIN blocks
- **Co-teaching and language support embedded in content areas**

Instruction is aligned with WIDA ELD Standards and incorporates both content objectives and explicit language objectives, ensuring that students simultaneously develop academic knowledge and language proficiency.

VALA NC's instructional model (guided readiness → live instruction → collaborative learning → assessment → WIN support) is designed to support ML learners through structured, interactive, and scaffolded learning experiences.

Teachers will implement research-based strategies, including:

- Instructional scaffolding (visual supports, modeling, sentence frames, guided practice)
- Differentiation by English proficiency level (Entering, Emerging, Developing, Expanding, Bridging)
- Explicit academic language instruction across content areas
- Use of multimodal resources (audio, visuals, translation tools, bilingual supports)
- Structured peer interaction and collaborative learning opportunities

These strategies are supported by research demonstrating that integrating language development with content instruction significantly improves outcomes for multilingual learners (Goldenberg, 2013; August and Shanahan, 2006).



Progress Monitoring, Evaluation, and Exit Procedures

ML student progress will be monitored using multiple measures:

- WIDA ACCESS for ELLs (annual assessment)
- Formative and benchmark assessments
- Classroom performance and language development indicators

Teachers and ML specialists will regularly review data to adjust instruction and ensure continuous progress. Students will be exited from ML services based on state-defined WIDA proficiency criteria, and VALA NC will monitor exited students for a minimum of two years, as required, to ensure sustained academic success.

Ongoing progress monitoring and data-driven instruction are critical for improving outcomes and ensuring appropriate support for ML students (Slavin and Cheung, 2005).

Family Engagement and Communication

VALA NC will prioritize strong partnerships with ML families by providing:

- Translation and interpretation services
- Multilingual communication through the LMS and school platforms
- Family workshops and resources to support learning at home

These efforts ensure that families remain informed, engaged, and empowered as partners in their child's education.

Qualified Staffing and Professional Development

VALA NC will employ or contract with a licensed ESL/ML teacher or coordinator responsible for overseeing ML services, compliance, and instructional support.

All instructional staff will receive ongoing professional development in:

- WIDA standards and language development strategies
- Sheltered instruction and scaffolding techniques (e.g., SIOP-informed practices)
- Supporting ML students in virtual learning environments

Embedding language development across all classrooms ensures that ML support is systemic and not isolated, which is a key factor in improving achievement outcomes (Goldenberg, 2013).

In summary, through this comprehensive system of accurate identification, integrated instructional support, ongoing progress monitoring, and qualified staffing, VALA NC ensures that Multilingual Learners receive equitable access to rigorous instruction and the support needed to achieve both language proficiency and academic success in a virtual learning environment.



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Q207.Explain how the school will identify and meet the needs of gifted students, including the following:

1. Specific research-based instructional programs, practices, strategies, and opportunities the school will employ or provide to enhance their abilities.
2. Plans for monitoring and evaluating the progress and success of gifted students; and means for providing qualified staffing for gifted students.



VALA NC will identify and serve gifted learners through a talent-development and acceleration model that is aligned with the school's 5A Framework and informed by North Carolina's 2024 revised Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) Program Standards (NC DPI, 2024). North Carolina requires public schools to identify and serve academically or intellectually gifted students, and the revised state standards emphasize equity, talent development, academic rigor, and attention to students' academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs (NC DPI, 2024). VALA NC's gifted program will therefore be designed not only to recognize already-identified AIG students, but also to develop and reveal high potential in students who may be overlooked in traditional systems, including students from underrepresented groups, rural communities, multilingual backgrounds, and twice-exceptional profiles (Pfeiffer, 2015; Reis and Renzulli, 2010).

Identification of gifted learners

VALA NC will use a multi-criteria identification process rather than relying on a single test score. Identification evidence will include prior AIG identification and records from previous schools, standardized test results, benchmark and diagnostic data, classroom performance, teacher observations, work samples, student interviews or reflections when appropriate, and parent input. The school will also use ongoing performance data to identify students who demonstrate advanced readiness, rapid mastery, unusual reasoning ability, or exceptional creativity even if they have not previously been formally identified. This is especially important in a statewide virtual model, where some students may have had limited access to enrichment or inconsistent previous identification practices. Current gifted-education research continues to emphasize the need for broader, more equitable identification systems and for schools to recognize that underachievement, masking, and contextual barriers can suppress visible performance in gifted learners (Pfeiffer, 2015; Raoof, 2024).

For students entering with an existing AIG designation, VALA NC will ensure continuity of service from the beginning of enrollment. For students without prior identification, the school will implement talent-development screening cycles using local performance data, adaptive-platform mastery data, teacher nominations, and evidence from advanced projects and discussions. In keeping with North Carolina's AIG framework, identification will be treated as an ongoing process rather than a one-time event (NC DPI, 2024). This is particularly important for gifted students whose abilities may emerge differently across content areas or whose strengths may not be fully captured in traditional screening alone.

Instructional model and service approach for gifted students

VALA NC will not treat gifted education as an isolated add-on. Instead, gifted support will be embedded within the school's broader instructional design. Across grade levels, students will experience a structured learning cycle that includes guided readiness, live teacher-led instruction, retrieval practice, collaborative learning, independent/adaptive practice, formative assessment, and WIN ("What I Need") intervention or enrichment. Within that framework, gifted students will receive a combination of acceleration, enrichment, and advanced application opportunities.

A central research-based practice will be curriculum compacting. When students demonstrate mastery of already-taught or easily acquired grade-level content, teachers will reduce unnecessary repetition and replace it with more advanced work, inquiry, independent study, or cross-disciplinary challenges. Curriculum compacting has long been recognized as a foundational differentiation strategy for



advanced learners, and current gifted-education guidance continues to identify it as an essential method for providing challenge while preserving access to age-based community and instruction (Renzulli and Reis, 2006).

VALA NC will also provide academic acceleration, including flexible pacing within courses, subject-based acceleration, access to above-grade-level content, advanced virtual electives, honors-level expectations where appropriate, and, in upper grades, Advanced Placement, dual enrollment, and capstone pathways as the school grows. The evidence base for acceleration remains one of the strongest in gifted education; recent reviews and current national guidance continue to conclude that appropriately matched acceleration supports academic growth and is a necessary component of appropriate service for many gifted learners (NAGC, 2025; Ivarsson, 2024).

Beyond acceleration, VALA NC will emphasize enrichment and talent development through project-based learning, interdisciplinary STEAM experiences, research tasks, authentic performance assessments, student-designed inquiries, and opportunities for independent or mentored study. Recent meta-analytic and synthesis work continues to show that enrichment programming has positive academic and affective effects for gifted learners, particularly when it promotes depth, student agency, and meaningful intellectual challenge (Gül, 2025; Smedsrud, 2025). This aligns strongly with VALA NC's mission to help students actively create, think, and grow through authentic, future-ready learning experiences.

Teachers will use research-based differentiation practices such as increased depth and complexity, open-ended problem solving, choice-based products, seminar-style discussion, advanced texts and sources, tiered assignments, flexible grouping, and metacognitive reflection. In mixed-ability classrooms, current research continues to support differentiated instruction as a necessary means of serving gifted learners effectively without lowering expectations for others (Ardenlid, 2025).

Because some gifted learners underperform when insufficiently challenged—or when motivational, social-emotional, or contextual barriers interfere with performance—VALA NC will also intentionally address gifted underachievement. Recent systematic review work highlights that underachievement among gifted students is often shaped by motivation, emotional factors, school climate, self-regulation, and fit between learner need and instruction (Raoof, 2024). Accordingly, VALA NC's program will combine academic challenge with advisory support, mentoring, reflective goal setting, and consistent monitoring so that advanced learners are not merely identified, but are actually thriving.

Grade-span opportunities

In the elementary grades, gifted learners will receive early talent development through compacting, flexible grouping, challenge tasks, advanced literacy and numeracy experiences, and inquiry-based extension. In the middle grades, the school will expand opportunities for accelerated content, advanced projects, and sustained interdisciplinary problem solving. In high school, gifted learners will have access to advanced pathways including honors-level work, AP and dual-enrollment options as available, capstone projects, college- and career-connected seminars, and NCSSM-inspired advanced electives such as data science, AI, public health, engineering design, or research-oriented study where enrollment supports them. This developmental progression is aligned with North Carolina's emphasis on both identification and service quality across grade spans (NC DPI, 2024).



Monitoring and evaluating progress

VALA NC will monitor gifted learners using the same strong data systems that support all students, with additional attention to growth at the upper end of achievement, level of challenge, advanced product quality, and continued engagement. Teachers and school leaders will use the RADAR (Real-time Analytics for Detection, Action, and Response) System to synthesize data from the LMS, adaptive platforms, formative assessments, benchmark measures, and performance tasks. For gifted students, progress review will consider not only proficiency but also pace of mastery, evidence of advanced reasoning, quality of independent work, and whether instruction remains sufficiently challenging.

Students receiving gifted services will have individualized advanced-learning goals documented within their learning plans. Progress will be reviewed regularly during teacher data cycles, family conferences, and school-level academic reviews. Evidence may include benchmark growth, classroom performance, completion of compacted or accelerated units, project and portfolio quality, participation in advanced coursework, and indicators of motivation and engagement. This broader definition of success is important because gifted learners can stagnate when only grade-level proficiency is monitored (Reis and Renzulli, 2010). The school will evaluate program success by tracking access to advanced opportunities, student growth, representation across subgroups, course-taking patterns, retention in advanced pathways, and student/family feedback. North Carolina's updated AIG framework places particular emphasis on equitable access, program accountability, and continuous improvement—areas that VALA NC will integrate into its annual review processes (NC DPI, 2024).

Qualified staffing

VALA NC will ensure qualified staffing for gifted learners through a combination of designated leadership, teacher professional learning, and advanced-course capacity. The school will designate an AIG coordinator or advanced-learning lead—either directly employed or secured through an approved service arrangement—who will oversee identification, service planning, progress monitoring, family communication, compliance, and program evaluation. Classroom teachers will be trained to differentiate for advanced learners, implement compacting and acceleration appropriately, design rigorous inquiry tasks, and recognize signs of both giftedness and gifted underachievement (Ayık, 2025).

For specialized advanced courses, VALA NC may also leverage flexible staffing models consistent with its broader high school design, including adjunct instructors, dual-enrollment partners, and approved online options, while maintaining teacher-of-record oversight and program coherence. This is especially valuable in a virtual model, where access to advanced content can be expanded without depending solely on traditional in-building staffing structures. Recent work on digitally enabled acceleration models suggests that technology-rich environments can expand appropriate access for gifted learners when paired with intentional instructional design and qualified oversight (Aboud, 2026).

In summary, VALA NC's gifted program will be built on a clear premise: gifted learners require appropriate challenge, purposeful acceleration, authentic enrichment, and ongoing monitoring, not merely more work or faster movement through the same material. Through equitable identification, curriculum compacting, acceleration, project-based enrichment, individualized monitoring, and qualified staffing, VALA NC will create a gifted-education model that is rigorous, responsive, and well suited to a



statewide virtual school. This approach is strongly aligned with North Carolina's AIG standards and with current research showing that advanced learners thrive when schools intentionally match educational opportunities to their demonstrated readiness, interests, and potential (Reis and Renzulli, 2010).

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11.3. Exceptional Children

The public charter school cannot deny admission to any child eligible for special education services as identified under the federal legislation *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA)*, *IDEA regulations*, and *Article 9 115C of the North Carolina General Statutes*, *North Carolina Policies Governing Services*



for Children with Disabilities. All public schools are responsible for hiring licensed and 'highly qualified' special education teachers pursuant to law. Public schools are required to provide a full continuum of services to meet the unique needs of ALL students with disabilities.

Q208. **Identification and Records** Explain how you will identify students who are enrolled within the charter school that have previously been found to be eligible for special education services or are protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.



VALA NC will implement clear, compliant, and research-informed procedures to ensure that all students who have previously been identified as eligible for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or who are protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act are promptly identified and appropriately served upon enrollment. These procedures are grounded in federal and state requirements and aligned with best practices for ensuring continuity of services and minimizing disruption to student learning (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

As part of the enrollment process, VALA NC will request and review records for all incoming students, including prior Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Section 504 plans, evaluation reports, and any related documentation. Families will be asked to indicate whether their child has previously received special education services or accommodations, and this information will be used to ensure timely identification and continuity of services. Research emphasizes that early and accurate access to prior records is critical to maintaining appropriate supports and avoiding gaps in service delivery (Etscheidt, 2006).

For students with existing IEPs or 504 Plans, the school will make formal requests to the student's previous school or district to obtain all relevant records. VALA NC will follow up as needed to ensure timely receipt of documentation and will maintain communication with prior schools to support a smooth transition. In accordance with federal and state requirements, the school will implement the existing IEP or provide comparable services upon enrollment until the IEP team can review, adopt, or revise the plan as appropriate. This approach reflects established guidance that emphasizes immediate service provision and continuity during student transitions (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

VALA NC will also ensure that instructional staff review student records at the start of enrollment to understand each student's needs, accommodations, and services. This process will be supported by internal systems for tracking and monitoring student records to ensure compliance and continuity of services. Effective implementation of IEPs and 504 plans depends on educator awareness and consistent access to student-specific information, which has been shown to improve fidelity of implementation and student outcomes (Cook and Odom, 2013).

In addition to records review, VALA NC will utilize beginning-of-year assessments, ongoing progress monitoring, and teacher observations to identify students who may require additional supports. These systems are part of the school's broader Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework and help ensure that students with existing needs are not overlooked. Research supports the use of integrated data systems and progress monitoring within MTSS to strengthen early identification and service alignment for students with disabilities (Fuchs and Fuchs, 2006; McIntosh and Goodman, 2016).

To ensure compliance, VALA NC will implement a structured record management system that includes:

- Secure storage and handling of student records in accordance with FERPA
- Ongoing monitoring of IEP and 504 documentation for completeness and compliance
- Clearly defined roles for staff responsible for overseeing special education and 504 processes

The school's EC Director (Exceptional Children Director) will oversee the identification, documentation, and compliance processes for students with disabilities, while a designated 504 Coordinator will ensure proper implementation and monitoring of Section 504 plans. Clearly defined leadership roles and



accountability structures are essential components of effective special education program implementation (Yell et al., 2017).

Through these procedures, VALA NC will ensure that all students with previously identified disabilities are promptly recognized, their records are accurately obtained and reviewed, and appropriate services are implemented without delay. This approach reflects both legal compliance and research-based best practices for ensuring continuity, access, and equitable educational opportunity for students with disabilities in both traditional and virtual learning environments (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

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Q209. Provide the process for identifying students who may be eligible for special education services as identified in the federal 'Child Find' mandate. Be sure to include how student evaluations and assessments will be completed. Include how the school will avoid misidentification of special education students.



VALA NC will fully implement the federal Child Find mandate to ensure that all students who may be eligible for special education services are proactively identified, evaluated, and served in a timely and appropriate manner. This process is grounded in early identification, data-driven decision-making, and full compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and North Carolina policies (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Child Find at VALA NC is an ongoing and proactive process, not limited to referrals, ensuring that students are continuously monitored and supported.

VALA NC will ensure that families, staff, and the broader community are informed of the availability of special education services through enrollment materials, school communications, and outreach efforts. Parents or guardians may refer their child for evaluation at any time, and school personnel will initiate referrals when data indicate that a student may require additional support.

Universal Screening and Early Identification

All students will participate in universal screening and ongoing progress monitoring in core academic areas. Data sources will include formative and benchmark assessments, adaptive learning platform data, teacher observations, and student engagement indicators such as attendance, participation, and assignment completion. These data will be reviewed regularly through structured data cycles to identify students who may be at risk. Research demonstrates that universal screening combined with a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) improves early and accurate identification of students with disabilities (Fuchs and Fuchs, 2006; McIntosh and Goodman, 2016).

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

The identification process will be supported by VALA NC's MTSS, which provides a structured framework for delivering increasingly targeted interventions:

- **Tier I:** High-quality, standards-aligned core instruction with differentiation and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) supports
- **Tier II:** Targeted small-group interventions based on identified academic or behavioral needs
- **Tier III:** Intensive, individualized interventions for students demonstrating limited progress

Student progress will be continuously monitored. When a student does not demonstrate adequate progress despite well-implemented, evidence-based interventions, a problem-solving team will review the data to determine whether a referral for evaluation is warranted. This tiered approach helps distinguish between instructional gaps and potential disabilities (Fletcher et al., 2019).

Referral and Evaluation Process

A referral for evaluation may be initiated by parents, teachers, or other school personnel at any time. Upon referral, VALA NC will:

1. Conduct a Review of Existing Data (RED) to examine academic performance, intervention history, and relevant records
2. Obtain informed parental consent prior to evaluation
3. Conduct a comprehensive, multidisciplinary evaluation using multiple tools and data sources



Evaluations may include academic, cognitive, behavioral, developmental, and functional assessments, as appropriate, and will be conducted by qualified professionals. No single measure will be used as the sole criterion for eligibility, ensuring a comprehensive and valid determination (Yell et al., 2017).

Given the virtual nature of the school, VALA NC will utilize a combination of in-person and virtual evaluation methods, as appropriate and in compliance with state guidelines. The school may partner with qualified external providers to ensure timely and comprehensive evaluations. Research indicates that well-designed virtual and hybrid assessment approaches can be valid and effective when implemented by trained professionals (Stifel et al., 2020).

Eligibility Determination and IEP Development

Following completion of the evaluation, an eligibility determination meeting will be convened within required timelines. The IEP team will include:

- Parent(s) or guardian(s)
- General education teacher
- Exceptional Children (EC) teacher
- LEA representative
- Individual qualified to interpret evaluation results

The team will review all relevant data and determine eligibility in accordance with IDEA and North Carolina policies. If eligible, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be developed to address the student's unique needs. All decisions will be documented through Prior Written Notice, and parents will be fully informed of their rights throughout the process.

Prevention of Misidentification

VALA NC will implement multiple safeguards to prevent both over-identification and under-identification of students:

- Use of multiple data sources rather than reliance on a single assessment
- Implementation and monitoring of evidence-based interventions through MTSS prior to referral when appropriate
- Careful consideration of exclusionary factors, including lack of appropriate instruction, language acquisition needs, and environmental or cultural influences
- Use of culturally and linguistically responsive evaluation practices to reduce bias and disproportionality (Klingner et al., 2012)
- Involvement of qualified, trained professionals in all stages of evaluation and eligibility determination

These practices align with research indicating that structured MTSS frameworks and multidisciplinary evaluation processes significantly reduce misidentification (Klingner et al., 2012; McIntosh and Goodman, 2016).



Data Management and Compliance

All student records and evaluation data will be maintained securely in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). VALA NC will implement clear procedures for documentation, tracking, and monitoring timelines to ensure full compliance with federal and state requirements.

In summary, through a comprehensive, proactive, and research-based Child Find system, VALA NC will ensure that students with disabilities are accurately identified and evaluated in a timely manner. By integrating universal screening, MTSS-based intervention, multidisciplinary evaluation, and safeguards against misidentification, the school will provide equitable access to services and support students in achieving success in the least restrictive environment.

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Q210. Provide a plan detailing how the records of students with disabilities and 504 Accommodation plans will be properly managed, including the following:

1. Requesting Records from previous schools
2. Record Confidentiality (on-site)
3. Record Compliance (on-site)



VALA NC will implement a comprehensive system to ensure that records for students with disabilities and students with Section 504 Accommodation Plans are properly requested, securely maintained, and consistently monitored for compliance with all federal and state requirements. The school's approach emphasizes accuracy, confidentiality, and ongoing oversight to ensure that student records fully support the delivery of services and continuity of care (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

1) Requesting Records from Previous Schools

Upon enrollment, VALA NC will promptly request records from each student's previous school, including Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Section 504 plans, evaluation reports, and any related documentation. The school will initiate formal records requests and follow up as needed to ensure timely receipt of complete and accurate records. Communication with prior schools will be maintained to support continuity of services, and students with existing IEPs or 504 Plans will receive services without delay in accordance with IDEA transfer provisions and federal guidance (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Research indicates that timely access to prior records is essential for maintaining appropriate supports and avoiding service interruptions (Etscheidt, 2006).

2) Record Confidentiality (On-Site / Virtual Environment)

To ensure confidentiality, VALA NC will maintain all student records in secure, access-controlled systems in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and applicable state regulations. Given the virtual nature of the school, records will be stored within a secure digital student information system, with access limited to authorized personnel based on role and responsibility. The school will implement safeguards such as role-based access controls, secure login protocols, and data encryption where applicable.

Staff will receive ongoing training on confidentiality, data security, and proper handling of student records, including compliance with FERPA and Section 504 requirements. All records containing sensitive information will be clearly identified and protected from unauthorized access. Research highlights that strong data governance, staff training, and controlled access systems are essential for maintaining confidentiality and protecting student information in digital environments (Cook and Odom, 2013).

VALA NC will utilize the state-supported Exceptional Children Accountability Tracking System (ECATS), as required, for the development, documentation, and management of IEPs, ensuring alignment with North Carolina Department of Public Instruction requirements and supporting accurate, compliant recordkeeping.

3) Record Compliance (On-Site / System-Level Monitoring)

VALA NC will implement a structured record compliance monitoring system to ensure that all documentation is complete, accurate, and up to date. This system will include:

- Regular review of student records by EC staff to ensure required documentation is present
- Use of compliance checklists aligned with state and federal requirements for both IEP and 504 records
- Ongoing monitoring of timelines related to evaluations, IEP reviews, and re-evaluations



- Immediate corrective action when any area of noncompliance is identified, followed by verification of correction

The school will conduct periodic internal audits of EC and 504 records to ensure both compliance and quality. These audits will review the presence and accuracy of required components, such as:

- Current IEPs and reevaluation documentation
- Prior Written Notices and parent communication records
- Documentation of parent consent and participation
- Service delivery documentation and progress monitoring

The EC Director (or designated coordinator) will oversee all special education records and compliance processes, while a designated 504 Coordinator will be responsible for monitoring the implementation and documentation of 504 Accommodation Plans. VALA NC may also utilize external specialists or consultants, as needed, to support periodic audits and ensure alignment with best practices. Clear leadership oversight and structured monitoring systems are critical to ensuring legal compliance and fidelity of implementation in special education programs (Yell et al., 2017).

In summary, through this comprehensive system—combining timely records requests, secure digital storage, use of the state ECATS platform, ongoing staff training, and structured compliance monitoring—VALA NC will ensure that all records for students with disabilities and 504 plans are properly managed, fully compliant with federal and state regulations, and effectively support high-quality service delivery and student success.

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Q211. Exceptional Children's Programming Explain how you will meet the learning needs of students with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities in the least restrictive environment possible.



VALA NC is committed to providing a full continuum of services to meet the learning needs of students with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE), in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The school's approach is grounded in inclusive practices, individualized supports, and flexible service delivery within a virtual learning environment, ensuring that students are educated with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

At VALA NC, the general education setting will serve as the primary instructional environment for all students, including those with disabilities, to the greatest extent appropriate. Through the school's Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework and personalized learning model, instruction is designed from the outset to be accessible to a wide range of learners. This includes multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression, enabling students with diverse needs to access grade-level content alongside their peers (Meyer et al., 2014).

Students with mild disabilities will primarily be served within the general education setting through differentiated instruction, accommodations, and targeted support. General education and EC teachers will collaborate regularly to align instruction with IEP goals, ensuring that supports such as extended time, scaffolded instruction, and modified assignments are consistently implemented. Research indicates that inclusive, differentiated instruction improves academic outcomes and engagement for students with mild disabilities (Tomlinson, 2014).

Students with moderate disabilities will receive a combination of inclusive instruction and targeted small-group or individualized support. This may include co-teaching, push-in or pull-out services in a virtual setting, and structured intervention blocks designed to address specific academic or functional needs. Co-teaching and collaborative service delivery models have been shown to improve access to grade-level content while supporting individualized learning needs (Friend et al., 2010). Instruction will be aligned to both grade-level standards and individualized goals, with an emphasis on building independence and skill development.

Students with severe or multiple disabilities will receive highly individualized instruction and supports, which may include one-on-one services, specialized instructional strategies, and the use of assistive technology. VALA NC will work closely with families and service providers to design programming that addresses both academic and functional needs. Depending on the nature of the student's needs, services may include a combination of synchronous virtual instruction, in-person supports when required, and partnerships with qualified external providers. Assistive technology and individualized supports are critical for ensuring access and participation for students with significant disabilities (Alper and Raharinirina, 2006).

Across all levels of need, the IEP team will determine appropriate placement, services, accommodations, and modifications based on a comprehensive review of data, including evaluations, progress monitoring, teacher input, and parent feedback. Placement decisions will follow the IDEA requirement that removal from the general education setting occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability prevents satisfactory progress with supplementary aids and services (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

VALA NC will ensure access to the general education curriculum for all students with disabilities through:



- Differentiated instruction and flexible pacing
- Integration of IEP goals into daily instruction
- Use of assistive technology and digital accessibility tools
- Structured intervention time, such as targeted support (WIN) blocks
- Ongoing collaboration between general education and EC staff

The school will also provide related services, as required by each student's IEP, through qualified personnel or contracted providers. These services may include speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and counseling, delivered through a combination of virtual and in-person formats as appropriate. Research supports the effectiveness of integrated related services in improving both academic and functional outcomes for students with disabilities (Cook and Odom, 2013).

To support effective implementation, VALA NC will ensure that all instructional staff receive ongoing professional development in inclusive practices, differentiation, co-teaching, and strategies for supporting students with disabilities in a virtual environment. The EC Director will oversee program implementation, ensure compliance, and support staff in meeting the needs of all learners. Effective professional development and implementation systems are essential for sustaining inclusive practices and improving student outcomes (Cook and Odom, 2013).

Through this comprehensive and flexible approach—combining inclusive instruction, individualized supports, and a full continuum of services—VALA NC will ensure that students with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment and are provided with meaningful access to both the general education curriculum and opportunities for academic and functional success.

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Q212. Describe the specific educational programs, strategies, and additional supports the school will provide to ensure a full continuum of services for students with disabilities. How will the school ensure students' access to the general education curriculum?



VALA NC will provide a comprehensive continuum of services to ensure that all students with disabilities have equitable access to the general education curriculum and the supports necessary to achieve academic and functional success. This continuum is grounded in inclusive practices, individualized planning, and flexible service delivery aligned to each student's IEP, consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and best practices in special education (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

At the core of VALA NC's approach is the belief that access to the general education curriculum begins with strong instructional design. Through the school's Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework and personalized learning model, instruction is intentionally designed to meet the needs of diverse learners. This includes providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression, allowing students with disabilities to access grade-level content alongside their peers (Meyer et al., 2014).

To ensure a full continuum of services, VALA NC will provide a range of instructional supports and service delivery options based on individual student needs, including:

- Inclusion within the general education setting with accommodations and modifications
- Co-teaching and collaborative instruction between general education and EC staff
- Push-in and pull-out services based on student need and IEP decisions
- Small-group and targeted intervention services within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework
- Individualized instruction aligned to IEP goals
- Assistive technology and digital accessibility tools to support engagement and learning
- Related services such as speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and counseling, delivered through qualified staff or contracted providers

These services will be delivered through a combination of synchronous virtual instruction, asynchronous supports, and, when necessary and appropriate, in-person services or partnerships to meet specific student needs. Research supports the effectiveness of flexible, technology-supported service delivery models in increasing access and personalization for students with disabilities (Alper and Raharinirina, 2006).

Access to the general education curriculum will be ensured through:

- Alignment of IEP goals with grade-level standards and daily instruction
- Differentiated instruction and flexible pacing to support varying levels of readiness (Tomlinson, 2014)
- Integration of accommodations and modifications across all instructional settings
- Structured intervention time (e.g., WIN blocks) to address skill gaps without unnecessarily removing students from core instruction
- Ongoing collaboration between general education teachers and EC staff to ensure consistency and alignment of supports

Co-teaching and collaborative service delivery models will further support access by allowing students to receive specialized instruction within the general education environment, which has been shown to improve both academic outcomes and inclusion (Friend et al., 2010).



VALA NC will also implement a coordinated system for monitoring student progress and adjusting services as needed. Student performance data, progress toward IEP goals, and teacher observations will be reviewed regularly through structured data cycles. Adjustments to services, instructional strategies, or placement will be made through the IEP team to ensure continued alignment with student needs. Continuous progress monitoring is a key component of effective special education programs and supports improved student outcomes (Fuchs and Fuchs, 2006).

To support effective implementation, all instructional staff will receive ongoing professional development in inclusive practices, differentiation, co-teaching, assistive technology, and strategies for supporting students with disabilities in a virtual learning environment. The EC Director will oversee the implementation of services, ensure compliance, and support staff in delivering high-quality instruction across the continuum. Strong implementation systems and professional learning are essential for sustaining effective inclusive practices (Cook and Odom, 2013).

Through this integrated approach—combining inclusive instructional design, a full range of service options, and continuous progress monitoring—VALA NC will ensure that students with disabilities have meaningful access to the general education curriculum and the supports necessary to succeed academically and functionally.

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Q213. Describe the methods and support systems that will be in place to ensure students with disabilities receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).



VALA NC will ensure that all students with disabilities receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) through a comprehensive system of individualized planning, high-quality instruction, consistent implementation of services, and ongoing monitoring of both student progress and program fidelity. FAPE at VALA NC is grounded in the principle that each student's educational program must be reasonably calculated to enable appropriate progress in light of the child's unique circumstances (Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District, 2017).

Each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) will serve as the foundation for ensuring FAPE. IEPs will be developed based on comprehensive, multidisciplinary evaluation data and will include measurable annual goals, specially designed instruction, related services, and appropriate accommodations and modifications. The IEP team, including parents and qualified professionals, will ensure that services are aligned with both grade-level standards and the student's individualized needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

To ensure that services are delivered as intended, VALA NC will implement clear systems for service delivery, documentation, and accountability, including:

- Scheduling and tracking of all special education and related services to ensure implementation as outlined in the IEP
- Ongoing monitoring of IEP implementation by EC staff and school leadership
- Use of the North Carolina ECATS system to document services, track timelines, and ensure compliance
- Regular collaboration between EC staff and general education teachers to ensure consistent application of accommodations, modifications, and instructional supports

Instructional access to FAPE will be further strengthened through the integration of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). UDL ensures that instruction is proactively designed to provide multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression, thereby reducing barriers to learning (Meyer et al., 2014). MTSS provides a structured framework for delivering differentiated instruction and targeted interventions, ensuring that student needs are addressed early and systematically (Fuchs and Fuchs, 2006).

Student progress will be systematically monitored through IEP goal tracking, formative assessments, benchmark data, and teacher observations. Progress toward IEP goals will be documented and communicated to families at regular intervals in accordance with state requirements. If a student is not making expected progress, the IEP team will reconvene to review data and make timely adjustments to services, instructional strategies, or placement. Ongoing progress monitoring is a critical component of effective special education practice and supports improved student outcomes (Stecker et al., 2005).

VALA NC will also ensure that students receive all necessary supplementary aids and services to support meaningful participation in the general education curriculum. These may include accommodations, modifications, assistive technology, and related services such as speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and counseling. Assistive technology, in particular, plays a critical role in increasing access, independence, and engagement for students with disabilities, especially in virtual learning environments (Alper and Raharinirina, 2006).



To ensure implementation with fidelity, the EC Director will oversee all aspects of the special education program, including service delivery, compliance monitoring, and staff support. The school will conduct periodic internal audits of IEP implementation and service documentation to ensure adherence to legal and programmatic requirements. All instructional staff will receive ongoing professional development in IDEA requirements, inclusive practices, IEP implementation, and strategies for supporting students with disabilities in a virtual environment. Effective implementation systems and staff capacity-building are essential for ensuring high-quality outcomes for students with disabilities (Cook and Odom, 2013).

Through this integrated system—combining individualized planning, inclusive instructional design, structured service delivery, continuous progress monitoring, and strong oversight—VALA NC will ensure that all students with disabilities receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education that is responsive to their individual needs and aligned with federal and state requirements.

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Q214. Describe how implementation of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will be monitored and reported to the student, parents, and relevant staff.



VALA NC will implement a structured, transparent, and data-driven system to ensure that Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are implemented with fidelity, actively monitored, and clearly communicated to students, families, and relevant staff, in full compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and requirements for providing a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

The Exceptional Children (EC) staff, under the leadership of the EC Director, will oversee all aspects of IEP implementation and monitoring. At enrollment and following each IEP meeting, all relevant personnel—including general education teachers, EC teachers, and related service providers—will be informed of their specific responsibilities. Staff will have secure, ongoing access to IEP documents and accommodation plans through the state's ECATS system and school platforms to ensure consistent implementation.

Monitoring of IEP Implementation

IEP implementation will be monitored through multiple aligned systems, including:

- Ongoing verification of service delivery to ensure alignment with IEP specifications (frequency, duration, and setting)
- Documentation of accommodations and modifications within instructional platforms and lesson records
- Regular collaboration among EC staff, general education teachers, and service providers through scheduled team meetings
- Use of ECATS to track compliance, timelines, and service documentation

Progress Monitoring and Data Use

Student progress toward IEP goals will be systematically monitored using research-based progress monitoring practices, including formative assessments, curriculum-based measures, and performance data aligned to individualized goals. Data will be collected and reviewed on a regular basis (e.g., biweekly or monthly, depending on the goal), allowing staff to make timely instructional adjustments and ensure appropriate progress (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017; Jung et al., 2018).

In the virtual environment, VALA NC will also utilize digital learning platforms and internal systems (e.g., RADAR system) to track student engagement, assignment completion, and skill mastery, providing additional data points to support individualized instruction and intervention.

Reporting and Communication

VALA NC will ensure consistent and meaningful communication with students and families through:

- **Periodic IEP progress reports** aligned with grading/reporting periods, as required under IDEA
- **Ongoing communication** via conferences, virtual meetings, and digital platforms
- **Annual IEP review meetings**, with additional meetings convened as needed based on student progress or parent request

Students, when appropriate, will be actively engaged in understanding their IEP goals and progress, promoting self-advocacy and ownership of learning.



Collaboration and Professional Capacity

To ensure alignment and fidelity, EC staff and general education teachers will collaborate regularly through structured planning meetings and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Ongoing professional development will be provided to ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities related to IEP implementation, differentiation, progress monitoring, and compliance.

Oversight and Accountability

The EC Director will monitor the integrity of the IEP process through periodic internal reviews of service delivery, progress monitoring data, and documentation. These reviews will ensure that services are delivered as intended and that all compliance requirements are met. When appropriate, external audits and compliance checks will be utilized to further strengthen accountability and consistency (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

In summary, through a coordinated system of implementation, data-driven monitoring, collaboration, and transparent communication, VALA NC will ensure that IEPs function as active, responsive tools that guide instruction and support meaningful student progress in a virtual learning environment.

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U.S. Department of Education. *Questions and Answers on IDEA Implementation and Monitoring*; Office of Special Education Programs: Washington, DC, 2020.

Q215. Describe the proposed plan for providing related services and to have qualified staffing adequate for the anticipated special needs population.



VALA NC will implement a flexible, scalable, and compliant staffing model to ensure that all students with disabilities receive required related services in accordance with their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including requirements for a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).

VALA NC anticipates that a higher percentage of its student population may require Exceptional Children (EC) services, consistent with trends observed in virtual school settings. Accordingly, staffing and service delivery will be driven by actual enrollment, service intensity, and individualized student needs rather than fixed ratios alone.

Qualified Staffing Model

VALA NC will employ appropriately licensed EC professionals and related service providers to ensure a full continuum of services, including:

- Licensed Exceptional Children (EC) teachers
- An EC Director/Coordinator responsible for compliance, program oversight, and service delivery
- Licensed related service providers (e.g., speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists)
- A licensed school psychologist to support evaluations, reevaluations, and eligibility determinations

All personnel—whether employed directly or contracted—will meet North Carolina licensure requirements and will be trained in both special education compliance and effective service delivery in virtual environments.

Related Services Delivery

Related services will be delivered using a flexible, student-centered approach aligned to each student's IEP, including:

- Synchronous virtual sessions (teletherapy) for direct service delivery
- Asynchronous supports and guided practice activities
- In-person services or partnerships, when required by the IEP

VALA NC may partner with experienced teletherapy providers to deliver specialized services in online settings. Telepractice models have been shown to be effective and comparable to in-person services when implemented with fidelity and appropriate safeguards (ASHA, 2021; Cason, 2014).

Staffing Adequacy and Caseload Management

Staffing decisions will be based on ongoing caseload analysis, including:

- Number of students served
- Service minutes required by IEPs
- Complexity and intensity of student needs



VALA NC will regularly review enrollment and service data to ensure that caseloads remain manageable and compliant with best practice recommendations, and will adjust staffing levels by hiring additional personnel or expanding contracted services as needed.

Coordination and Collaboration

EC staff and related service providers will work collaboratively to ensure cohesive and effective service delivery. This includes:

- Coordinating service schedules to meet IEP requirements
- Aligning services with instructional goals and student needs
- Monitoring service minutes and maintaining accurate documentation
- Participating in IEP development, review, and revision

Regular communication will be maintained with families and instructional staff to ensure transparency and alignment.

Monitoring and Quality Assurance

VALA NC will implement systems to ensure both compliance and service quality, including:

- Ongoing monitoring of service delivery and fidelity to IEP requirements
- Regular review of student progress data and goal attainment
- Evaluation of provider performance and service effectiveness
- Internal compliance checks and, when appropriate, external audits

Data-based decision-making will guide adjustments to services to ensure that students make meaningful educational progress (Cook & Odom, 2013).

Professional Development

All EC staff and related service providers will receive ongoing professional development focused on:

- IDEA compliance and IEP implementation
- Effective virtual and hybrid service delivery models
- Progress monitoring and data-based decision-making
- Collaboration with general education teachers in inclusive settings

Through a combination of qualified personnel, flexible service delivery models, data-driven staffing decisions, and strong oversight systems, VALA NC will ensure that related services are adequately staffed, effectively delivered, and fully aligned with the individualized needs of its students.

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U.S. Department of Education. IDEA Guidance on FAPE and LRE Implementation; Office of Special Education Programs: Washington, DC, 2020.

11.4. Student Performance Standards

Q216. Describe how the school will measure student performance.



VALA NC will measure student performance through a comprehensive, data-driven system grounded in its 5A Framework, particularly the Adaptive Instruction and Accountable Systems pillars, ensuring that performance is continuously monitored, clearly defined, and actively used to guide instruction. Student performance is measured daily, weekly, and periodically, providing timely, actionable insights that inform instructional decisions and support student growth.

Student performance will be evaluated using a combination of state-required assessments, benchmark assessments, and ongoing formative measures. All students will participate in North Carolina state assessments, including End-of-Grade (EOG), End-of-Course (EOC), and other required assessments, which provide standardized measures of proficiency and growth.

In alignment with the school's Adaptive Instruction model, VALA NC will implement benchmark and interim assessments at regular intervals to monitor progress toward grade-level standards. These assessments provide timely data to identify trends in student performance, measure growth, and inform instructional adjustments (Hamilton et al., 2009).

At the core of VALA NC's instructional model is a commitment to mastery-based learning, in which students are expected to demonstrate a high level of understanding before progressing to new content. Performance standards will be defined by clear mastery expectations, typically requiring students to demonstrate proficiency at or above 80 percent or through demonstrated competency on performance-based tasks. Students who do not meet mastery expectations receive targeted support and additional opportunities to demonstrate understanding before moving forward, consistent with research on mastery learning and feedback cycles (Guskey, 2020).

Consistent with the Adaptive Instruction pillar of the 5A Framework, the school will utilize diagnostic and AI-supported adaptive learning tools to assess baseline skill levels, personalize learning pathways, and adjust content and pacing based on real-time student performance. These tools are embedded within daily instruction and provide continuous insight into student mastery, allowing teachers to respond immediately to learning needs through differentiation, small-group instruction, and WIN ("What I Need") supports.

A central component of VALA NC's performance monitoring system is the RADAR (Real-time Analytics for Detection, Action, and Response) system, which integrates multiple data sources—including formative assessments, benchmark results, engagement metrics, and assignment completion—into a unified platform. RADAR system enables educators to monitor student performance in real time, identify learning gaps early, and take immediate instructional action through targeted intervention or enrichment. This ensures that performance data is not only collected, but actively used to drive instructional decisions and student support.

Student performance is measured continuously throughout the instructional cycle using structured formative assessment practices. As outlined in Appendix E, instruction is intentionally designed around short learning cycles that include immediate checks for understanding, adaptive practice, collaborative application (e.g., team-based learning), and mastery checks. This ensures that performance data is generated throughout each lesson, not just at the end of a unit, aligning with research on retrieval practice and frequent feedback (Roediger & Karpicke, 2006).



A defining feature of VALA NC's performance system is the intentional use of the weekly schedule to support assessment and instructional response. Fridays are dedicated to a structured cycle of assessment, feedback, and reflection. During this time, students engage in spiral review, low-stakes assessments, retrieval practice, and performance-based tasks that reinforce learning and provide clear evidence of mastery. A rotational structure allows teachers to conference with students, provide immediate feedback, and deliver targeted intervention or enrichment through WIN support. Students also engage in reflection and goal setting, strengthening their ability to monitor their own progress.

This weekly assessment cycle ensures that student performance is not only measured frequently but also deeply understood. It provides a consistent opportunity to identify learning gaps, reinforce key skills, and adjust instruction before new content is introduced. At the same time, teachers use dedicated time for data analysis and instructional planning, ensuring that performance data directly informs the design of upcoming lessons and supports.

By combining clear mastery expectations, continuous formative assessment, adaptive learning technologies, the RADAR system, and a structured weekly assessment cycle, VALA NC ensures that student performance is measured in a way that is ongoing, actionable, and tightly aligned to its Adaptive Instruction model and overall 5A Framework.

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Roediger, H. L.; Karpicke, J. D. Test-Enhanced Learning: Taking Memory Tests Improves Long-Term Retention. *Psychol. Sci.* 2006, 17, 249–255.

Q217. Explain the use of any evaluation tool or assessment that the proposed charter school will use in addition to any state or federally mandated tests. Describe how the data will be used to inform instruction and improve student performance.



In addition to state and federally mandated assessments, VALA NC will implement a comprehensive system of diagnostic, benchmark, formative, and adaptive assessment tools as part of its Adaptive Instruction model within the 5A Framework. These tools are intentionally selected to provide real-time, actionable data that informs instruction and improves student performance. Research consistently demonstrates that high-impact assessment systems are those that are frequent, data-driven, and directly connected to instructional decision-making (Black and Wiliam, 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Student performance is measured daily, weekly, and periodically to ensure timely and actionable insights.

VALA NC will utilize diagnostic assessments at the beginning of the year and upon student enrollment to establish baseline proficiency levels in core academic areas. These diagnostics identify skill gaps and strengths, allowing teachers to develop personalized learning pathways aligned to each student's needs.

VALA NC will implement benchmark and interim assessments administered multiple times throughout the year to measure student growth and progress toward grade-level standards. These assessments ensure alignment with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and provide actionable data for instructional planning and early intervention (Stecker et al., 2020).

Consistent with the Adaptive Instruction pillar, VALA NC will also leverage adaptive learning platforms such as IXL, DreamBox, and Khanmigo. These platforms continuously assess student performance through embedded diagnostics and skill-based progression, dynamically adjusting content, pacing, and level of support based on real-time student responses. This approach reflects research on adaptive learning systems, which shows that technology-supported personalization can significantly improve student outcomes when paired with strong instructional practices (Pane et al., 2017; VanLehn, 2019).

A defining feature of VALA NC's model is the integration of the RADAR (Real-time Analytics for Detection, Action, and Response) system. RADAR aggregates data from multiple assessment sources—including LMS activity, adaptive platforms, formative assessments, and benchmark results—to provide real-time insights into student performance. Through RADAR, teachers and school leaders can immediately detect learning gaps, act through targeted instructional adjustments and respond with interventions such as small-group instruction, WIN ("What I Need") blocks, and individualized supports. This aligns with research emphasizing the importance of timely data use and rapid instructional response in improving student achievement (Hamilton et al., 2009; Datnow and Park, 2018).

Formative assessment practices are embedded within daily instruction and include exit tickets, quizzes, discussion-based checks for understanding, performance tasks, and student reflections. These low-stakes assessments provide immediate feedback to both students and teachers, enabling rapid instructional adjustments and reinforcing learning through retrieval practice and feedback cycles (Roediger and Karpicke, 2006; Dunlosky et al., 2013).

Data from all assessment sources—including diagnostic, benchmark, adaptive, and formative tools—are integrated into the school's data systems and reviewed regularly through structured processes aligned to the Accountable Systems pillar of the 5A Framework. Teachers engage in ongoing data analysis and collaborative planning through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to examine student performance, identify trends, and plan targeted instruction.



As described in the school's weekly instructional model, VALA NC has intentionally structured its schedule to support this data-driven approach. Fridays are dedicated to assessment, targeted intervention, student conferencing, and instructional planning. During this time, teachers analyze student performance data, adjust instructional plans, and provide individualized support through WIN blocks, ensuring that assessment results are directly translated into responsive instruction.

At the student level, data is used to promote ownership of learning. Students engage in goal setting, progress monitoring, and reflection, using performance data to understand their growth and identify next steps—an approach shown to increase motivation and achievement (Hattie, 2012).

At the classroom level, this results in flexible grouping, reteaching, enrichment, and individualized support. Instruction is continuously adjusted based on current data to ensure that students receive the support or challenge needed to achieve mastery.

At the school level, leadership teams analyze aggregated data to evaluate program effectiveness, monitor subgroup performance, and ensure that instructional strategies and interventions are producing measurable results.

Through this integrated system of assessment and data use, VALA NC ensures that evaluation tools are used not only to measure student performance but to actively drive instruction, personalize learning, and improve outcomes for all students in alignment with its Adaptive Instruction model and 5A Framework.

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Q218. Explain the policies and standards for promoting students, including students with special needs, from one grade level to the next. Discuss how and when promotion criteria will be provided to students.



VALA NC will implement clear, consistent, and equitable policies for promoting students from one grade level to the next, grounded in demonstrated mastery of grade-level standards and aligned with the school's mastery-based instructional model. Promotion decisions will be based on a comprehensive review of student performance data, ensuring that students are adequately prepared for the next level of instruction. Research supports the use of multiple measures and mastery-based criteria to improve student outcomes and reduce inappropriate retention (Guskey, 2015; Heppen et al., 2017).

Promotion criteria will include multiple measures of student performance, including:

- Demonstration of mastery of grade-level standards in core content areas
- Performance on classroom-based, benchmark, and formative assessments
- Completion of required coursework and assignments
- Progress toward individual learning goals and competencies

Consistent with the school's emphasis on mastery-based learning, students are expected to demonstrate sufficient understanding of key concepts before advancing. Students who do not initially meet promotion criteria will be provided with targeted intervention, additional instructional support, and multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery prior to final promotion decisions. This approach aligns with research indicating that timely intervention and multiple opportunities to learn are more effective than retention alone (Hattie, 2012).

VALA NC will take a proactive, prevention-oriented approach through its Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Students experiencing academic difficulty will be identified early through ongoing progress monitoring and data analysis, including the RADAR (Real-time Analytics for Detection, Action, and Response) system. Families will be notified promptly, and targeted interventions will be implemented through WIN ("What I Need") blocks, small-group instruction, and personalized learning pathways. This continuous monitoring ensures that concerns are addressed early and that promotion decisions are informed by sustained evidence of student progress rather than single-point measures (Fuchs and Fuchs, 2006).

If sufficient progress is not demonstrated, more formal discussions regarding promotion or retention will begin by midyear. These discussions will involve families as active partners and will include a transparent review of student data, interventions provided, and progress made. Promotion decisions will never come as a surprise to students or families.

To support objective and research-informed decision-making, VALA NC may utilize structured tools such as the Light's Retention Scale (LRS-5), which incorporates multiple indicators including academic performance, attendance, motivation, and social-emotional factors. Such tools help ensure that retention decisions are made thoughtfully and holistically rather than based on a single criterion.

For students in third grade, VALA NC will fully comply with North Carolina's Read to Achieve legislation, including all required promotion, retention, and intervention requirements related to reading proficiency. The school will implement required reading assessments, provide targeted reading interventions, and follow all state-mandated pathways for promotion, including opportunities for additional instruction and reassessment.



For students with disabilities, promotion decisions will be made in alignment with each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP team will consider progress toward IEP goals, accommodations, and individual learning needs when determining promotion. VALA NC will ensure that students with disabilities have full access to the general education curriculum and appropriate supports to demonstrate mastery, consistent with federal requirements under IDEA.

Promotion criteria and expectations will be clearly communicated to students and families through multiple channels. These include publication in the student and family handbook prior to the start of the school year, orientation sessions, and ongoing communication through progress reports, conferences, and digital platforms. Families will be informed early and regularly if a student is at risk of not meeting promotion standards and will receive clear guidance on available supports and next steps.

Final promotion decisions will be made at the end of the academic year based on a comprehensive review of student data and in collaboration with teachers, school leadership, and, when applicable, the IEP team.

Through these structured supports, proactive communication practices, and research-informed decision-making processes, VALA NC will ensure that promotion decisions are fair, transparent, and focused on student readiness for future academic success.

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Q219. Provide the public charter school's exit standards for graduating all students. These standards should set forth what students in the last grade served will know and be able to do. If serving high school, include plans for students at risk of dropping out.



VALA NC will establish clear, rigorous, and measurable exit standards to ensure that all graduates are prepared for success in postsecondary education, the workforce, or military service. These standards are aligned with North Carolina graduation requirements and the school's 5A Framework, ensuring that students develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for lifelong success. Consistent with practices in high-performing schools, VALA NC will define graduate readiness through a "Portrait of a Graduate" framework, outlining essential competencies such as critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, communication, and ethical responsibility (Conley, 2014; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

All students will be required to meet or exceed North Carolina course and credit requirements for graduation, including successful completion of all required coursework, state assessments, and any additional state-mandated criteria. VALA NC will ensure full compliance with graduation pathways, including college preparatory and Career and Technical Education (CTE) options.

In addition to meeting state requirements, VALA NC defines a successful graduate as a student who demonstrates proficiency in the following areas:

- **Academic Mastery:** Demonstrates strong proficiency in core academic subjects, including reading, writing, mathematics, and scientific reasoning, as evidenced by coursework, assessments, and performance-based tasks.
- **Adaptive Learning Skills:** Applies self-directed learning strategies, utilizes feedback effectively, and demonstrates the ability to adapt to new challenges, consistent with the Adaptive Instruction pillar of the 5A Framework.
- **Accountability and Ownership:** Sets goals, monitors progress, and takes responsibility for learning outcomes, reflecting the Accountable Systems pillar.
- **Authentic Application:** Applies knowledge and skills to real-world contexts through project-based learning, problem-solving, and career-connected experiences.
- **Digital Literacy and Collaboration:** Demonstrates the ability to effectively use technology, communicate, and collaborate in both virtual and in-person environments.

To ensure that these competencies are meaningfully demonstrated, all students will complete a culminating capstone or portfolio-based graduation requirement. This capstone will require students to integrate academic knowledge, inquiry, and real-world application, reflecting practices used in high-performing STEM institutions such as the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics. Students will present evidence of their learning through research, problem-solving, or interdisciplinary projects that demonstrate readiness for postsecondary pathways (Conley, 2014).

To support diverse student goals, VALA NC will provide multiple pathways to graduation, including advanced coursework (e.g., honors and AP), dual enrollment opportunities with community colleges, and career-focused learning experiences. Each student will develop and regularly update a Personalized Graduation Plan (PGP) aligned with their college, career, or workforce goals.

Students will also be supported through an advisory and mentoring system, in which each student is assigned an advisor who provides ongoing academic monitoring, goal-setting support, and postsecondary guidance. Strong student-adult relationships have been shown to significantly improve student persistence and graduation outcomes (Allensworth and Easton, 2007).



For students at risk of dropping out, VALA NC will implement a proactive, data-driven Early Warning and Intervention System aligned with its RADAR (Real-time Analytics for Detection, Action, and Response) framework. RADAR will continuously monitor key indicators such as academic performance, engagement, attendance, and course completion to identify students at risk early (Balfanz et al., 2007).

Identified students will receive tiered supports, including:

- Individualized academic support and flexible pacing
- Targeted WIN (“What I Need”) intervention blocks
- Mentoring and frequent check-ins with advisors and teachers
- School counselor support for academic, social-emotional, and postsecondary planning
- Credit recovery and flexible scheduling options

The school’s virtual model further enhances these supports by allowing flexible pacing, personalized pathways, and alternative scheduling options that remove barriers often present in traditional settings.

For students with disabilities, graduation expectations will be aligned with each student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP), ensuring access to the general education curriculum with appropriate accommodations and supports in accordance with IDEA requirements.

Through clearly defined exit standards, a Portrait of a Graduate framework, performance-based expectations, multiple pathways, and proactive intervention systems, VALA NC will ensure that all students graduate prepared for success in college, career, and life.

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11.5. School Culture and Discipline

Q220. Describe the culture or ethos of the proposed school. Explain how it will promote a positive academic environment and reinforce student intellectual and social development.



The culture of the Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA NC) is grounded in its 5A Framework (Active Learning, Adaptive Instruction, Accountable Systems, Authentic Experiences, and Accessible Education), which collectively establishes a student-centered, engaging, and inclusive virtual environment. Aligned with its mission of empowering students to actively create, think, and grow through purposeful, real-world learning, VALA NC is intentionally designed to address common challenges of virtual education—such as isolation, disengagement, and lack of accountability—through structured, relationship-driven, and highly interactive practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

At the core of VALA NC's culture is active engagement and shared responsibility for learning. Inspired by practices from high-performing institutions such as the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (NCSSM), VALA NC fosters a “thinker-maker-doer” culture in which students actively construct knowledge, engage in inquiry, and apply learning to real-world challenges. Students participate in a structured blend of synchronous and asynchronous instruction, with a strong emphasis on live, interactive learning experiences that promote collaboration, discussion, and feedback. Through team-based learning, project-based learning, and interactive virtual classrooms, students are active participants rather than passive recipients of content. Daily instructional structures, including WIN (What I Need) blocks, provide dedicated time for personalized support, enrichment, and peer collaboration, reinforcing a culture where every student is supported and challenged appropriately (Freeman et al., 2014).

VALA NC further cultivates a culture of inquiry, research, and authentic application. Consistent with practices observed in high-performing STEM-focused schools, students engage in problem-solving, investigation, and project-based tasks that require critical thinking and real-world application. Over time, students build toward performance-based demonstrations of learning, including capstone experiences, presentations, and interdisciplinary projects that reflect authentic understanding and readiness for future pathways (Conley, 2014).

Equally important is the intentional cultivation of strong relationships and a sense of belonging. VALA NC will implement an advisory and mentorship system in which each student is connected to a dedicated staff member who provides academic guidance, monitors progress, and supports goal setting. Students will engage in small-group learning communities, regular check-ins, and collaborative activities that foster peer connections. This relationship-driven approach ensures that every student is known well by at least one adult, a practice strongly associated with improved engagement, persistence, and achievement (Allensworth and Easton, 2007).

To reinforce a consistent and positive learning environment, VALA NC will establish clear expectations for behavior, engagement, and digital citizenship aligned with its CRISP-RISE character framework (Curiosity, Responsibility, Integrity, Service, Perseverance, Respect, Innovation, Self-Discipline, Empathy). These values will be explicitly taught, modeled, and reinforced through recognition systems, student showcases, and celebrations of learning, promoting a culture of respect, responsibility, and continuous growth.

VALA NC also promotes a culture of ownership and accountability. Students are expected to take an active role in their learning through goal setting, progress monitoring, and reflection. Using tools such as the RADAR (Real-time Analytics for Detection, Action, and Response) system, students and teachers have



access to real-time performance data, enabling immediate identification of learning needs and timely instructional response. This fosters student agency and reinforces the expectation that students are responsible for their learning progress (Datnow and Park, 2018).

The school extends its culture beyond the academic day through robust extracurricular and enrichment opportunities, including virtual clubs, student-led organizations, and collaborative projects. These opportunities provide meaningful avenues for student voice, leadership, and community-building, which are essential in a virtual environment (Borup et al., 2014).

Family partnership is another essential component of VALA NC's culture. Through Parent University, consistent communication, and access to real-time student data, families are empowered as active partners in their child's education. This shared responsibility strengthens accountability, reinforces learning expectations, and contributes to improved student outcomes (Hill and Tyson, 2009).

VALA NC also emphasizes a high expectations-high support model, a defining characteristic of high-performing schools. Through proactive systems such as MTSS, advisory support, WIN interventions, and data-informed instruction, students receive the support they need while being held to rigorous academic and behavioral expectations (Sugai and Horner, 2002).

Ultimately, the culture at VALA NC combines high expectations with strong support systems, meaningful relationships, and engaging, relevant learning experiences. Students are empowered to think critically, collaborate effectively, and apply their knowledge in authentic contexts. Through this intentionally designed culture, VALA NC promotes both intellectual growth and social-emotional development, preparing students for success in college, career, and life.

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Q221. Explain how you will create and implement this culture for students, teachers, administrators, and parents starting from the first day of school. Describe the plan for acculturating students who enter the school mid-year.



Establishing a Coherent Culture System

VALA NC will intentionally build and sustain its school culture through a coherent and structured approach that begins prior to the first day of school and continues throughout the year for students, staff, and families. Grounded in the school's 5A Framework, this process ensures that all members of the school community share a common understanding of expectations, actively engage in the learning process, and contribute to a connected, accountable, and supportive virtual environment. Consistent with practices in high-performing schools, VALA NC will emphasize clarity of expectations, strong relationships, and consistent routines as the foundation of a positive school culture (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Staff Onboarding and Culture Development (Pre-Opening Phase)

Before the school year begins, all staff will participate in a comprehensive onboarding and professional development program focused on virtual pedagogy, relationship-building, and the consistent implementation of VALA NC's cultural expectations. Teachers and administrators will be trained to foster student engagement through live, interactive instruction, collaborative learning structures, and ongoing communication. Drawing from practices used in high-performing institutions such as the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, staff will also be prepared to cultivate a "thinker-maker-doer" learning environment that promotes inquiry, student ownership, and real-world application. They will develop proficiency in using the school's Learning Management System (LMS), communication platforms, and data tools to monitor student engagement, provide timely feedback, and proactively support students. Additionally, staff will establish shared norms for instruction, communication, and digital citizenship to ensure consistency across all classrooms. This early alignment ensures that the culture is consistently modeled and reinforced across all interactions (DuFour et al., 2016).

Student and Family Orientation (Launch Phase)

The school year will begin with a structured Student and Family Orientation Program designed to establish clarity, build relationships, and prepare all stakeholders for success in a virtual learning environment. During this experience, students and families will be introduced to the school's instructional model, daily schedule, technology platforms, and expectations for participation and communication. Students will engage in guided sessions focused on digital citizenship, time management, and effective online learning practices, while families will receive support in understanding how to monitor progress, access real-time data, and partner with teachers. In addition, students will be introduced to advisory structures and peer communities to begin building relationships from the outset. This shared foundation ensures that students, families, and staff begin the year aligned and prepared, reflecting research that early clarity and family engagement significantly impact student success (Hill and Tyson, 2009).

First Weeks of School: Building Relationships and Routines

During the first weeks of school, teachers will intentionally prioritize relationship-building and community development alongside academic instruction. Through structured community-building activities, small-group collaboration, advisory check-ins, and consistent use of synchronous learning, students will quickly become active participants in a connected learning community. Clear routines and



expectations for engagement, communication, and academic integrity will be explicitly taught, modeled, and reinforced daily. Instructional structures such as WIN (What I Need) blocks will immediately establish a culture of personalization, ensuring that students receive targeted support, enrichment, and opportunities for peer collaboration. Teachers will also conduct regular check-ins to monitor student adjustment and ensure that each learner feels supported and connected. This approach reflects research indicating that strong student-adult relationships and early engagement are key predictors of persistence and achievement (Allensworth and Easton, 2007).

Sustaining Culture Through Systems and Continuous Support

As the year progresses, VALA NC will sustain its culture through consistent systems, communication, and opportunities for engagement. Teachers will maintain strong relationships with students through ongoing feedback, virtual office hours, and small-group instruction, while administrators will support staff through coaching, virtual walkthroughs, data analysis, and professional learning communities aligned to the school's instructional model. Students will engage in ongoing goal setting, reflection, and progress monitoring, supported by real-time data systems such as RADAR (Real-time Analytics for Detection, Action, and Response), reinforcing a culture of ownership and accountability (Datnow and Park, 2018). Families will remain active partners through regular communication, Parent University sessions, and access to real-time student progress through the LMS and Student Information System. In addition, extracurricular opportunities such as virtual clubs and student interest groups will extend the culture beyond the academic day, fostering peer connections, student leadership, and a strong sense of belonging within the virtual environment (Borup et al., 2014).

Mid-Year Enrollment and Acculturation Plan

VALA NC's goal is to maintain stable enrollment and ensure that all students begin the school year with a strong foundation through the full orientation and onboarding process. As such, the school will establish a defined enrollment window and may implement a mid-year enrollment cutoff to preserve instructional continuity and ensure students are positioned for success. However, in the event that a student enrolls after the initial orientation period, the school will implement a structured onboarding process to support successful integration. These students will participate in a condensed orientation focused on technology platforms, expectations for virtual learning, and strategies for academic success, and will be assigned an advisor or staff point of contact to provide initial check-ins and ongoing support.

Teachers will intentionally integrate newly enrolled students into classroom communities through peer introductions, small-group collaboration, and guided participation in synchronous sessions. Additional academic and technical support will be provided through WIN blocks, diagnostic assessments, and targeted interventions to address any gaps in learning or acclimation. Early monitoring of engagement, attendance, and performance will ensure that any challenges are identified and addressed promptly. This structured and supportive approach reflects best practices from high-performing schools, where intentional onboarding and early intervention are critical to successful student integration and long-term achievement.



Conclusion: A Consistent and Lived Culture

Through this intentional and balanced approach, VALA NC ensures both the integrity of its instructional model and the successful integration of all students, including those who enroll mid-year. Culture is not simply defined but consistently **modeled and reinforced** through daily instruction, advisory support, WIN blocks, and ongoing communication.

Clear expectations, strong relationships, and real-time data systems such as RADAR ensure that students are continuously supported, monitored, and engaged. Structured onboarding and targeted supports enable new students to integrate quickly and successfully.

Ultimately, VALA NC fosters a culture of **high expectations, strong support, and student ownership**, creating a cohesive environment in which all students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

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Q222. Provide a brief narrative that delineates how student conduct will be governed at the proposed charter school and how this plan aligns with the overall mission and proposed Education Plan. Be sure to include:

1. Practices the school will use to promote effective discipline.
2. A preliminary list and definitions of the offenses which may result in suspension or expulsion of students.
3. An explanation of how the school will take into account the rights of students with disabilities in regard to these actions that may or must lead to suspension and expulsion.



4. Policies and procedures disseminating due process rights, including grievance procedures, for when a student is suspended or expelled.



Student conduct at VALA NC will be governed by a proactive, student-centered discipline framework that aligns with the school's mission to empower students through active, accountable, and purposeful learning. Consistent with the 5A Framework, the school's approach emphasizes prevention, engagement, and restoration, while maintaining clear expectations and accountability to ensure a safe, respectful, and productive virtual learning environment. This approach reflects practices used in high-performing schools, where positive behavior is taught, reinforced, and supported through consistent systems rather than addressed only through punitive measures (Sugai and Horner, 2002).

VALA NC's discipline model is grounded in the belief that strong relationships, engaging instruction, and clear structures are the foundation of effective student behavior. Through consistent synchronous instruction, collaborative learning experiences, and personalized supports such as WIN (What I Need) blocks, students remain actively engaged and connected to their learning community, reducing the likelihood of behavioral concerns. Teachers will explicitly model and reinforce expectations for digital citizenship, respectful communication, academic integrity, and appropriate participation in virtual settings. In alignment with high-performing school practices, these expectations will be clearly defined, explicitly taught, and consistently reinforced across all classrooms to ensure a shared understanding of behavioral norms (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

In addition, VALA NC will implement a proactive, prevention-focused approach to digital safety and student conduct through the intentional design of its technology systems. All school-issued devices and platforms will be configured with secure access controls, content filtering, and device management software to create a safe, structured, and school-ready digital environment. These systems will limit access to inappropriate content, restrict unsafe online activity, and ensure that devices are used for educational purposes. By establishing a secure and guided digital ecosystem, VALA NC minimizes opportunities for misuse while reinforcing responsible technology use. These preventative measures are complemented by appropriate monitoring tools that allow staff to identify and address concerns early, further supporting a culture of safety, accountability, and responsible digital engagement.

When behavioral issues do occur, VALA NC will implement a tiered system of support aligned with Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) frameworks, prioritizing early intervention and restorative practices. These may include teacher redirection, student-teacher conferences, parent communication, behavioral reflection activities, and individualized support plans. For repeated or more serious concerns, administrative involvement may include formal behavior plans, temporary loss of privileges (such as participation in extracurricular activities or certain online platforms when appropriate), and increased monitoring and support to ensure student success. Restorative practices, including guided reflection and problem-solving conversations, will be used to help students understand the impact of their actions and repair relationships, a strategy widely used in high-performing schools to improve behavior and school climate (Gregory et al., 2016).

In alignment with North Carolina law and best practices, VALA NC recognizes that certain behaviors may warrant more serious disciplinary action, including suspension, exclusion, or expulsion. Preliminary categories of offenses that may result in such consequences include, but are not limited to: threats of violence or harm toward others; harassment, bullying, or cyberbullying; repeated or severe violations of academic integrity; misuse of school technology or platforms, including attempts to bypass security



systems or engage in unsafe or inappropriate online behavior; possession or distribution of prohibited or illegal materials; and any conduct that substantially disrupts the learning environment or compromises the safety and well-being of students or staff. All offenses will be clearly defined in the student handbook, with developmentally appropriate definitions and examples, along with corresponding consequences, to ensure transparency, consistency, and fairness.

VALA NC is committed to ensuring that the rights of students with disabilities are fully protected in all disciplinary actions. The school will comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable state and federal regulations. Prior to any disciplinary action that constitutes a change in placement, the school will conduct a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR) to determine whether the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability. Students with disabilities will continue to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), including access to services and supports outlined in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan, even during periods of disciplinary removal as required by law. When appropriate, behavioral interventions and supports will be aligned with Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP) to proactively address student needs.

VALA NC will ensure that all disciplinary actions involving suspension, exclusion, or expulsion adhere to due process requirements as outlined in North Carolina General Statutes and the school's charter agreement. Policies and procedures regarding student conduct, disciplinary consequences, and due process rights will be clearly outlined in the student and parent handbook and communicated during orientation and throughout the school year. When disciplinary action is taken, families will receive timely written notice that includes the reason for the action, the duration, and the process for appeal. The school will maintain a formal grievance procedure that allows students and families to appeal disciplinary decisions, ensuring fairness, transparency, and consistency in all actions.

Through this approach, VALA NC establishes a clear and consistent framework for student conduct that prioritizes prevention, reinforces positive behavior, and ensures accountability when necessary. By aligning discipline practices with the school's instructional model, technology systems, and commitment to student support, the school creates an environment where expectations are understood, student safety is protected, and all learners are positioned to engage productively and succeed.

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Q223.Exclusion or expulsion must abide by the due process required under 115C-218.60 and the Charter Agreement. If the school intends to utilize exclusion or expulsion, please explain how the school intends to utilize, how this will be communicated to parents, and how the school will ensure alignment with state law including Article 27.

- § 115C-218.60. Student discipline. The school is subject to and shall comply with Article 27 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, except that a charter school may also exclude a student from the charter school and return that student to another school in the local school administrative unit in accordance with the terms of its charter after due process.



VALA NC intends to utilize both exclusion and expulsion as part of its comprehensive student discipline framework when necessary to protect the safety, integrity, and continuity of the school's learning environment. The use of these measures will be limited to serious or repeated violations of the student code of conduct and will always be implemented in accordance with North Carolina General Statute §115C-218.60, Article 27 of Chapter 115C, and the school's Charter Agreement. Consistent with practices in high-performing schools, exclusion and expulsion will be used only after documented interventions and supports have been implemented, except in cases involving immediate threats to safety (Sugai and Horner, 2002).

Exclusion may be used in circumstances where a student's continued enrollment at VALA NC is not in the best interest of the student or the school community, including situations involving persistent disruption, failure to engage in the virtual learning program despite documented interventions, or behavior that significantly interferes with the school's ability to deliver its educational model. In such cases, and following due process, the student may be returned to the local school administrative unit in accordance with state law. Expulsion may be used in cases involving severe or dangerous behavior, including threats to student or staff safety, serious violations of law, or other actions that substantially compromise the safety and well-being of the school community. In alignment with best practices, these decisions will be guided by a careful review of the severity, frequency, and context of the behavior, as well as prior interventions and supports provided (APA ZTTF, 2008).

VALA NC will ensure that all decisions related to exclusion or expulsion follow clearly defined procedures that protect student rights and provide fair, equitable, and consistent outcomes. These procedures will be formally adopted by the Board of Directors and outlined in the student and parent handbook. Prior to any long-term suspension, exclusion, or expulsion, the school will provide written notice to the student and parent or guardian detailing the alleged violation, the proposed disciplinary action, and the evidence supporting the decision. Students and families will be given the opportunity to respond to the allegations and participate in a hearing process, consistent with due process requirements under state law. Decision-making processes will include administrative review and, when appropriate, board-level oversight to ensure consistency and fairness across cases.

All parents and students will be informed of the school's discipline policies, including the potential use of exclusion and expulsion, during the enrollment and orientation process and through ongoing access to the student and parent handbook. Communication will be clear, accessible, and provided through multiple channels to ensure families understand their rights and responsibilities. In the event of a disciplinary action involving exclusion or expulsion, families will receive timely notification of the decision, the rationale, and the process for appeal. VALA NC will also provide guidance to families on next steps, including transition support when a student is returned to the local school administrative unit.

VALA NC will ensure full compliance with Article 27 of Chapter 115C by aligning its discipline policies and procedures with all applicable legal requirements, including provisions related to student rights, hearings, appeals, and documentation. The school will maintain accurate and secure records of all disciplinary actions and ensure that decisions are made in a manner that is equitable, consistent, and legally sound. In alignment with high-performing school practices, the Board of Directors and school



leadership will regularly review discipline data, including trends by subgroup, to ensure fairness, prevent disproportionality, and support continuous improvement of discipline practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Through the establishment of clear policies, adherence to due process, and transparent communication with families, VALA NC will implement exclusion and expulsion in a manner that protects both student rights and the overall safety and effectiveness of the school community. These measures are embedded within a broader system that prioritizes prevention, intervention, and student support, ensuring that exclusionary discipline is used only when necessary and in full alignment with state law and best educational practices.

REFERENCES

American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force. Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools? *Am. Psychol.* 2008, 63 (9), 852–862. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.63.9.852> (<https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.63.9.852>).

Darling-Hammond, L.; Flook, L.; Cook-Harvey, C.; Barron, B.; Osher, D. Implications for Educational Practice of the Science of Learning and Development. *Appl. Dev. Sci.* 2020, 24 (2), 97–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791> (<https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791>).

Sugai, G.; Horner, R. Positive Behavior Supports: The Evolution of an Applied Science. *J. Posit. Behav. Interv.* 2002, 4 (1), 23–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109830070200400103>.

Q224. **This subsection is entirely original and has not been copied, pasted, or otherwise reproduced from any other application.**

- ☒ Yes
☐ No

Q225. **Explanation (optional).**

11.6. Certify

Q226. **This subsection is entirely original and has not been copied, pasted, or otherwise reproduced from any other application.**

- ☒ Yes
☐ No

Q227. **Explanation (optional):**





12. Operations

12.1. Transportation Plan

Q228. Describe in detail the transportation plan that will ensure that no child is denied access to the school due to lack of transportation. Include budgetary assumptions and the impact of transportation on the overall budget. The details of this plan should align with the mission, identified need for the charter school, targeted student population, and the budget proposal. If you plan to provide transportation, include the following:

1. Describe the plan for oversight of transportation options (e.g., whether the school will provide its own transportation, contract out for transportation, attempt to contract with a district, or a combination thereof) and who on the staff will provide this daily oversight.
2. Describe how the school will transport students with special transportation needs and how that will impact your budget.
3. Describe how the school will ensure compliance with state and federal laws and regulations related to transportation services



The school is designed as a primarily virtual learning environment, and therefore ensures equitable access to all students by delivering high-quality instruction directly into the home. To eliminate transportation as a barrier to enrollment and participation, the school will provide all enrolled students with the necessary instructional technology, including devices and internet connectivity support where needed. This approach ensures that no student is denied access to the educational program due to transportation limitations.

While daily transportation is not required for participation in the core instructional program, the school recognizes that limited in-person activities may be necessary to support a well-rounded educational experience. These may include state-mandated assessments, student support services, special education services when required, and optional enrichment opportunities such as field experiences.

Oversight of Transportation

The school will utilize a hybrid transportation model, prioritizing efficiency and flexibility. Transportation for required in-person events will be coordinated through a combination of:

- Parent vehicle,
- Contracted transportation vendors,
- Parent/guardian reimbursement where appropriate, and
- Strategic partnerships with community organizations when feasible.

Daily oversight of transportation planning and coordination will be the responsibility of the Lead Administrator or designee. This individual will ensure that transportation services are:

- Scheduled effectively,
- Cost-efficient,
- Responsive to student needs, and
- Aligned with all safety and compliance requirements.

Transportation for Students with Special Needs

The school is committed to meeting all requirements outlined in students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), including transportation as a related service when necessary to access the education plan. For students who require specialized transportation:

- Services will be provided through contracted, licensed transportation providers with experience in serving students with disabilities.
- The school will coordinate directly with families to ensure safe and appropriate arrangements.
- Transportation decisions will be made on an individualized basis through the IEP team process.

Budget allocations include contingency funds to support these services, recognizing that specialized transportation may involve higher per-student costs. These costs have been incorporated into the overall financial plan to ensure both compliance and sustainability.

Compliance with State and Federal Regulations



The school will comply with all applicable state and federal laws governing student transportation, including requirements related to student safety, special education services, and contractor oversight. All third-party providers will be required to:

- Meet state licensing and safety standards,
- Maintain appropriate insurance coverage, and
- Adhere to student confidentiality and safety protocols.

The Director of Operations will oversee compliance monitoring, contract management, and vendor accountability to ensure ongoing adherence to all regulatory requirements.

The school will ensure full compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable North Carolina transportation safety regulations.

Budgetary Assumptions and Financial Impact

Because the school operates in a virtual model, transportation costs are significantly reduced compared to traditional brick-and-mortar schools. The financial plan reflects:

- Minimal fixed transportation costs,
- Variable, need-based expenditures for required in-person events, and
- Targeted allocations for special education transportation services.

This approach allows the school to prioritize resources toward instructional quality, student support systems, and technology access, while still ensuring equitable access for all students.

Transportation is therefore managed as a strategic, controlled cost center, aligned with the school's mission and commitment to operational efficiency and equitable access for all students.

Transportation expenditures are projected to remain low due to the virtual instructional model, estimated at approximately 1–2% of the total operating budget. Costs are primarily associated with state-required in-person assessments and specialized transportation services for students with disabilities as determined by IEP teams. This model aligns with VALA NC's mission to expand equitable, statewide access by eliminating transportation barriers while strategically allocating resources toward instruction, student support, and technology.

12.2. School Lunch Plan

Q229. Describe in detail the school lunch plan that will ensure that no child is lacking a daily meal. The details of this plan should align with the targeted student population and school budget proposal. If the school intends to participate in the National School Lunch Program, include the following components in the response:

1. How the school will comply with applicable local, state, and federal guidelines and regulations;
2. Any plans to meet the needs of low-income students; and
3. Include how the school intends to collect free- and reduced-price lunch information from qualified families. If a school intends to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision, describe the



methodology the school will use to determine eligibility.



As a fully virtual public charter school, VALA NC delivers instruction in students' homes and does not operate a centralized campus for daily meal service. As such, the school will not provide a traditional on-site breakfast or lunch program. However, VALA NC is committed to ensuring that all students, particularly those from low-income households, have consistent and equitable access to nutritious meals through a structured system of partnerships, resource coordination, and targeted family support. This approach is grounded in research demonstrating that access to adequate nutrition is closely linked to student health, attendance, concentration, and academic performance (USDA, 2023; CDC, 2022).

To meet this commitment, VALA NC will implement a comprehensive, multi-tiered approach:

Strategic Partnerships to Address Food Access

VALA NC will collaborate with established community-based organizations, most notably the Zakat Foundation of America (ZFA), to provide direct and supplemental food assistance to families. Through this partnership, families may access monthly food distributions, emergency relief support, seasonal meal programs, and community-based food distribution events across North Carolina. This partnership strengthens the school's ability to respond proactively to food insecurity and ensures that support extends beyond referrals to include tangible resources. Research indicates that consistent access to food resources can significantly reduce barriers to learning and improve student engagement (Gundersen & Ziliak, 2015).

Connection to Federal, State, and Local Nutrition Programs

The school will actively connect families to existing public nutrition programs, including National School Lunch Program (NSLP) distribution sites, Summer Nutrition Programs, and other community feeding initiatives. VALA NC will maintain a regularly updated, statewide directory of meal access points and ensure that families receive location-specific information based on their residence. This coordinated approach aligns with national guidance emphasizing the importance of leveraging existing nutrition infrastructure to address food insecurity at scale (USDA, 2023).

Free- and Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL) Data Collection and Use

VALA NC will collect free- and reduced-price lunch eligibility information during enrollment and on an annual basis thereafter. This data will be used to identify students in need, inform targeted outreach and support strategies, and ensure compliance with all applicable state and federal reporting requirements.

Targeted Support for Low-Income and At-Risk Students

Using FRL data and ongoing engagement with families, the school's Family Engagement and Student Support Teams will provide individualized assistance, including referrals to local food resources, support with accessing public benefits such as SNAP and WIC, and coordination with partner organizations. Staff will be trained to identify signs of food insecurity and respond with timely, confidential, and culturally responsive support. Students experiencing food insecurity are more likely to face challenges with attendance, behavior, and academic persistence, reinforcing the importance of early identification and intervention (Jyoti et al., 2005).

Meals During In-Person School Activities

For any required in-person activities, including state testing, field trips, or school-sponsored events, VALA NC will ensure that all participating students have access to meals. This may include providing



meals directly or offering meal stipends to remove barriers to participation.

Compliance and Program Evaluation

VALA NC will comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations related to student nutrition, including those governing eligibility determination, data collection, and reporting. The school will annually evaluate the feasibility of participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), using FRL data and student need to inform decision-making. If participation becomes viable and aligned with the school's operational model, VALA NC will implement the program in full compliance with all regulatory requirements.

Through this approach, VALA NC ensures that no child's access to nutrition is limited by the school's virtual model. By combining strategic partnerships, proactive family support, and strong data-driven systems, the school will address food insecurity while maintaining fiscal responsibility and operational feasibility.

REFERENCES

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). *Household Food Security in the United States*; USDA: Washington, DC, 2023.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Healthy Schools: Nutrition and Academic Performance*; CDC: Atlanta, GA, 2022.

Gundersen, C.; Ziliak, J. P. Food Insecurity and Health Outcomes. *Health Affairs* 2015, 34 (11), 1830–1839.

Jyoti, D. F.; Frongillo, E. A.; Jones, S. J. Food Insecurity Affects School Children's Academic Performance. *The Journal of Nutrition* 2005, 135 (12), 2831–2839.

12.3. Civil Liability and Insurance

The Nonprofit shall name the SBE as an Additional Named Insured to their liability coverage for operation of a charter school while obtaining and maintaining insurance at a minimum in the following amounts:

- 1. Errors and Omissions: one million dollars (\$1,000,000) per occurrence;**
- 2. General Liability: one million dollars (\$1,000,000) per occurrence;**
- 3. Property Insurance: For owned building and contents, including boiler and machinery coverage, if owned;**
- 4. Crime Coverage: no less than two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) to cover employee theft and dishonesty;**
- 5. Automobile Liability: one million dollars (\$1,000,000) per occurrence; and**
- 6. Workers' Compensation: as specified by Chapter 97 of NC General Statute, Workers' Compensation Law**

Q230. Attach Appendix L: Insurance Quotes

- The applicant must provide a quote from an insurance provider as part of this application (as Appendix L) to demonstrate the levels of insurance coverage and projected cost.



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Applicant Evidence :


Appendix L- Insurance Q...

Uploaded on **4/9/2026** by
Lauren Watters

12.4. Health and Safety Requirements

All public charter schools are required to follow the regulations regarding health and safety as stated in G.S. 115C 218.75.

Q231. We, the Board members will develop a written safety plan and policies to be shared with staff, parents, and students and be available upon inspection from the Department of Public Instruction and local Health Departments. **The Board Chair must sign this question.**

Signature



12.5. Start-Up Plan

Q232. Provide a detailed start-up plan for the proposed school, specifying tasks, timelines, and responsible individuals (including compensation for those individuals, if applicable).



Start-Up Plan Overview

The school will implement a structured, phased start-up plan aligned with best practices in charter school development and grounded in strong operational systems (Miller, 2024, Indicator 7). The plan is designed to ensure readiness across governance, staffing, technology, compliance, and student enrollment prior to the first day of instruction.

The start-up period will span approximately **12–15 months prior to opening**, with clear accountability assigned to key leadership roles.

Phase 1: Authorization and Planning (Months 1–3)

Key Tasks:

- Finalize charter application and respond to authorizer feedback
- Establish founding board governance structures and meeting cadence
- Secure legal, financial, and operational partners (e.g., audit, legal counsel)
- Begin detailed financial modeling and budget refinement

Responsible Individuals:

- Founding Board Chair
- Executive Director (upon hiring or designation)
- External consultants (as needed)

Compensation:

- Board members serve as volunteers
- Limited consulting fees may be incurred for legal and financial services, aligned with the start-up budget

Phase 2: Leadership Hiring and Infrastructure Development (Months 4–8)

Key Tasks:

- Hire Executive Director (if not already in place)
- Hire key leadership staff:
 - Director of Operations
 - Director of Curriculum & Instruction
- Establish operational systems:
 - Financial systems (accounting, payroll)
 - Student Information System (SIS)
 - Learning Management System (LMS)
- Begin vendor selection for:
 - Curriculum platforms



- Technology providers
- Special education services

Responsible Individuals:

- Executive Director
- Founding Board (oversight and approval)
- Director of Operations (once hired)

Compensation:

- Executive Director and leadership staff compensated in accordance with the Year 1 staffing plan and budget proposal
- Vendor contracts aligned with approved budget allocations

Phase 3: Staffing, Enrollment, and Program Development (Months 9–12)

Key Tasks:

- Recruit and hire instructional and support staff
- Launch student recruitment and enrollment campaign
- Finalize curriculum, instructional schedules, and student supports
- Procure student devices and technology systems
- Develop professional development and onboarding plans

Responsible Individuals:

- Executive Director
- Director of Curriculum & Instruction
- Director of Operations

Compensation:

- Salaries aligned with approved staffing model
- Marketing and enrollment costs aligned with budget projections
- Technology purchases reflected in start-up and operational budget

Phase 4: Pre-Opening and Readiness (Months 13–15)

Key Tasks:

- Conduct staff onboarding and professional development
- Distribute student devices (via regional events and/or direct shipment)
- Finalize student schedules and class assignments
- Test all technology systems (LMS, SIS, communication tools)
- Confirm compliance with all state and federal requirements
- Execute family orientation and onboarding



Responsible Individuals:

- Executive Director
- Director of Operations
- Director of Curriculum & Instruction
- Technology support staff

Compensation:

- Staff fully onboarded and compensated per employment agreements
- Final start-up expenses executed within approved budget

Ongoing Oversight and Accountability

The Executive Director will provide regular updates to the Board of Directors throughout the start-up process, including:

- Monthly progress reports
- Budget-to-actual comparisons
- Risk identification and mitigation strategies

This ensures strong governance oversight (Miller, 2024, Indicator 8) and continuous improvement throughout the start-up phase (Miller, 2024, Indicator 9).

Alignment to Budget

All start-up activities, staffing decisions, and vendor contracts are aligned with the school's approved budget and financial model. The phased hiring approach and use of strategic partnerships ensure that expenditures remain controlled and sustainable while maintaining high-quality implementation.

REFERENCES

Miller, T. W. 10 Indicators of High-Performing Charter Schools: What Sets the Best Schools Apart and How to Become One of Them; Leaders Building Leaders: Santa Rosa Beach, FL, 2024

Q233. Describe what the board anticipates will be the challenges of starting a new school and how it expects to address these challenges. Submit a Start-up (Year 0) Budget as Appendix O, if applicable.



Anticipated Start-Up Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

The Board of Directors recognizes that launching a new school, particularly a virtual academy, requires disciplined execution, strong systems, and proactive planning. The Board has identified several key start-up challenges and has developed clear strategies to address each, grounded in operational effectiveness, strong communication, and continuous improvement .

Enrollment and Student Recruitment

Challenge:

Achieving enrollment targets in a competitive and evolving virtual education landscape.

Mitigation Strategy:

The school will implement a structured enrollment and marketing plan that includes digital outreach, community partnerships, and clear communication of the school's value proposition. Enrollment will be monitored weekly, with adjustments made in real time to ensure targets are met. Conservative enrollment projections (90–95%) are used in financial planning to reduce risk.

Student Engagement in a Virtual Environment

Challenge:

Ensuring consistent student engagement and attendance in a remote learning model.

Mitigation Strategy:

The school will implement a high-touch instructional model that includes synchronous instruction, structured schedules, and ongoing monitoring of student participation. Clear expectations, regular communication with families, and targeted interventions will be used to support engagement and academic progress.

Technology Deployment and Access

Challenge:

Ensuring all students have timely access to devices, connectivity, and instructional platforms.

Mitigation Strategy:

The school will implement a structured technology deployment plan that includes procurement, device management, and distribution through a combination of regional events and direct shipping. Internet access support will be provided to families in need. Systems will be tested prior to launch to ensure full operational readiness.

Staffing and Talent Acquisition

Challenge:

Recruiting and onboarding high-quality staff aligned with the school's mission and instructional model.

Mitigation Strategy:

The school will begin recruitment early, leveraging professional networks and targeted outreach. Clear role expectations, competitive compensation, and structured onboarding will support staff readiness.



Ongoing professional development will ensure staff are equipped to succeed in a virtual environment.

Operational Systems and Compliance

Challenge:

Establishing effective systems for finance, reporting, student data, and regulatory compliance.

Mitigation Strategy:

The school will implement proven operational systems, including financial management, student information systems, and compliance tracking. Key functions such as finance and legal services will be supported through experienced external partners. The Board will receive regular reports to ensure oversight and accountability.

Board Oversight and Continuous Improvement

The Board will actively monitor start-up progress through regular reporting from the Executive Director, including:

- Enrollment updates
- Budget-to-actual financial reports
- Operational readiness benchmarks

This oversight ensures that challenges are identified early and addressed proactively, supporting a successful and sustainable school launch.

12.6. Facility

Note that the SBE may approve a charter school prior to the school's obtaining a facility; however, students may not attend school and no funds will be allocated until the school has obtained a valid Certificate of Occupancy for Educational use to the Office of Charter Schools.

Q234. What is your plan to obtain a building? Identify specific steps the board will take to acquire a facility and obtain the Educational Certificate of Occupancy. Present a timeline with reasonable assumptions for facility selection, requisition, state fire marshal and health inspections, and occupation.



The school will utilize a small administrative office space as its primary facility, consistent with its virtual instructional model.

Plan to Obtain Facility:

- Identify and secure commercial office space (approximately 2,000–3,500 sq. ft.) in a centrally accessible location.
- Engage a commercial real estate broker to identify suitable properties.
- Execute a lease agreement aligned with the approved budget.
- Coordinate with local authorities to ensure compliance with zoning and occupancy requirements.

Certificate of Occupancy:

- The facility will be classified as a standard office space and will meet all local building, fire, and health requirements.
- The school will obtain the appropriate Certificate of Occupancy (CO) prior to opening.
- Because the facility will not house daily student instruction, requirements for an Educational Certificate of Occupancy are minimal and will be confirmed with local authorities.

Timeline:

- Months 6–9: Identify and secure facility
- Months 9–11: Complete inspections (fire, safety, occupancy)
- Month 12: Final approval and occupancy

This approach ensures a timely, cost-effective facility acquisition aligned with the school's operational model.

Q235. Describe the school's facility needs based on the educational program and projected enrollment, including: number of classrooms, square footage per classroom, classroom types, common areas, overall square footage, and amenities. Discuss both short-term and long-term facility plans. Demonstrate that the estimate included in your budget is reasonable.



VALA NC's facility needs are intentionally streamlined and cost-efficient, reflecting its fully virtual instructional model while still ensuring the infrastructure necessary to support effective operations, staff collaboration, and organizational governance. Unlike traditional brick-and-mortar schools, the educational program does not require daily student occupancy or classroom-based instruction. Instead, facility planning is designed to support administrative functions, provide a centralized hub for staff as needed, and allow for periodic in-person collaboration and training.

Short-Term Facility Plan

In the initial years of operation, VALA NC will lease a modest commercial office space estimated between approximately 2,000 and 3,500 square feet. This space will serve as the school's administrative headquarters and a centralized hub to support core operational functions.

While the majority of staff will operate remotely in alignment with the school's virtual model, the facility will be available to local or regional staff as needed. It will provide flexible workspace for school leadership, operational staff, and any team members whose roles benefit from in-person collaboration at various points throughout the year.

The facility will include:

- Flexible individual and shared workspaces for staff use as needed
- A conference room to support governing board meetings, leadership collaboration, and stakeholder engagement
- Reception and administrative support space for day-to-day operations
- Multi-purpose meeting space that can be used for staff collaboration, planning sessions, or professional development

In addition to supporting daily operations, the space will function as a meeting and training hub. It will be used for governing board meetings, leadership planning sessions, staff collaboration, and any in-person professional development that may be required or beneficial. This approach ensures the school maintains flexibility while still providing a physical location to support alignment, culture-building, and training.

Because instruction is delivered virtually, no traditional classrooms are required. Teachers will deliver instruction remotely, and students will participate in learning from their homes or other approved locations. As a result, the facility does not need to accommodate student seating, classroom transitions, or daily on-site student services typical of a physical campus.

Long-Term Facility Plan

Over time, VALA NC anticipates maintaining a similar facility footprint, with only modest adjustments based on staffing growth or evolving operational needs. Any future expansion would likely involve incremental increases in office or meeting space. Long-term facility strategy prioritizes flexibility, scalability, and cost efficiency, ensuring that space is aligned with how the school operates.

Educational Program Alignment



The facility plan is intentionally aligned with the school's virtual instructional approach. Instruction occurs entirely online, eliminating the need for dedicated classrooms or specialized instructional spaces. Students do not report to a central campus for daily learning, which significantly reduces facility demands.

At the same time, the inclusion of a small, flexible administrative hub ensures that the school can effectively support leadership functions, staff collaboration, and professional learning. This hybrid approach allows VALA NC to balance operational efficiency with the need for periodic in-person connection and coordination.

Common Areas and Amenities

Although traditional student-centered common areas are not required, the facility will include essential shared spaces to support staff and governance functions. These include conference and meeting rooms for board meetings and team collaboration, as well as flexible collaboration areas that can be adapted for training, planning, or small-group work.

For larger gatherings or specialized events, the school may also utilize external venues or rented spaces as needed, ensuring flexibility without overinvesting in underutilized permanent space.

Budget Alignment and Fiscal Responsibility

The proposed facility budget reflects current market rates for commercial office space and is significantly lower than the cost of operating a traditional school facility. This lean approach demonstrates fiscal responsibility and allows the school to prioritize funding toward high-impact areas such as instruction, technology infrastructure, student support services, and staffing.

By maintaining a modest and flexible facility footprint, VALA NC ensures that its financial resources are aligned with its mission and educational model. The facility plan is both reasonable and sustainable, supporting effective operations while avoiding unnecessary overhead and preserving the ability to adapt over time.

Q236. Describe school facility needs, including: science labs, art room, computer labs, library/media center, performance/dance room, gymnasium and athletic facilities, auditorium, main office and satellite offices, workroom/copy room, supplies/storage, teacher workrooms, and other spaces.



Due to its fully virtual instructional model, VALA NC does not require traditional instructional facilities such as science labs, art rooms, gymnasiums, auditoriums, or performance spaces. Academic programming, including science, arts, and other specialized subjects, will be delivered through high-quality virtual platforms, digital simulations, and project-based learning experiences that are aligned with the school's instructional design.

When in-person experiences are appropriate to enhance learning, such as science labs, performances, or enrichment activities, the school will leverage community partnerships and short-term facility rentals to provide students with access to these opportunities in a flexible and cost-effective manner.

The school's physical facility needs are limited to administrative and operational space. This includes a main office, conference and board meeting space, staff work and collaboration areas, and storage for technology and supplies. This approach ensures that facility use remains aligned with the virtual model while maximizing flexibility, efficiency, and resource allocation toward student learning and support.

Q237. What is the breakdown of cost per square foot for the proposed facility? Outline how this cost is comparable to the commercial and educational spaces for the proposed school location.

VALA NC anticipates leasing commercial office space at an estimated rate of approximately \$18 to \$25 per square foot annually, depending on final location, lease terms, and prevailing market conditions. Based on a projected facility size of approximately 2,000 to 3,500 square feet, the school estimates an annual facility cost in the range of \$45,000 to \$70,000. A representative estimate of 2,500 square feet at \$20 per square foot results in an annual cost of approximately \$50,000.

This projected lease rate is consistent with current commercial office market conditions in comparable regions across North Carolina, particularly for suburban office space similar to what the school intends to utilize. Because the facility is designed for administrative and operational purposes rather than instructional use, the school is able to leverage standard commercial office space rather than higher-cost, specialized educational facilities.

In comparison, traditional school facilities often require significantly higher capital investment, with construction and specialized educational space costs frequently exceeding \$100 to \$200 per square foot, in addition to ongoing maintenance and operational expenses. By contrast, VALA NC's facility model avoids these costs entirely, as it does not require classrooms, large common areas, or specialized infrastructure.

This approach demonstrates strong fiscal responsibility and alignment with the school's virtual model. Facility expenditures remain modest and predictable, allowing the school to allocate a greater share of resources toward instruction, technology, and student support services while maintaining a cost structure that is both reasonable and sustainable.

Q238. Facility Contingency Plan: Describe the method of finding a facility if the one the board has identified will not be ready by the time the public charter school will be opening. Include information



regarding the immediate spatial needs of the school and identify any programs that will not be immediately offered because a permanent facility has yet to open.

If the initially identified facility is not available prior to the school's opening, VALA NC will implement a flexible and low-risk contingency plan to ensure uninterrupted operations. This plan includes securing temporary administrative space through short-term commercial leases, executive office suites, or co-working environments that can accommodate essential staff and operational needs.

In addition, the school is fully equipped to operate in a remote environment. Leadership, administrative staff, and instructional personnel can effectively carry out all core functions through established virtual systems, including communication platforms, student information systems, and learning management systems. Governing board meetings, staff collaboration, and professional development can be conducted virtually as needed, ensuring continuity in governance and organizational alignment.

VALA NC's instructional program is delivered entirely online, the school's ability to open and operate is not dependent on a physical facility. Immediate spatial needs are limited to administrative functions, which can be readily supported through temporary or flexible workspace solutions. As a result, no academic programs or student services will be delayed or withheld due to facility availability.

This contingency approach significantly reduces facility-related risk and provides the school with the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances while maintaining full operational readiness and program implementation from day one.

Q239. Describe the board's capacity and experience in facilities acquisition and management, including managing build-out and/or renovations, as applicable.



The Board of Directors brings strong experience in financial oversight, organizational leadership, and operational planning, which collectively supports effective decision-making related to facility acquisition and management. While the Board does not include members whose primary professional background is in real estate development or construction, several members have led complex organizations, managed large-scale budgets, and overseen programs requiring strategic planning, vendor coordination, and compliance oversight.

For example, Nizar Mashal, a Chief Financial Officer with extensive experience in financial planning, investment strategy, and corporate finance, has led high-level financial operations, including IPO processes, acquisitions, and large-scale financial structuring. His expertise supports the Board's ability to evaluate lease agreements, assess cost structures, and ensure fiscally responsible facility decisions. Similarly, Halil Demir, Executive Director of a global nonprofit organization, has overseen the growth and management of a multi-million-dollar organization operating across multiple locations, including the development of educational and community-based programs. His experience in organizational expansion, budgeting, and operational logistics provides valuable insight into facilities planning and resource allocation.

Additional board members contribute expertise in governance, compliance, and program oversight, including experience managing academic programs, accreditation processes, and institutional operations.

Given that VALA NC's facility needs are limited to leasing and maintaining a small administrative office space, with no anticipated construction or major renovations, the level of complexity is significantly reduced compared to traditional school models. The Board is well-positioned to oversee this process effectively.

If specialized expertise is required, the Board will engage qualified external professionals such as commercial real estate brokers, legal counsel, or facilities consultants to support site selection, lease negotiation, and any necessary build-out. This approach ensures that the school has access to appropriate expertise while maintaining strong governance oversight and fiscal responsibility.

12.7. Certify

Q240. I certify that this subsection is entirely original and has not been copied, pasted, or otherwise reproduced from any other application.

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

Q241. Explanation (optional):



13. Financial Plan

13.1. Charter School Budget

All budgets should balance indicating strong budgetary skills. Any negative fund balances will, more than likely, generate additional questions by those evaluating the application. If the applicant is depending on other funding sources or working capital to balance the operating budget, please provide documentation such as signed statements from donors, foundations, bank documents, etc., on the commitment of these funds. If these figures are loans, the repayment needs to be explained in the narrative and found within the budget projections.

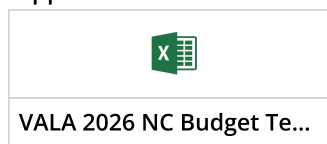
Q242. **If applicable, attach as Appendix M: Revenue Assurances.** Assurances are needed to confirm the commitment of any additional sources of revenue.

At the time of application submission, the proposed school is not relying on or dependent upon any additional sources of revenue beyond projected public funding. Therefore, no revenue assurances are available or required, and Appendix M is not included.

Q243. **Attach as Appendix N: Proposed Budget for Year 1 through Year 5** [Click here to access and download the Budget Template \(https://www.dpi.nc.gov/2026-nc-budget-template-final/download?attachment\)](https://www.dpi.nc.gov/2026-nc-budget-template-final/download?attachment) **"Please be advised that Google Sheets is not supported for use with the NC charter budget template. Due to the functions running on the back end of the workbook, it is required that applicants use:**
[Excel 2021 or later \(PC and Mac\)](#)
[Excel for Microsoft 365 Subscriptions \(PC and Mac Versions\)](#)
[Excel Online](#)"

☒ Upload Required File Type: **excel** Max File Size: **30** Total Files Count: **5**

Applicant Evidence :



Uploaded on **4/24/2026** by
Lauren Watters

13.2. Budget Narrative



Please include additional information that explains the assumptions used in the 5-year budget.

Q244. Provide the break-even point of student enrollment.

Under these budgeting strategies, the school's estimated break-even point is approximately **315 students**, or about **95% of projected Year 1 enrollment**. This means the school could absorb a small enrollment shortfall while still maintaining a balanced operating budget. The Board intentionally designed the budget to be conservative and to maintain close control of fixed costs during the start-up years, particularly through a lean facility model, outsourced professional services where appropriate, and a phased staffing approach.

The Board will monitor enrollment and revenue closely throughout the planning and start-up process to ensure spending remains aligned with actual student enrollment and available funds.

Q245. Discuss the school's contingency plan to meet financial needs if anticipated revenues are not received or are lower than estimated.



The Board has developed a conservative and flexible financial model to ensure the school can respond effectively if anticipated revenues are not received or are lower than projected.

1. Conservative Planning Assumptions

The budget is built using:

- Conservative enrollment projections (90–95% of target)
- Cautious assumptions regarding federal and variable funding sources

This approach reduces the likelihood of significant budget gaps in Year 1.

2. Variable Cost Structure

The school's financial model includes a high degree of **variable and scalable expenses**, allowing adjustments if revenue declines. These include:

- Phased hiring of staff aligned to actual enrollment
- Contracted financial and operational services that can be adjusted based on need
- Discretionary spending such as travel, marketing, and professional development
- The costs of devices and curriculum (less students, less costs)

1. Expense Reduction Strategies

If revenues are lower than expected, the school will:

- Delay or reduce non-essential hires
- Reduce discretionary and non-instructional expenditures
- Renegotiate or adjust vendor contracts where feasible
- Postpone expansion-related costs

The school will prioritize maintaining instructional quality and required student services.

1. Cash Flow Monitoring and Board Oversight

The Board will receive:

- Monthly financial reports
- Budget-to-actual comparisons
- Enrollment updates tied directly to revenue projections

This allows for early identification of financial risks and timely adjustments.

1. Use of Fund Balance and Reserves

The school will maintain a targeted fund balance to provide a financial cushion. If necessary, reserves may be used on a limited basis to address short-term revenue gaps while corrective actions are implemented.

1. Enrollment and Revenue Recovery



The school will actively monitor enrollment and, if needed:

- Increase targeted recruitment efforts
- Expand outreach in under-enrolled regions
- Adjust marketing strategies to stabilize enrollment

The school's contingency plan is built on conservative budgeting, flexible cost management, and strong financial oversight. These systems ensure that the school can respond quickly and effectively to revenue fluctuations while maintaining financial stability and program quality.

Q246. Does the budget rely on sources of funds other than state, county, and federal (e.g., loans, donations, etc.)? If so, please provide the source and amount. Also, describe any committed contributions and in-kind donations of goods or services to be received by the charter school that will assist in evaluating the financial viability of the school. Clearly indicate between those grants or in-kind donations which have already been firmly committed and those the board is planning to pursue. Be sure that the appropriate assurances documentation is provided in the appendices.



The school's budget is not dependent on any sources of funding beyond state, local, and eligible federal funds. The financial model has been intentionally developed to be fully sustainable based on public funding alone, ensuring stability and reducing financial risk during the start-up and early operational years.

At this time, there are no committed loans, donations, or in-kind contributions included in the budget projections.

Planned Supplemental Funding (Non-Dependent)

While not required for financial viability, the Board will proactively pursue additional funding opportunities to enhance the student experience. These may include:

- Competitive grants aligned to virtual learning, technology, and innovation
- Program sponsorships and partnerships with community and business organizations
- In-kind contributions such as instructional resources, technology support, or enrichment programming

Any such funds will be treated as supplemental and will be used to expand student opportunities rather than support core operations.

Future Commitments

Should any grants, donations, or in-kind contributions be secured, the school will:

- Document all commitments formally
- Include appropriate assurances in the appendices
- Ensure all funds are aligned with the school's mission and program priorities

The school's financial plan is designed to be self-sustaining without reliance on external funding sources, while maintaining the flexibility to pursue additional resources that enhance programming, student support, and innovation.

Q247. **Provide the student to teacher ratio that the budget is built on.**



The school's budget is built on an average student-to-teacher ratio of approximately 15:1 in Year 1, based on projected enrollment and staffing.

Specifically:

- 330 students (Year 1 projected enrollment)
- 22 instructional staff members (core, electives, EC, and support roles)

This results in an overall ratio of approximately 15 students per teacher, with typical class sizes ranging from 17–20 students per section depending on grade level and content area.

This ratio supports the school's high-touch virtual instructional model, allowing for:

- Synchronous instruction
- Small group support
- Targeted interventions for students, including those with additional needs

The staffing model is intentionally designed to balance instructional quality and financial sustainability, with adjustments made in future years as enrollment grows.

Q248. Describe the board's individual and collective qualifications and capacity for implementing the financial plan successfully.



The founding Board of Directors brings strong individual and collective qualifications to effectively implement and oversee the school's financial plan, with particular depth in financial management, governance, compliance, and organizational leadership.

Individual Qualifications

Board members represent a complementary range of expertise directly aligned to financial oversight and sustainability:

- Nizar Mashal, Chief Financial Officer of a publicly traded company, brings extensive experience in financial planning, investor relations, regulatory compliance, and consolidated financial reporting. His background includes corporate finance, restructuring, and oversight of complex financial systems, providing critical expertise in budgeting, forecasting, and fiscal controls.
- Abdelilah Choukri, Executive Director in Corporate and Investment Banking at Wells Fargo, brings deep experience in enterprise risk management, capital oversight, and regulatory reporting. His work in highly regulated financial environments strengthens the Board's capacity for financial governance, transparency, and performance monitoring.
- Halil Demir, Executive Director of a global nonprofit organization, has successfully scaled operations to a multi-million-dollar enterprise, overseeing budgeting, fundraising, and long-term financial sustainability across complex, multi-site programs.
- Dr. Cevdet Akbay and Dr. Khalid Lodhi contribute experience managing multi-year federal grants and academic programs, including securing and overseeing millions of dollars in external funding, with responsibility for compliance, reporting, and program accountability.

Additional board members contribute expertise in education leadership, program management, and community engagement, ensuring that financial decisions remain aligned with student needs and organizational priorities.

Collective Capacity

As a governing body, the Board demonstrates strong capacity to implement the financial plan through:

- Expertise in financial oversight, risk management, and regulatory compliance
- Experience managing large-scale budgets across corporate, nonprofit, and educational sectors
- Ability to align financial decision-making with strategic and academic priorities
- Familiarity with audit processes, financial reporting, and internal controls

The Board's combined experience ensures the ability to monitor financial performance, respond to changes in enrollment or funding, and maintain responsible stewardship of public funds.

Implementation and Oversight Structure

The Board will maintain a clear governance role, delegating day-to-day financial management to school leadership while ensuring accountability through:

- Regular review of financial statements and budget-to-actual reports
- Monitoring of cash flow, fund balance, and long-term sustainability
- Approval of major financial decisions and contracts
- Oversight of independent audits and compliance requirements



The Board's collective expertise, spanning corporate finance, investment banking, nonprofit financial management, and grant oversight, provides a strong foundation for successful implementation of the financial plan. This depth of experience positions the Board to ensure fiscal discipline, mitigate risk, and support long-term sustainability.

Q249. Describe how one or more high needs students with disabilities might affect the budget and your plan to meet student needs that might be more than anticipated.

Budget Impact

High-needs students may require:

- Contracted services (e.g., speech, occupational therapy, behavioral support)
- Additional staffing support (e.g., one-on-one aides or reduced caseloads)
- Specialized instructional materials or technology

While the budget includes projected Exceptional Children (EC) funding based on anticipated enrollment, the Board acknowledges that individual student needs may exceed these allocations.

Plan to Meet Student Needs

The school will implement a flexible and responsive approach to ensure all student needs are met:

- **Individualized Planning:** All services will be determined through the IEP process, ensuring that each student receives appropriate support based on documented needs.
- **Contracted Service Providers:** The school will utilize qualified external providers to deliver specialized services as needed, allowing for scalability and cost control.
- **Contingency Planning:** The budget includes flexibility to reallocate resources or utilize reserves if higher-than-anticipated costs arise.
- **Staffing Adjustments:** The school may adjust staffing levels or assignments to ensure compliance and adequate support for students.

Oversight and Monitoring

The Executive Director, in coordination with EC leadership, will:

- Monitor service delivery and associated costs
- Review budget-to-actual expenditures related to EC services
- Provide regular updates to the Board

Summary

While high-needs students may increase costs beyond initial projections, the school is committed to meeting all legal and educational obligations. Through flexible budgeting, strategic use of contracted services, and strong oversight, the school will ensure that all students receive appropriate support while maintaining financial stability.



Q250.If there is a plan to outsource any or all financial management areas such as payroll, benefits, audits, fundraising, accounting, etc., provide a statement on how the vendors will be selected and how the board will oversee their activities to ensure fidelity and compliance.



The school plans to outsource key financial management functions, including accounting, payroll, audit services, and selected financial reporting functions, to ensure accuracy, compliance, and operational efficiency.

Vendor Selection Process

Vendors will be selected through a structured and competitive process that includes:

- Identification of qualified firms with experience in **charter school finance and compliance**
- Review of proposals based on:
 - Relevant experience and references
 - Knowledge of North Carolina charter school requirements
 - Cost and value of services
 - Capacity to provide timely and accurate reporting
- Approval of final vendor selection by the Board of Directors

Preference will be given to firms approved by the **NC Local Government Commission (LGC)** and those with a proven track record serving public charter schools.

Scope of Outsourced Services

Outsourced services may include:

- General accounting and financial reporting
- Payroll and benefits administration
- Audit preparation and coordination
- Financial compliance and reporting support

This approach ensures access to specialized expertise while maintaining cost efficiency.

Board Oversight and Accountability

The Board will maintain strong oversight of all outsourced financial services through:

- **Contractual Agreements:** Clearly defined scopes of work, performance expectations, and compliance requirements
- **Regular Reporting:** Monthly financial reports, including budget-to-actual comparisons and cash flow analysis
- **Audit Oversight:** Annual independent audit conducted by an LGC-approved firm
- **Performance Monitoring:** Ongoing evaluation of vendor performance, accuracy, and timeliness

The Executive Director and Finance Officer will manage day-to-day coordination with vendors, while the Board retains final oversight and accountability for all financial operations.

By outsourcing key financial functions to experienced providers and maintaining strong governance oversight, the school ensures financial accuracy, regulatory compliance, and responsible stewardship of public funds.



Q251.Does the school intend to contract for services such as student accounting and financial services, exceptional children instructional support, custodial, etc? Describe the criteria and procedures for the selection of contractors and large purchases.



Yes, the school intends to contract for select services to ensure operational efficiency, access to specialized expertise, and cost-effective implementation. Anticipated contracted services include:

- Student accounting and financial services
- Payroll and audit services
- Exceptional Children (EC) instructional and related services (e.g., speech, occupational therapy)
- Technology support services
- Custodial services for the administrative office
- Regional testing site rentals and support

Criteria for Selection of Contractors

All contractors will be selected based on clear, objective criteria, including:

- Demonstrated experience in charter school or public sector services
- Knowledge of applicable state and federal regulations
- Quality and reliability of services
- Cost effectiveness and overall value
- References and past performance

Preference will be given to vendors with experience supporting North Carolina charter schools and those approved by relevant state agencies, where applicable.

Procurement Procedures

The school will follow a structured procurement process that includes:

- Competitive bidding or solicitation of multiple quotes for significant contracts
- Review and evaluation of proposals by school leadership
- Recommendation to the Board for approval of major contracts and expenditures
- Documentation of all procurement decisions to ensure transparency and compliance

For large purchases or contracts, the Board will establish approval thresholds to ensure appropriate oversight and fiscal responsibility.

Oversight and Accountability

The Executive Director and Director of Operations will manage day-to-day vendor relationships, while the Board will provide oversight through:

- Review and approval of major contracts
- Monitoring of vendor performance and deliverables
- Regular financial and operational reporting

The school's approach to contracting emphasizes quality, compliance, and fiscal discipline. By leveraging external expertise where appropriate and maintaining strong oversight, the school ensures efficient operations and responsible use of resources.



Q252.Explain how the budget aligns with the school's mission, curricular offerings, transportation plans, and facility needs.



The school's budget is intentionally designed to align with its mission of delivering a high-quality, accessible virtual education model while maintaining fiscal discipline and operational efficiency.

Alignment with Mission

The mission emphasizes access, flexibility, and high-quality instruction for all students. The budget reflects this by prioritizing:

- Instructional staff and student support services
- Technology access for all students (devices, connectivity, platforms)
- Scalable systems that support statewide access

A significant portion of the budget is allocated to personnel and instructional resources, ensuring that funding directly supports student learning and outcomes.

Alignment with Curricular Offerings

The school's virtual instructional model is supported through targeted investments in:

- Curriculum platforms and digital content
- Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Student Information Systems (SIS)
- Professional development for virtual instruction

These allocations ensure that the curriculum is delivered effectively and consistently across all grade levels.

Alignment with Transportation Plan

Because the school operates as a virtual academy, transportation costs are minimal and strategically limited to:

- Required in-person activities such as testing or school events
- Targeted transportation support when necessary

This approach reduces overall expenditures while ensuring equitable access, allowing the school to redirect resources toward instruction and student support.

Alignment with Facility Needs

The facility plan is intentionally lean and aligned with the virtual model:

- A small administrative office supports core operations
- No traditional classroom space is required
- Regional facilities are reserved only as needed for testing and events

This significantly reduces fixed facility costs and allows the school to invest more heavily in instructional quality and technology.

Summary



The budget reflects a clear alignment between the school's mission and its operational model by:

- Prioritizing instruction and student access
- Minimizing unnecessary fixed costs
- Maintaining flexibility and scalability

This disciplined approach ensures that financial resources are used efficiently to support student success while maintaining long-term sustainability.

Q253. What percentage of expenditures will be the school's goal for a general fund balance? Describe how the school will develop the fund balance.

The school's goal is to maintain a **general fund balance of 3–5% of total annual expenditures**, consistent with best practices in charter school financial management and long-term sustainability.

Development of Fund Balance

The school will build and maintain its fund balance through the following strategies:

- **Conservative Budgeting:**
The budget is developed using cautious revenue assumptions and controlled expenditure planning to generate modest annual surpluses.
- **Operating Surpluses:**
As reflected in the financial projections, the school anticipates generating annual surpluses beginning in Year 1, which will be added to the fund balance to strengthen financial stability.
- **Expense Management:**
The school will closely monitor spending and adjust variable costs, such as staffing and contracted services, to align with actual enrollment and revenue.
- **Board Oversight:**
The Board will review monthly financial reports, including fund balance status, to ensure progress toward the established goal.

Purpose of Fund Balance

The general fund balance will serve as:

- A safeguard against revenue fluctuations or unexpected expenses
- A tool to support cash flow stability
- A resource for strategic reinvestment in programs and services when appropriate

By maintaining a disciplined approach to budgeting and financial oversight, the school will build a sustainable fund balance that supports both short-term stability and long-term success.

Q254. Provide a description of proposed financing structure. Include financing of facilities, other asset financing, and leases.



The school's financing structure is designed to be simple, low-risk, and sustainable, with no reliance on debt financing for core operations.

Facilities Financing

The school will utilize a commercial lease model for its administrative office space.

- No construction or major renovation financing is required
- Lease costs are built into the annual operating budget
- Short- to mid-term lease agreements will provide flexibility and cost control

This approach eliminates the need for long-term debt or capital financing related to facilities.

Asset Financing

The school will acquire necessary assets, including:

- Student devices (laptops and accessories)
- Technology infrastructure (software, LMS, SIS)
- Office equipment and furnishings

These assets will be funded through operating revenues and phased purchasing, aligned with enrollment growth. Where appropriate, the school may utilize leasing or bulk purchasing agreements for technology to manage cash flow and ensure regular refresh cycles.

Leases and Contractual Agreements

The school will enter into lease or service agreements for:

- Administrative office space
- Copiers and office equipment
- Technology platforms and systems
- Regional facility rentals for testing and events

All agreements will be structured to:

- Align with the approved budget
- Maintain flexibility as the school grows
- Avoid long-term financial obligations that could create risk

Debt Financing

The school does not plan to utilize loans or long-term debt as part of its financing structure. This reduces financial risk and ensures that operations remain fully supported by recurring public revenue sources.

Summary

The proposed financing structure emphasizes:

- Lease-based, flexible facility use
- Pay-as-you-go asset acquisition



- Strategic use of service contracts
- Avoidance of long-term debt

This approach ensures financial stability, operational flexibility, and alignment with the school's virtual model.

Q255. Will the school have assets from other sources (e.g. building, furniture, chairs, computers, etc.)? If yes, please provide a list. Note which are secured and which are anticipated, and include evidence of commitment for any assets on which the school's core operation depends.

The school's core operations are not dependent on assets from external sources. All essential assets required for school operations, including technology, furnishings, and equipment, will be acquired through the school's operating budget.

Secured Assets

At this time, there are no externally secured assets (e.g., donated buildings, equipment, or technology) upon which the school's operations depend.

Anticipated Assets (Non-Dependent)

The school may pursue or accept supplemental in-kind contributions to enhance programming, which could include:

- Technology equipment or software licenses
- Office furniture or equipment
- Instructional resources or program materials

These assets, if obtained, will be considered non-essential enhancements and will not be relied upon for core instructional or operational functions.

Core Asset Acquisition Plan

All critical assets necessary for opening and operating the school will be funded through the approved budget, including:

- Student devices (1:1 technology model)
- Learning Management System (LMS) and Student Information System (SIS)
- Office equipment and furnishings
- Technology infrastructure and support systems

The school's financial plan is designed to be fully self-sufficient, without reliance on external assets. Any future contributions or in-kind donations will be supplemental and will not impact the school's ability to open or operate successfully.

13.3. Financial Compliance



Q256.How will the school ensure adequate internal controls, including segregation of duties, safeguarding of assets, accurate and adequate record keeping?



The school will implement a comprehensive system of internal controls to ensure proper financial management, safeguard assets, and maintain accurate and transparent records.

Segregation of Duties

The school will maintain clear separation of financial responsibilities to reduce risk and ensure accountability:

- The Executive Director will authorize expenditures and oversee financial operations
- The Finance Officer/contracted financial provider will manage accounting, payroll, and financial reporting
- The Board of Directors will review and approve budgets, major expenditures, and financial reports

No single individual will have control over all aspects of any financial transaction.

Safeguarding of Assets

The school will implement procedures to protect both physical and financial assets, including:

- Inventory tracking systems for all technology and equipment (e.g., student devices)
- Secure storage and controlled access to financial records and systems
- Appropriate insurance coverage for property and liability

Accurate Record Keeping

The school will utilize established financial systems and procedures to ensure accurate and timely record keeping:

- Use of a professional accounting system aligned with state reporting requirements
- Monthly reconciliation of all accounts
- Maintenance of detailed financial records in accordance with state and federal guidelines

Financial Oversight and Monitoring

The Board will provide ongoing oversight through:

- Monthly financial reports, including budget-to-actual comparisons
- Annual independent audit conducted by an LGC-approved firm
- Review of internal controls and financial policies

Use of Qualified External Providers

The school will engage experienced external providers for accounting, payroll, and audit services to ensure:

- Compliance with all regulatory requirements
- Accuracy and reliability of financial data
- Adherence to best practices in charter school financial management



Through clear segregation of duties, strong oversight, and the use of established financial systems and external expertise, the school will maintain effective internal controls that ensure financial integrity, transparency, and accountability.

Q257. Provide any known or possible related party transactions (relationship, description of transaction, and estimated dollars involved).

At this time, the Board is not aware of any known related party transactions that would involve Board members, school leadership, or affiliated individuals or entities.

Potential Future Transactions

If any related party transactions are identified in the future, the school will ensure that:

- All relationships are fully disclosed to the Board
- The transaction is reviewed to ensure it is fair, reasonable, and in the best interest of the school
- The transaction is approved by disinterested Board members in accordance with established conflict of interest policies
- Appropriate documentation is maintained to ensure transparency and compliance

Conflict of Interest Policy

The Board will adopt and enforce a formal Conflict of Interest Policy, requiring:

- Annual disclosure statements from all Board members and key staff
- Ongoing disclosure of any potential conflicts as they arise
- Recusal of any individual with a financial interest in a proposed transaction

The school is committed to maintaining the highest standards of transparency and ethical conduct. Any related party transactions, if they occur, will be handled in full compliance with applicable laws and governance best practices.

Q258. Provide the name of the firm approved by the NC Local Government Commission (LGC) that will conduct the audit. Include the complete mailing address, telephone number, and fax number. If a firm has yet to be identified, please list the firms the board has investigated.



The Board has begun the process of identifying and vetting an audit firm approved by the North Carolina Local Government Commission (LGC) to conduct the school's annual independent audit.

At the time of application submission, a final audit firm has not yet been formally approved by the Board. However, the Board has received training and guidance from an experienced auditor and is currently considering engagement with the following LGC-approved firm:

Firm Under Consideration:

Sharpe Patel PLLC
5510 Six Forks Road, Suite 140
Raleigh, NC 27609
Phone: 919-341-4187

Primary Contact:

Jay E. Sharpe, CPA, CFE
Audit Partner
Email: jay@sharpepatelcpa.com

Mr. Sharpe brings more than 25 years of experience working with charter schools and has extensive experience conducting audits for charter schools across North Carolina and South Carolina, including virtual charter schools. His background reflects strong familiarity with the financial, compliance, and reporting requirements specific to charter school operations.

Selection Process

The final audit firm will be selected based on:

- Demonstrated experience with North Carolina charter school audits
- Knowledge of GASB standards and LGC reporting requirements
- Cost and overall value of services
- References and prior performance

The Board will formally approve the selected firm prior to the school's opening and will ensure all required audit contracts and documentation are submitted in accordance with LGC requirements.

The school is committed to engaging a qualified, LGC-approved audit firm to ensure full compliance, transparency, and financial accountability beginning in its first year of operation.

13.4. Certify

Q259. I certify that this subsection is entirely original and has not been copied, pasted, or otherwise reproduced from any other application.

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No



Q260.Explanation (optional):



14. Other Forms

Q261. [Sign the attached Charter School Required Signature Certification document and upload it as a PDF or image file.](#)

☒ Upload Required File Type: **pdf, image** Max File Size: **30** Total Files Count: **1**

Resources



Charter School Required ...

Applicant Evidence :



2026 Charter School Req...

Uploaded on **4/20/2026** by
Lauren Watters



15. Third-party Application Preparation

Q262. Was this application prepared with the assistance of a third-party person or group?

☒ Yes

☐ No

Q263. Give the name of the third-party person or group:

Leaders Building Leaders

Q264. Fees provided to the third-party person or group:

\$15,000



16. Application Fee

Pursuant to G.S. 115C-218.1(c) the charter school applicant must submit a \$1000 application fee to the Office of Charter Schools. The applicant must submit their application fee by April 24, 2026, at 5:00 pm EDT for Fast Track and Accelerated applications, and April 24, 2026, at 5:00 pm EDT for traditional timeline applications. Payments will be accepted in the form of a certified check. Cash nor credit cards are accepted.

Q265.*Application Note: The applicant must mail the certified check or money order along with the Application Fee Payment Form (see the resources to download Payment Form) before or on the due date of April 26, 2026, at 5:00 pm EDT. By signing below you acknowledge and understand.

Payments should be made payable to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Office of Charter Schools 6307 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-6307

Signature

Resources



2026 Payment Form.docx...



17. Signature page

Q266. Fill out the attached resource and get it signed and notarized. Then upload as a PDF or image file.

☒ Upload Required File Type: **pdf, image** Max File Size: **30** Total Files Count: **5**

Resources



Signature Page.docx

Applicant Evidence :



VALA NC_Signature Page_...

Uploaded on **4/20/2026** by

Lauren Watters

Q267. Board chair, please digitally sign your application here.

Signature

Final Status

Approver Comments



Appendix J: Proposed Bylaws

**BYLAWS OF
VIRTUAL ACTIVE LEARNING ACADEMY
A NORTH CAROLINA NONPROFIT CORPORATION**

**ARTICLE 1
NAME, OFFICES, AND AGENT**

Section 1.1 Name. The name of the non-profit corporation shall be VIRTUAL ACTIVE LEARNING ACADEMY (VALA) (hereinafter referred to as the “Corporation”), duly organized and authorized under the laws of the State of North Carolina.

Section 1.2. Principal Office: The principal office of the Corporation shall be located at:

847 Bay Bouquet Lane,
Apex, NC 27523

The Board of Directors (“the Board”) may change this address as necessary.

Section 1.3. Registered Office: The registered office of the Corporation, required by law to be maintained in the State of North Carolina, may be, but need not be, identical with the principal office. The Corporation shall continuously maintain in North Carolina a registered office at such place as may be designated by the Board.

Section 1.4. Other Offices: The corporation may have offices at other places, either within or without the State of North Carolina, as the Board may from time to time determine, or as the affairs of the corporation may require.

Section 1.5. Agent. The Corporation shall continuously maintain within North Carolina a registered agent, who shall be designated by the Board.

**ARTICLE 2
PURPOSE**

Section 2.1. Purpose. The Corporation is organized exclusively for charitable, educational, and scientific purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The primary purpose of the Corporation is to establish, operate, and support one or more public charter schools in the State of North Carolina, including the Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA-NC), to provide high-quality, student-centered educational programs that promote academic achievement, equitable access, and lifelong learning.

Section 2.2. Activities. In furtherance of its purpose, the Corporation may engage in activities that include, but are not limited to:

- a) designing, implementing, and evaluating innovative instructional programs,
- b) recruiting, employing, and supporting qualified educators and staff,
- c) securing and managing financial, material, and technological resources,
- d) forming partnerships with educational, community, industry, and governmental organizations,
- e) providing services, programs, and supports that enhance student learning and well-being, and
- f) undertaking any lawful activities consistent with the Corporation’s mission and permissible for organizations exempt under Section 501(c)(3).

ARTICLE 3 MEMBERS

Section 3.1. No Members. The Corporation shall have no members. All functions and affairs of the Corporation shall be directed entirely by the Board thereof.

ARTICLE 4 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 4.1. General Powers. The activities, affairs, and business of the Corporation shall be managed, controlled, and directed by the Board.

Section 4.2. Number, Qualifications, and Election. The Board consists of not less than five (5) nor more than nine (9) directors. A board term is equal to a term of three (3) years, unless a Director is elected to serve the remainder of a term. A director may serve a maximum of 2 (two) consecutive terms unless approved as set forth herein. To ensure continuity of work and duties of the Board, members having served at least two terms total, either consecutive or not, may be granted additional partial or full terms by a majority vote of the remaining board members in advance of each subsequent term. The number of Directors each year shall be determined by the Board based upon need. A person needs to be at least twenty-one years old and in good standing to be qualified as a Director. If required by law or regulation, a majority of Directors and Officers shall reside within the State of North Carolina.

Section 4.3. Elections: Directors after the First Board shall be elected at the annual meeting by the current Board. Election procedures for the Board are outlined as follows: nominations may be made by any Director; votes may be taken publicly by a show of hands; nominees receiving the highest number of votes shall be deemed elected.

Section 4.4. Duties. The Board shall perform all duties required of it, collectively and individually, by applicable law, the Articles of Incorporation, and these Bylaws. Each Director shall serve in a fiduciary capacity to the Corporation and shall discharge the responsibilities of their position in good faith, with loyalty, and with the degree of care, diligence, and judgment that a reasonably prudent person would exercise in similar circumstances and in a comparable role.

Section 4.5. Resignation, Removal, and Vacancies. A Director may resign at any time by submitting written notice to the President or Secretary of the Corporation. The resignation shall be effective on the date specified in the notice, or, if no date is specified, upon receipt by the President or Secretary. A Director may be removed from office, with or without cause, by a majority vote of the Board at any duly called meeting. In the event of a vacancy on the Board due to death, resignation, removal, disqualification, or any other reason, the remaining Directors shall continue to conduct the business of the Corporation. Such vacancies shall be filled using the same procedure established for electing Directors. A Director appointed to fill a vacancy shall serve for the remainder of the unexpired term of the departing Director.

Section 4.6. Compensation. Directors shall serve without compensation for their services. However, the Board may, by majority vote, authorize the reimbursement of reasonable travel and related expenses incurred by a director in the performance of official duties on behalf of the Corporation. The Corporation shall maintain liability insurance covering its directors and officers for actions undertaken in the course of conducting the Corporation's business.

Section 4.7. Certain Director Liability. Directors shall be subject to all liabilities imposed by applicable law on the board of a nonprofit corporation. Any director who votes for or assents to a distribution of the Corporation's assets that is contrary to the North Carolina Nonprofit Corporation Act, the Articles of

Incorporation, or these Bylaws shall be jointly and severally liable to the Corporation for the amount of the unlawful distribution. However, a director shall not be liable to the Corporation for such actions to the extent that the director acted in good faith and reasonably relied on financial statements or other financial information provided by the President, Treasurer, or by an independent certified public accountant or accounting firm, which the director reasonably believed to be accurate and prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. In no event shall a director's liability exceed the debts, obligations, and liabilities of the Corporation existing at the time of the vote or assent.

ARTICLE 5 OFFICERS

Section 5.1. Designation of Officers. Officers of the Board shall include the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Board may create and fill additional officer positions as it deems necessary for the effective operation of the Corporation. The same individual may simultaneously hold more than one office, except that the offices of President and Secretary may not be held by the same person. No officer shall sign or execute any document in more than one capacity if the document requires two separate officers' signatures.

Section 5.2. Election and Term. The Board shall elect officers from among its own members. Except as provided in Section 5.3, officers shall serve for a term of one year, beginning at the start of the fiscal year following their election, or until their successors are duly elected and qualified. Officer elections may be conducted at the annual meeting of the Board or at any duly called meeting designated for this purpose. No officer shall serve more than three consecutive one-year terms in the same office unless an extension is approved by a majority vote of the Board.

Section 5.3. Initial Officers. At the first organizational meeting of the Governing Board, the Board shall elect initial officers, including a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Initial officers shall be elected from among the Board members by open nominations and majority vote, unless otherwise specified in these Bylaws. Initial officers shall serve a term of one year, or until their successors are duly elected and qualified, to facilitate leadership during the Corporation's startup phase and transition to regular officer election cycles.

Section 5.4. Resignation, Removal, and Vacancies. An officer may resign at any time by submitting a written notice to the Board. The resignation shall become effective on the date specified in the notice, or, if no date is provided, upon receipt by the Board. An officer may be removed from office, with or without cause, by a majority vote of the Board at any duly called meeting. Removal as an officer does not automatically constitute removal as a director unless specifically stated by the Board. In the event of a vacancy in any office due to death, resignation, removal, disqualification, or any other reason, the Board shall continue to conduct the business of the Corporation. The Board shall fill the vacancy by electing a replacement officer using the same procedure applicable to the initial election of officers. An officer elected to fill a vacancy shall serve for the remainder of the unexpired term of their predecessor and until a successor is duly elected and qualified.

Section 5.5. Compensation. Officers shall serve without compensation for their services to the Board, except for travel and related expenses as may be authorized by the Board.

Section 5.6. President. The Board shall elect the President from among its members using the same procedure established for the election of directors. The President shall serve as the principal officer of the Corporation and shall be responsible for supervising, organizing, and managing the business and affairs of the Board, subject to the Board's oversight. The President shall preside at all meetings of the Board and shall execute, on behalf of the Corporation, such deeds, mortgages, bonds, contracts, checks, and other instruments as may be authorized by the Board or as required by law. The President shall perform all duties incident to the office and such additional responsibilities as may be assigned by the Board. The President may be removed from office, with or without cause, by a majority vote of the Board at any duly called meeting.

Section 5.7. Vice-President. The Board may elect a Vice President from among its members using the same procedure established for the election of directors. At the request of the President, or in the President's absence or incapacity, the Vice President shall perform the duties of the President and, when acting in that capacity, shall have all the powers and be subject to all the restrictions applicable to the President. The Vice President shall perform all duties incident to the office and any additional responsibilities assigned by the Board. The Vice President may be removed from office, with or without cause, by a majority vote of the Board at any duly called meeting.

Section 5.8. Secretary. The Board shall elect the Secretary from among its members using the same procedure established for the election of Directors. The Secretary shall keep accurate minutes of all meetings of the Board and shall ensure that all notices are issued in accordance with these Bylaws and applicable law. The Secretary shall serve as the custodian of the Corporation's official records, including statements, books, reports, certificates, and other documents. The Secretary shall sign such instruments as may require their signature and shall maintain an up-to-date roster of all Directors, including their addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, and other available contact information. This record shall be open to inspection as required by law. The Secretary shall perform all duties incident to the office and any additional responsibilities assigned by the Board. The Secretary may be removed from office, with or without cause, by a majority vote of the Board at any duly called meeting.

Section 5.9. Treasurer. The Board shall elect the Treasurer from among its members using the same procedure established for the election of directors. The Treasurer shall have primary responsibility for financial oversight of the Corporation, including budgeting, financial reporting, and ensuring sound fiscal management practices. The Treasurer shall also serve as chair of the audit committee, unless otherwise designated by the Board. The Treasurer shall provide to the Board, at least quarterly, with a clear and accurate account of all financial transactions and the financial condition of the Corporation. The Treasurer is authorized to sign checks and other financial instruments as approved by the Board or required by the Corporation's financial policies. The Treasurer shall perform all duties incident to the office and any additional responsibilities assigned by the Board. The Treasurer may be removed from office, with or without cause, by a majority vote of the Board at any duly called meeting.

ARTICLE 6 COMMITTEES

Section 6.1. General. The Board may establish standing or ad hoc committees as it deems necessary to support the work of the Corporation, and all committees shall operate under the authority and direction of the Board. The Board shall appoint the chair of each committee, and committee chairs may nominate individuals for committee membership, subject to Board approval. Committee membership is not restricted to Directors; parent and community members may serve on committees unless the committee addresses confidential personnel matters or other matters reserved for Board members only. Membership of any committee engaged in personnel matters shall be limited exclusively to Board members. Committees may meet and conduct business between Board meetings and shall report their activities, findings, and recommendations to the Board at regular meetings or as otherwise requested by the Board. Each Director shall serve on at least one standing committee unless excused by Board vote. The roles, responsibilities, and scope of each committee shall be defined in writing and formally approved by the Board.

ARTICLE 7 BOARD MEETINGS

Section 7.1. Regular Meetings. Regular meetings of the Board, including annual Board retreats, shall be held

at least eight (8) times per year at such time and place as designated by the Board. Regular meetings are generally held monthly, except during July and August, unless the Board determines that a meeting is necessary. Meetings are typically scheduled for the third Thursday of each month in the evening, but the Board may adjust the schedule as needed. The annual meeting of the Board shall be held in June for the purpose of electing Directors and conducting any other business that may properly come before the Board. All regular meetings shall be notified to the public using feasible and appropriate means of communication as permitted by law and in compliance with North Carolina's Open Meetings Law.

Section 7.2. Special and Emergency Meetings. Special or emergency meetings of the Board may be called by the President, any Officer, or any two Directors. Such meetings shall be held at the time and place designated in the meeting notice. Notice of special or emergency meetings shall be provided to the public as soon as practicable under the circumstances, using any feasible means of communication permitted by law and in compliance with North Carolina's Open Meetings Law. Only the business stated in the notice of a special or emergency meeting shall be considered at the meeting.

Section 7.3. Notice of Meetings. Notice of any regular meeting, including the annual Board retreat, shall be provided to all Directors at least seven (7) days in advance. Notice of any special meeting shall be given to Directors at least two (2) days (48 hours) prior to the meeting. Notice of emergency meetings shall be provided as soon as practicable and in accordance with North Carolina's Open Meetings Law. All meeting notices shall be delivered using feasible and appropriate means of communication permitted by law and consistent with North Carolina's Open Meetings Law. Each Director shall notify the President at least twenty-four (24) hours in advance if they are unable to attend a scheduled meeting.

Section 7.4. Waiver Notice. Notice of a meeting is not required for any director who, either before or after the meeting, submits a written waiver of notice, consents to the holding of the meeting, or approves the minutes of the meeting. Attendance at a meeting shall also constitute a waiver of notice unless the director, at the beginning of the meeting, objects to the lack of proper notice. All waivers, consents, approvals, and objections shall be documented in the minutes of the meeting to which they pertain.

Section 7.5. Quorum. A majority of the voting members of the Board then in office shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. If fewer than a quorum are present at any meeting, the directors in attendance may adjourn the meeting to a later time or date until a quorum is obtained. No official action may be taken without a quorum present.

Section 7.6. Voting. If a quorum is present when a vote is taken, the affirmative vote of a majority of the directors present shall constitute the action of the Board, unless a greater number is required by law, the Articles of Incorporation, or these Bylaws. Voting by proxy is not permitted. If a director abstains from voting due to a conflict of interest, the abstaining director shall not be counted as part of the voting majority, but the remaining directors present shall continue to constitute a quorum for that vote. A majority of the non-conflicted directors voting shall be sufficient to approve the motion.

Section 7.7. Open Meetings Law. The Board shall conduct all of its meetings in accordance with the public policy of the State of North Carolina and fully comply with the requirements of the North Carolina Open Meetings Law, including provisions related to public notice, access, closed sessions, and recordkeeping.

Section 7.8. Conduct of Meetings. The President of the Board shall preside at all meetings of the Board. In the absence of the President, the Vice President shall preside. If both the President and Vice President are absent, the Directors present shall select a Director to preside over the meeting. The Secretary shall record the minutes of all Board meetings. In the absence of the Secretary, the presiding officer shall appoint a person to act as Secretary for that meeting. The Board may elect to use Robert's Rules of Order, or any other commonly accepted rules of parliamentary procedure, as a guideline for the conduct of its meetings, provided that such

rules are applied in a manner consistent with these Bylaws and applicable law.

Section 7.9. Closed Sessions. The Board may enter a closed session only for purposes permitted under the North Carolina Open Meetings Law. A motion to enter a closed session must be made and approved during an open meeting and must cite the specific statutory authority under N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143-318.11 that permits the closed session. All votes must occur in open session unless expressly permitted by law. Minutes of closed sessions shall be maintained in accordance with North Carolina law and shall remain confidential until their release is required or permitted by statute.

Section 7.10. Electronic Meetings and Attendance. Board meetings may be held virtually as long as all members participating in the meeting can hear one another. For any meetings, whether in person or virtually, Directors may individually participate by means of a conference telephone, video conference, or any other electronic communication so long as all members participating in the meeting can hear one another. Such participation constitutes personal presence at the meeting for purposes of conducting business and meeting the quorum requirements.

ARTICLE 8 FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

Section 8.1. Contract Authority. No contract binding the Corporation shall be executed unless authorized by a majority vote of the Board. The Board may delegate limited authority to an officer or agent to enter into contracts on behalf of the Corporation, and such authorization may be general or limited to specific transactions. All contracts shall comply with applicable federal, state, and local requirements, including North Carolina charter school procurement and reporting laws.

Section 8.2. Loans and Debt Obligations. No loan, line of credit, or other debt obligation shall be executed in the name of the Corporation unless expressly authorized by a majority vote of the Board. If the Board authorizes an officer or agent to enter into a loan or credit agreement, such authority shall be documented in the Board's minutes and may be general or confined to specific transactions. The Corporation shall not incur debt that jeopardizes its financial stability or compliance with North Carolina charter school regulations.

Section 8.3. Checks, Drafts, and Electronic Payments. All checks, drafts, electronic transfers, or other orders for the payment of money issued in the name of the Corporation shall require the signatures or approvals of at least two officers or authorized agents, in accordance with policies adopted by the Board. The Board shall maintain internal control procedures to safeguard assets, prevent fraud, and ensure appropriate segregation of financial duties which shall be codified in Board policies.

Section 8.4. Deposits and Bank Accounts. All funds of the Corporation not otherwise employed shall be deposited to the credit of the Corporation in financial institutions selected by the Board. Accounts shall be maintained in accordance with North Carolina charter school financial regulations and sound accounting practices. The Board may authorize investment of idle funds in accordance with state law and the Corporation's investment policy, if any.

Section 8.5. Gifts, Grants, and Contributions. The Board, or any agent authorized by the Board, may accept gifts, grants, contributions, bequests, or devises on behalf of the Corporation, provided such contributions support the Corporation's mission and comply with federal and state laws, regulations, and the representations made in the Corporation's IRS Form 1023 filing. The Board may decline any gift that imposes undue obligations, conflicts with VALA's mission, or creates a compliance risk.

Section 8.6. Annual Budget. The Board shall adopt an annual operating budget prior to the beginning of each fiscal year. The budget shall reflect anticipated revenues and expenditures and shall comply with North Carolina

charter school budgeting requirements. The Executive Director shall prepare and present a proposed budget for Board review.

Section 8.7. Audits and Financial Reporting. The Board shall retain an independent auditor approved by the North Carolina Local Government Commission to conduct an annual audit of the Corporation's financial statements. The Corporation shall adhere to all auditing, reporting, and fiscal monitoring requirements established by the North Carolina State Board of Education, the Office of Charter Schools, and other applicable authorities. The annual audit report shall be reviewed by the Finance and Audit Committee and presented to the Board for approval.

Section 8.8. Bonding of Officers and Agents. At the direction of the Board, any officer or agent of the Corporation may be required to furnish a bond, at the Corporation's expense, in such amount and with such surety as the Board determines necessary for the protection of the Corporation's assets.

Section 8.9. Financial Oversight and Internal Controls. The Board shall adopt and annually review financial policies that establish internal controls, ensure proper segregation of duties, regulate purchasing and procurement, and promote transparency and accountability. The Executive Director shall implement such policies, subject to Board oversight.

ARTICLE 9 FISCAL POLICIES

Section 9.1. Purpose. The Corporation shall maintain fiscal policies that ensure sound financial management, transparency, accountability, and compliance with all applicable federal and state laws, the North Carolina Charter Schools Act, and generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP).

Section 9.2. Fiscal Year. The fiscal year of the Corporation shall begin on July 1 and end on June 30 of each year, consistent with state requirements for charter schools.

Section 9.3. Budget Development and Adoption. The Executive Director shall prepare an annual operating budget reflecting projected revenues and expenditures for the upcoming fiscal year. The proposed budget shall be reviewed by the Finance and Audit Committee and submitted to the Board for approval no later than June 30. No expenditures shall exceed the approved budget without Board approval.

Section 9.4. Financial Reporting. The Executive Director shall provide the Board with monthly financial statements, including year-to-date revenues, expenditures, fund balances, and variances. Reports shall follow state-prescribed formats and GAAP.

Section 9.5. Internal Controls. The Board shall adopt financial policies establishing internal controls to safeguard assets and ensure proper segregation of duties, authorization procedures, cash-handling controls, procurement procedures, and fraud prevention safeguards. These policies shall be reviewed annually.

Section 9.6. Fund Accounting and Record Retention. The Corporation shall maintain accurate financial records and follow governmental fund accounting practices. All financial records shall be retained in accordance with state record retention schedules and be available for audit or inspection as permitted by law.

Section 9.7. Purchasing and Disbursements. All purchases and expenditures shall comply with the Corporation's Procurement and Purchasing Policy. Disbursements shall require appropriate documentation, approval, and dual authorization when necessary.

Section 9.8. Grants Management. All federal and state grants shall be managed in compliance with Uniform

Guidance (2 CFR 200), North Carolina Department of Public Instruction requirements, and any applicable grant terms. The Executive Director shall ensure proper expenditure tracking, reporting, and allowable use compliance.

Section 9.9. Investment of Funds. Idle funds may be invested in accordance with North Carolina General Statutes and Board-approved investment policies. Investments shall prioritize safety, liquidity, and reasonable yield.

ARTICLE 10 CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ANTI-NEPOTISM

Section 10.1. Purpose and Legal Compliance. The Corporation shall maintain and enforce a Conflict of Interest and Anti-Nepotism Policy in accordance with G.S. §115C-218.15, Chapter 55A of the North Carolina General Statutes, the North Carolina Charter Schools Act, and all applicable federal and state laws. The purpose of this Article is to promote transparency, ethical governance, accountability, and public trust in the affairs of the Corporation.

Section 10.2. Duty of Loyalty and Disclosure. All Directors, officers, employees, committee members, and agents of the Corporation shall act in the best interests of the Corporation and avoid actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest. Any direct or indirect financial, personal, professional, or familial interest that could influence decision-making shall be promptly disclosed in writing.

Section 10.3. Financial Conflicts of Interest. No Director, officer, employee, or agent of the Corporation shall receive any improper personal or private benefit resulting from the activities of the Corporation or from funds received from the State of North Carolina or any other source, except for reasonable compensation for services rendered and reimbursement of approved expenses. No Director, officer, employee, or immediate family member shall:

- a) hold a financial interest in a vendor or entity seeking contracts with the Corporation without full disclosure;
- b) participate in procurement, employment, contracting, or financial decisions in which they have a financial interest; or
- c) improperly benefit from any contract, transaction, or program involving the Corporation.

All financial transactions shall comply with the Corporation's Conflict of Interest and procurement policies.

Section 10.4. Recusal Procedures. Any individual with a disclosed conflict shall recuse themselves from related discussions, negotiations, recommendations, supervision, deliberations, employment actions, or votes. Any conflict and recusal shall be documented in the official Board minutes.

Section 10.5. Anti-Nepotism. Before any immediate family member, as defined by G.S. §115C-12.2, of a Board member or employee with supervisory authority is employed, engaged as an independent contractor, or otherwise retained by the Corporation:

- a) The relationship shall be disclosed to the Board;
- b) the proposed employment or engagement shall be approved in an open-session Board meeting; and
- c) Appropriate safeguards shall be implemented to prevent supervisory, evaluative, or decision-making conflicts.

The Corporation shall comply with all applicable North Carolina anti-nepotism requirements.

Section 10.6. Board Service Despite Conflict. In accordance with G.S. §115C-218.15(b)(3), an individual shall not be automatically disqualified from serving on the Board solely because of the existence of a conflict of interest, provided that the individual complies with applicable disclosure, recusal, and legal requirements.

Section 10.7. Annual Disclosure and Policy Review. The Board shall adopt and annually review a separate

Conflict of Interest and Anti-Nepotism Policy. Directors, officers, and key personnel shall annually complete written conflict-of-interest disclosure statements, which shall be maintained as official records of the Corporation.

ARTICLE 11 GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 11.1. Books and Records. The Corporation shall keep at its principal office:

- a) a copy of the Corporation's Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws as amended to date,
- b) a record of its directors, indicating their names, physical and email addresses, and telephone numbers, dates of election to the Board and to office(s), if applicable,
- c) a record of its committees and committee members, including the specific task for which each committee was formed and members' names, physical and email addresses, and telephone numbers,
- d) minutes of all Board and committee meetings, indicating the time and place of such meetings, names of those present, and the proceedings thereof, and
- e) adequate and correct books and records, including accounts of its properties and business transactions and accounts of its assets, liabilities, receipts, disbursements, gains, and losses.

Every Director has the absolute right to inspect and copy all books, records, and documents of every kind and to inspect the physical properties of the corporation provided such inspection is conducted at a reasonable time after reasonable notice, and provided that such right of inspection and copying is subject to the Corporation's obligations to maintain the confidentiality of certain books, records and documents under any applicable federal, state or local law.

Section 11.2. Indemnification. Every person who is or shall have been a Director or officer of the Organization and their personal representatives shall be indemnified to the fullest extent permissible under law by the Corporation against all costs and expenses reasonably incurred by or imposed upon them in connection with or resulting from any action, suit, or proceeding to which they may be made a party by reason of their being or having been a Director or officer of the Corporation, except in relation to such matters as to which they shall finally be adjudicated in such action, suit, or proceeding to have acted in bad faith and to have been liable by reason of willful misconduct in the performance of their duty as such director or officer. The Board shall take all such action as may be necessary and appropriate to authorize the Corporation to pay the indemnification provided by this Bylaw. "Costs and expenses" shall include, but without limiting the generality thereof, attorney's fees, damages, and reasonable amounts paid in settlement.

Section 11.3. State Indebtedness Clause. To the extent required by law, every contract of the Corporation shall include the following provision: "No indebtedness of any kind incurred or created by the charter school shall constitute an indebtedness of the State or its political subdivisions, and no indebtedness of the charter school shall involve or be secured by the faith, credit, or taxing power of the State or its political subdivisions as required by NCGS Section 115C-218.105(b)."

Section 11.4. Prohibited Activities. No part of the net earnings of the Corporation shall inure to the benefit of or be distributable to its members, Directors, officers, or other private persons, except that the Corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of purposes set forth in these Articles of Incorporation. No substantial part of the activities of the Corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the Corporation shall not participate in or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. Notwithstanding any other provisions of these articles, the Corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Code or by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170(c)(2) of the Code.

Section 11.5. Distribution Upon Dissolution. Upon the dissolution or final liquidation of the Corporation, after payment or provision for payment of all liabilities of the Corporation, the Corporation's remaining assets shall be disposed of as required by North Carolina law (N.C. G.S. Section 55A-14-03). Specifically, and only as long as required by state law pursuant to the Charter Act or its successor provisions, all net assets of the charter school purchased with public funds shall be deemed the property of the local school administrative unit in which the charter school is located. To the extent otherwise allowed by law, all assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose, all as the Board may determine, in accordance with applicable laws or any successor provisions thereto. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by the Superior Court of the county in which the principal office of the Corporation is located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations as such court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such exempt or public purposes.

Section 11.6. Non-Discrimination Policy. The Corporation shall not discriminate on the basis of race, religious preference, national or ethnic origin, disability, gender, sexual orientation, creed, ancestry, age, marital status, military status, political affiliation or belief, and any other legally protected categories, in either the hiring and other employment practices of the school or in its admission policies for students. Furthermore, the Corporation shall be open to all students as authorized on a space-available basis and shall not discriminate in its admission policies or practices. The Corporation shall conduct all of its activities in accordance with all applicable local, state, and federal anti-discrimination laws, as well as in accordance with all other laws and regulations applicable to the operation of charter public schools in the State of North Carolina.

Section 11.7. Whistleblower Protection. The Corporation shall maintain a Whistleblower Protection Policy that encourages good faith reporting of suspected misconduct, fraud, financial irregularities, violations of law, or breaches of policy. No director, officer, employee, contractor, volunteer, or applicant may suffer retaliation, intimidation, adverse employment action, or other discriminatory treatment for making a report in good faith or for participating in an investigation. Reports may be submitted confidentially or anonymously as permitted by law. The Executive Director shall ensure procedures for receiving, investigating, and resolving complaints, and any findings shall be reported to the Board or an appointed committee. Retaliation in any form is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action.

Section 11.8. Document Retention and Destruction. The Corporation shall maintain a Document Retention and Destruction Policy consistent with federal regulations, the North Carolina Public Records Act as applicable to charter schools, IRS requirements for 501(c)(3) organizations, and generally accepted accounting principles. The policy shall specify retention periods for financial records, contracts, personnel files, academic records, electronic communications, and governance documents. No record shall be destroyed if it is relevant to litigation, audit, open-records requests, investigations, or regulatory inquiries. The Executive Director or designee shall be responsible for implementing secure document-storage procedures and overseeing compliant destruction of records, including digital data.

Section 11.9. Corporate Seal. The Corporation may adopt and use a corporate seal in such form as approved by the Board. The presence or absence of the seal on corporate documents shall not affect their validity unless otherwise required by law.

ARTICLE 12 BYLAW AMENDMENTS

Section 12.1. Authority. These Bylaws may be amended, altered, or repealed by an affirmative vote of a majority of the full Board of Directors at any duly called regular or special meeting of the Board, unless a greater vote is required by applicable law, the Articles of Incorporation, or the charter agreement approved by the State Board of Education.

Section 12.2. Legal and Charter Compliance. All amendments to these Bylaws shall be consistent with the North Carolina Nonprofit Corporation Act, the North Carolina Charter Schools Act (G.S. 115C-218 et seq.), the Corporation's Articles of Incorporation, and the school's charter agreement. No amendment shall take effect if it conflicts with state or federal law or the charter approved by the State Board of Education.

Section 12.3. Reporting Requirements. Any amendment affecting the Corporation's governance structure, mission, fiscal oversight, leadership roles, or organizational framework shall be reported to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the Charter School Review Board within thirty (30) days of Board approval, or sooner if required by law or DPI guidance.

Section 12.4. Effective Date and Recordkeeping. Unless otherwise specified, amendments shall take effect immediately upon approval by the Board. All approved amendments shall be recorded in the official minutes of the Board and incorporated into the official copy of the Bylaws maintained by the Corporation.

Certification

These bylaws of Virtual Active Learning Academy were approved by the Board of Directors on _____.

Board President: Cevdet Akbay

Date:

Board Secretary: Altrovis Parks

Date:



Appendix K: Articles of Incorporation



NORTH CAROLINA

Department of the Secretary of State

To all whom these presents shall come, Greetings:

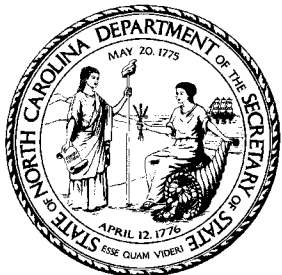
I, ELAINE F. MARSHALL, Secretary of State of the State of North Carolina, do hereby certify the following and hereto attached to be a true copy of

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

OF

VIRTUAL ACTIVE LEARNING ACADEMY

the original of which was filed in this office on the 31st day of January, 2025.



Scan to verify online.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal at the City of Raleigh, this 31st day of January, 2025.

Elaine F. Marshall

Secretary of State

State of North Carolina
Department of the Secretary of State

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
NONPROFIT CORPORATION

Pursuant to §55A-2-02 of the General Statutes of North Carolina, the undersigned corporation does hereby submit these Articles of Incorporation for the purpose of forming a nonprofit corporation.

1. The name of the nonprofit corporation is: Virtual Active Learning Academy.

2. ☒ (Check only if applicable.) The corporation is a charitable or religious corporation as defined in NCGS §55A-1-40(4).

3. The name of the initial registered agent is: Cevdet Akbay.

4. The street address and county of the initial registered agent's office of the corporation is:

Number and Street: 847 Bay Bouquet Ln

City: Apex State: NC Zip Code: 27523 County: Wake

The mailing address *if different from the street address* of the initial registered agent's office is:

Number and Street or PO Box: _____

City: _____ State: NC Zip Code: _____ County: _____

5. The name and address of each incorporator is as follows:

Cevdet Akbay - 847 Bay Bouquet Ln Apex, NC 27523

6. (Check either "a" or "b" below.)

a. ☐ The corporation will have members.

b. ☒ The corporation will not have members.

7. Attached are provisions regarding the distribution of the corporation's assets upon its dissolution.

8. Any other provisions which the corporation elects to include are attached.

9. The street address and county of the principal office of the corporation is:

Principal Office Telephone Number: (910) 476-0447

Number and Street: 847 Bay Bouquet Ln

City: Apex State: NC Zip Code: 27523 County: NC

The mailing address *if different from the street address* of the principal office is:

Number and Street or PO Box: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____ County: _____

10. **(Optional):** Listing of Officers (See instructions for why this is important)

11. **(Optional):** Please provide a business e-mail address _____.

Privacy Redaction

The Secretary of State's Office will e-mail the business entity provided at no charge when a document is filed. The e-mail provided will not be viewable on the website. For more information on why this service is being offered, please see the instructions for this document.

12. These articles will be effective upon filing, unless a future time and/or date is specified: _____

This is the 31 day of January, 2025.

Incorporator Business Entity Name

Cevdet Akbay

Signature of Incorporator

Cevdet Akbay Incorporator

Type or print Incorporator's name and title, if any

NOTES:

1. Filing fee is \$60. This document must be filed with the Secretary of State.

The Dissolution Clause

Upon the dissolution of the corporation, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by a Court of Competent Jurisdiction of the county in which the principal office of the corporation is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

The Limitation of Activities Clause

No part of the net earnings of the corporation shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article Third hereof. No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or (b) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

The Dissolution Clause

Upon the dissolution of the corporation, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by a Court of Competent Jurisdiction of the county in which the principal office of the corporation is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

The Limitation of Activities Clause

No part of the net earnings of the corporation shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in these Articles. No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or (b) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

Purpose of Corporation

The corporation is organized for the following purpose(s): (check all that apply):

- ☐ Religious
- ☐ Charitable
- ☒ Educational
- ☐ Testing for public safety
- ☐ Scientific
- ☐ Literary
- ☐ Fostering national or international amateur sports competitions, and/or
- ☐ Prevention of cruelty to children or animals.



Appendix F: Federal Documentation of
Tax-Exempt Status



Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service
Tax Exempt and Government Entities
P.O. Box 2508
Cincinnati, OH 45201

VIRTUAL ACTIVE LEARNING ACADEMY
C/O CEVDET AKBAY
847 BAY BOUQUET LANE
APEX, NC 27523-9316

Date:
02/24/2026
Employer ID number:
33-3635555
Person to contact:
Name: Ms. Georges
ID number: 5421233
Telephone: 877-829-5500
Accounting period ending:
April 30
Public charity status:
170(b)(1)(A)(vi)
Form 990 / 990-EZ / 990-N required:
Yes
Effective date of exemption:
January 31, 2025
Contribution deductibility:
Yes
Addendum applies:
No
DLN:
26053441003086

Dear Applicant:

We're pleased to tell you we determined you're exempt from federal income tax under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(3). Donors can deduct contributions they make to you under IRC Section 170. You're also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under Section 2055, 2106, or 2522. This letter could help resolve questions on your exempt status. Please keep it for your records.

Organizations exempt under IRC Section 501(c)(3) are further classified as either public charities or private foundations. We determined you're a public charity under the IRC Section listed at the top of this letter.

If we indicated at the top of this letter that you're required to file Form 990/990-EZ/990-N, our records show you're required to file an annual information return (Form 990 or Form 990-EZ) or electronic notice (Form 990-N, the e-Postcard). If you don't file a required return or notice for three consecutive years, your exempt status will be automatically revoked.

If we indicated at the top of this letter that an addendum applies, the enclosed addendum is an integral part of this letter.

For important information about your responsibilities as a tax-exempt organization, go to www.irs.gov/charities. Enter "4221-PC" in the search bar to view Publication 4221-PC, Compliance Guide for 501(c)(3) Public Charities, which describes your recordkeeping, reporting, and disclosure requirements.

Sincerely,

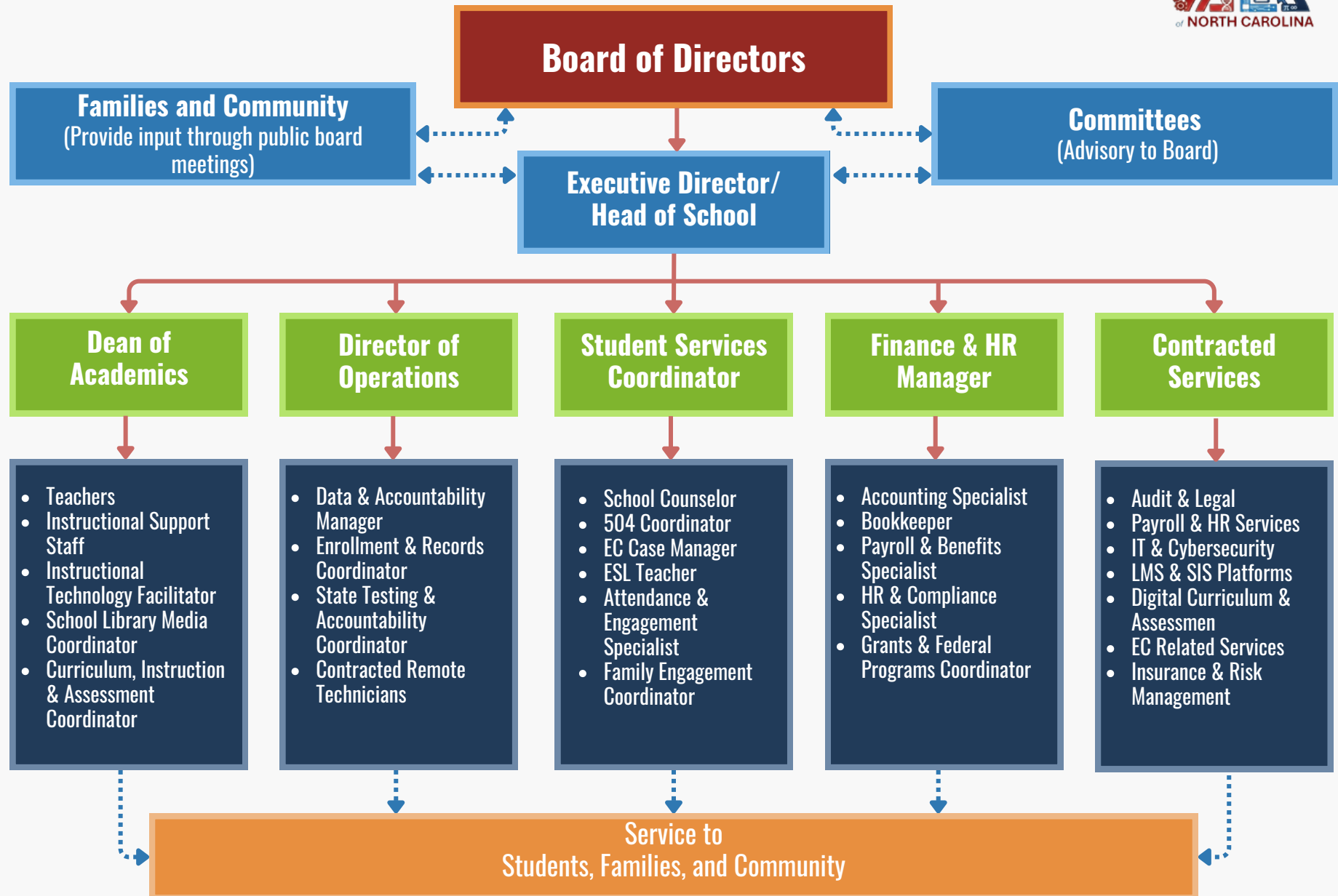
Stephen A. Martin
Director, Exempt Organizations
Rulings and Agreements



Appendix: Organizational Chart

Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina

Organizational Chart





Office of
CHARTER SCHOOLS
NC Department of Public Instruction

Enrollment Summary Table

Academic School Year	Grade Levels
Year 1	
Year 2	
Year 3	
Year 4	
Year 5	

e

Total Projected Student Enrollment

Academic School Year		Grade Levels	Total Projected Student Enrollment
Year 1	K-5		330
Year 2	K-7		505
Year 3	K-9		630
Year 4	K-11		780
Year 5	K-12		905

Ethnicity/Race	# of Students	Percentage (%)
American Indian or Alaska Native	9	1%
Asian	42	5%
Black or African American	212	23%
Hispanic	225	24%
Native HI or Pacific Islander	1	0.1%
Two or More Races	54	6%
White	387	42%
Total number of students:	930 Students (Total number of students by year 6 at full capacity)	
EDS Subgroups		
Economically Disadvantaged Students	512	55%
Students with Disabilities	167	18%
English Language	74	8%
Students Experiencing Homelessness	19	2%
Total number of students:	772 Students (Out of 930 Students-our total number of students in year 6)	



Appendix: Board Member Information Form & Resume

CEVDET AKBAY, Ph.D.

Professor of Chemistry | Fayetteville State University
Email: cakbay@uncfsu.edu | Phone: (910) 672-1943

847 Bay Bouquet Ln, Apex, NC 27523
Email: vala-nc@vala.academy
Phone: (910) 476-0447

PROFILE

Accomplished professor, researcher, and educational innovator with over 30 years of experience in STEM leadership and active-learning pedagogy. As an experienced grant writer, has secured nearly \$5 million in external funding as Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-PI. Director of the NSF-funded S8 Program, fostering student-centered research and mentoring. A founding member of the Forensic Science Program Planning Committee and creator of several chemistry and forensic science courses. Initiator of VALA-NC, a virtual K–12 charter school emphasizing active, project-based, AI-supported learning.

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Analytical Chemistry, Louisiana State University (2002)

M.S., Analytical Chemistry, Louisiana State University (1999)

B.S., Chemistry Education, İnönü University, Türkiye (1990)

ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Professor of Chemistry (2013–Present)

Chair and Assistant Chair, Department of Chemistry, Physics, and Materials Science (2012–2020)
Fayetteville State University (FSU), Fayetteville, NC

- Spearheaded American Chemical Society (ACS) accreditation of chemistry program
- Established Studio-Classroom Initiative with the funds from NSF under the student-centered active learning environment with upside-down pedagogies (SCALE-UP) model to implement student-centered, active and interactive learning.
- Mentored dozens of undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral researchers; led departmental growth in research and student success.

Postdoctoral Research Associate, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA (2002–2004)

Chemistry Instructor, Celal Bayar University, Manisa, Türkiye (1993–1997)

Science and Chemistry Teacher, Public Schools, Malatya, Türkiye (1990–1993)

RESEARCH AND GRANT LEADERSHIP

PI and Co-PI on multiple NSF, NIH, and DoD grants totaling about \$5M. Research expertise includes separation science, analytical chemistry, surfactant chemistry, and STEM pedagogy. Published 27 peer-reviewed journal articles and 60+ conference presentations.

LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

- Director, NSF-funded S8 Program (2023–2030) – Student-centered strategies and scholarship program for students' success in sciences.
- Founding Organizer, VALA-NC – Charter proposal developer for a statewide virtual K–12 academy integrating active and adaptive learning.
- Former Governing Board Member, Fulton Science Academy & Technology Enriched Accelerated Charter High School, Atlanta, GA.
- Founder and President, Akbay LLC (2019–Present) – Online business specializing in the resale of second-hand laboratory and medical equipment.
- Founding member of the Forensic Science Program Planning Committee at FSU.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Recognition for Excellence in Sponsored Research and Program Development (FSU). Departmental Teacher of the Year, FSU (2012).

Charter School Board Member Information Form

Note: To be completed individually by each proposed founding charter school board member. Please include a **one-page** resume with this form and sign by hand.

Serving on a public charter school board is a position of public trust and as a board member of a North Carolina public charter school; you are responsible for ensuring the quality of the school's entire program, competent stewardship of public funds, and the school's fulfillment of its public obligations and all terms of its charter.

As part of the application for a new charter school, the State Board of Education requests that each prospective board member respond individually to this questionnaire. Where narrative responses are required, brief responses are sufficient.

The purpose of this questionnaire is twofold: 1) to give application reviewers a clearer introduction to the applicant team behind each school proposal in advance of the applicant interview, in order to be better prepared for the interview; and 2) to encourage board members to reflect individually as well as collectively on their common mission, purposes, and obligations at the earliest stage of school development.

School Information

Name of charter school

Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA-NC)

Board Member's Information

Board Members

Full name: Cevdet Akbay

Home Address: 847 Bay Bouquet Ln, Apex, NC 27523

Business Name & Address: VALA-NC
847 Bay Bouquet Ln, Apex, NC 27523

Telephone No.: (910) 476 0447

	E-mail address: akbayc@gmail.com

Board Member Application	
Have you previously served on a board of a school district, another charter school, a non-public school, or any non-profit corporation?	No: ☐ Yes: ☒ Yes. I previously served as a Governing Board Member for two charter schools in Georgia: • Fulton Science Academy (Middle Charter School), Alpharetta, GA (2003–2007) • Technology Enriched Accelerated Charter High School in Alpharetta, GA (2006–2007) These experiences provided me with firsthand knowledge of charter school operations, governance structures, and compliance responsibilities.
Educational History	• Ph.D. in Analytical Chemistry, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA (2002) Dissertation: Synthesis, Characterization, and Applications of Novel Pseudostationary Phases in Micellar Capillary Electrophoresis for Separation of Chiral and Achiral Compounds (Advisor: Professor Isiah M. Warner) • M.S. in Analytical Chemistry, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA (1999) • B.S. in Chemistry Education, İnönü University, Malatya, Türkiye (1990)
Employment History	• Professor of Chemistry (2013–Present) Department of Chemistry, Physics, and Materials Science, Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville, NC • Associate Professor of Chemistry (2010–2013), Fayetteville State University

	• Assistant Professor of Chemistry (2004–2010), Fayetteville State University • Postdoctoral Research Associate (2002–2004), Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA • Graduate Teaching Assistant (1997–2002), Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA • Chemistry Instructor (1993–1997), Celal Bayar University, Manisa, Türkiye • Science and Chemistry Teacher (1990–1993), Public Middle and High School, Malatya, Türkiye
How were you recruited to join this Board of Directors?	I was not recruited in the traditional sense; I am the initiator and founding organizer of VALA-NC. The school’s concept grew from my long-standing commitment to active learning, STEM education, and equitable virtual instruction. I brought together educators and community partners who shared this vision to form a founding board with diverse expertise in academics, finance, operations, and governance. Drawing on my background in STEM pedagogy, federal program leadership, and charter school governance, I played a central role in shaping VALA-NC’s mission, academic model, and proposal framework.
Why do you wish to serve on the board of the proposed charter school?	As the initiator and founding visionary of VALA-NC, I am dedicated to expanding equitable access to high-quality, engaging, and personalized STEM education. Drawing on over two decades in higher education—including directing the NSF-funded S8 Program and leading Studio-Classroom active learning initiatives at Fayetteville State University—I have seen how hands-on, project-based learning transforms student success, especially among underrepresented groups. VALA-NC is grounded in this philosophy through its 5A Framework (Active Learning, Adaptive Instruction, Accountable Systems, Authentic Experiences, and Accessible Education) which integrates project-based learning, AI-driven instruction, and character development to foster critical thinking, collaboration, and digital fluency. As a board member, I aim to apply evidence-based strategies from higher education to K–12 virtual learning, ensuring that all decisions uphold excellence, equity, and ethical integrity. My vision is for VALA-NC to become a statewide

	and national model of transformative, student-centered virtual education that prepares learners for college, careers, and responsible citizenship.
What is your understanding of the appropriate role of a public charter school board member?	A public charter school board member is responsible for governance, not management—focusing on mission, accountability, and long-term success rather than daily operations. The board provides strategic oversight by setting the school’s vision, values, and policies; ensuring academic excellence and fiscal integrity; and upholding ethical and transparent decision-making in the best interests of students and the community. Effective boards empower school leaders to manage operations while holding them accountable for measurable results. They monitor academic performance, financial health, and regulatory compliance to ensure the school meets its charter commitments. Successful boards remain mission-focused, clarify governance roles, practice data-driven accountability, and engage in continuous strategic planning. At VALA-NC, the board will apply these principles through the 5A Framework—ensuring that all policies and decisions align with Active Learning, Adaptive Instruction, Accountable Systems, Authentic Experiences, and Accessible Education—while maintaining sustainability, compliance, and mission fidelity.
Describe any previous experience you have that is relevant to serving on the charter school’s board (e.g., other board service). If you have not had previous experience of this nature, explain why you can be an effective board member.	I bring a combination of charter governance experience and academic leadership expertise. I previously served on the governing boards of Fulton Science Academy and Technology Enriched Accelerated Charter High School in Georgia, where I gained firsthand experience in policy development, compliance, and strategic oversight. In higher education, I served as Chair and Assistant Chair of the Department of Chemistry, Physics, and Materials Science at Fayetteville State University (2012–2020). During my tenure, I led the department through American Chemical Society (ACS) accreditation, a rigorous process that required the same level of strategic planning, compliance, and accountability expected of charter school boards. To achieve accreditation, we implemented major curricular improvements, including the creation of new courses, comprehensive updates to most existing courses, and the development of multiple concentrations within the B.S. in Chemistry program. Currently, as Director and Principal Investigator of the NSF-funded S8 Program, I oversee multi-year federal reporting, performance assessment, and budget management—skills that align directly with the

	fiscal, academic, and governance responsibilities of a high-performing charter school board.
Describe the specific knowledge and experience that you would bring to the board.	I bring a strong combination of STEM expertise, educational innovation, and institutional leadership. My experience includes implementing active learning models such as SCALE-UP (student-centered active learning environment with upside-down pedagogies), flipped learning, and team-based learning (TBL); successfully securing and managing major federal grants (NSF, NIH, DoD); and leading in curriculum design, program evaluation, and data-driven improvement. I am deeply committed to student mentoring, research integration, and advancing diversity in STEM education. These strengths will help VALA-NC build and sustain rigorous, student-centered programs that meet state standards and surpass accountability goals.

School Mission and Program

What is your understanding of the school's mission and guiding beliefs?	VALA-NC's mission is to deliver a high-quality, accessible virtual education that integrates active learning, project-based experiences, and AI-driven adaptive tools to prepare students for success in college, careers, and civic life. The school's guiding beliefs emphasize collaborative learning, academic and character development, equitable access for all students, and the integration of technology, creativity, and critical thinking to inspire lifelong learning. These values closely align with my own educational philosophy and the evidence-based, student-centered practices I have implemented at Fayetteville State University.

What is your understanding of the school’s proposed educational program?	The proposed VALA-NC educational program is a virtual, student-centered model grounded in active learning, flipped instruction, and project-based learning. Using digital platforms, AI-driven adaptive tools, and interactive collaboration, it personalizes instruction to meet each student’s learning pace and style. Students engage in core academics in the mornings and interdisciplinary, project-based applications in the afternoons, with Fridays dedicated to review and reflection. The curriculum integrates STEM disciplines, critical thinking, communication, and soft skills, aligning with research from <i>Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning</i>. Strategies such as retrieval practice, spaced repetition, interleaving, elaboration, and reflection are embedded throughout instruction to strengthen long-term understanding and learner independence. Guided by VALA-NC’s 5A Framework, the model reflects evidence-based best practices from higher education, reimagined for a dynamic, equitable, and student-centered K–12 virtual environment.
What do you believe to be the characteristics of a successful school?	A successful school unites purpose, people, and practice around a shared vision of student success. It demonstrates strong mission alignment and visionary leadership, ensuring that all actions reflect clear goals and values. Effective governance and fiscal responsibility provide stability and accountability, while data-driven decision-making supports continuous academic and operational improvement. A thriving school also promotes student engagement, achievement, and character development, nurturing curiosity, creativity, and compassion. Through positive community partnerships, it connects learning to real-world experiences and shared purpose. Ultimately, a successful school builds a caring and accountable culture that measures success not just by test scores, but by the growth of students as thoughtful, capable, and responsible citizens.

How will you know that the school is succeeding (or not) in its mission?	School success will be measured through multiple indicators reflecting academic achievement, engagement, and continuous improvement. Academic performance will be monitored through assessments, course completion, and growth data, ensuring equity across student groups. Engagement and retention rates will demonstrate a positive and inclusive virtual learning culture. Graduation, college acceptance, and job placement outcomes will highlight long-term student success supported by mentoring and career-readiness experiences. Stakeholder feedback from families, educators, and community partners will assess satisfaction and mission alignment. Growth in 21st-century skills—communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking—will further validate student development. Regular data reviews and accountability measures will ensure transparency, guide improvement, and sustain long-term excellence.

Governance

Describe the role that the board will play in the school's operation.	The board will act as the governing body responsible for ensuring strong leadership, accountability, and alignment with VALA-NC's mission. It will establish the school's strategic vision and policies within the 5A Framework to promote excellence, equity, and compliance. The board will hire, evaluate, and support the school leader, oversee financial management to ensure transparency and ethical stewardship, and monitor academic performance to drive continuous improvement. Additionally, it will engage families and community partners to strengthen collaboration and advocacy. By focusing on governance, accountability, and sustainability, the board will empower school leadership to handle daily operations while upholding high standards of performance and mission integrity.

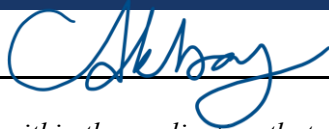
How will you know if the school is successful at the end of the first year of operation?	At the end of the first year, VALA-NC's success will be evaluated through key indicators of both academic and operational effectiveness. Meeting enrollment targets will demonstrate strong outreach and student retention, while building a cohesive, well-trained instructional team will confirm a solid foundation for sustainable learning. Evidence of student progress and engagement will validate the school's active, adaptive instructional model. Maintaining regulatory compliance and financial integrity will reflect effective governance, and positive feedback from students, families, and community partners will confirm satisfaction with the virtual learning experience. Together, these outcomes will show that VALA-NC's model is viable, scalable, and mission-driven, establishing a strong base for long-term success and community trust.
How will you know at the end of five years of the schools is successful?	By the end of five years, VALA-NC's success will be reflected through academic excellence, organizational strength, and a positive school culture. Students will show sustained academic growth across grade levels, meeting or exceeding state standards. High retention, graduation, and college acceptance rates, along with evidence of career readiness, will demonstrate the effectiveness of the school's personalized virtual model. Family and community satisfaction will validate engagement and trust, while state and external recognition will affirm overall performance. Continued financial stability and enrollment growth will indicate sound governance and sustainability, and a strong, character-driven culture will confirm mission alignment. By year five, VALA-NC aims to be recognized as a statewide model of innovative, equitable virtual STEM education that prepares students for college, careers, and responsible citizenship.

What specific steps will the charter school board need to take to ensure that the school is successful?	The board’s long-term success relies on mission-driven governance grounded in leadership, accountability, and community engagement. It must recruit and support a visionary school leader, establish clear governance and financial policies, and monitor performance through regular data review and evaluation. Maintaining transparent communication with families and stakeholders will build trust, while ongoing professional development will strengthen leadership capacity. The board will ensure fiscal responsibility through sound budgeting and audits and foster community partnerships to enhance learning and real-world connections. Ultimately, consistency, integrity, and mission alignment will sustain VALA-NC’s academic excellence and organizational stability.
How would you handle a situation in which you believe one or more members of the school’s board were acting unethically or not in the best interests of the school?	If I observed unethical behavior or actions contrary to the school’s mission, I would respond through a measured, transparent, and policy-driven process that upholds both integrity and due process. My first step would be to review the board’s Code of Ethics, Conflict of Interest policy, and bylaws to ensure a clear understanding of the standards and procedures governing such situations. I would then privately and respectfully raise my concerns with the Board Chair to seek clarification, context, or informal resolution. If the issue appeared to compromise the board’s integrity or persisted after initial discussion, I would formally report the concern through appropriate channels—such as the governance or ethics committee—and ensure it is documented in meeting minutes as required by policy. Throughout the process, I would maintain confidentiality, professionalism, and impartiality, ensuring that all actions align with state regulations, board policies, and best governance practices. My primary focus would remain on protecting the school’s integrity, upholding public trust, and ensuring that all decisions reflect the best interests of students, families, and the broader school community.

I, __Cevdet Akbay__, certify to the best of my knowledge and ability that the information I am providing to the North Carolina State Board of Education as a prospective board member for _Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina__ Charter School is true and correct in every respect.

Board Member's Signature

Signature



Date: November 8, 2025

**If you responded within the application that disciplinary action has been taken against any past or present professional licenses, provide a detailed response below outlining the disciplinary action and the license validity. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)*

KHALID MAHMUD LODHI, MPS, D.Sc.

Professor of Forensic Biology • Director, Forensic Science Program

Fayetteville State University • Fayetteville, NC • klodhi@uncfsu.edu • (910) 672-1650

SUMMARY

Experienced forensic biology professor and program director with 25+ years of international expertise in forensic DNA analysis, molecular biology, biochemistry, and forensic science education; Demonstrated strengths in academic leadership, curriculum development, forensic laboratory design, and mentoring students at all levels. Former forensic DNA scientist with extensive casework in homicides, sexual assaults, robberies, and cold cases, including expert witness testimony in U.S. courts. Strong record of peer-reviewed publications, competitive grant funding, and active participation in national and international forensic science conferences.

EDUCATION

D.Sc., Biological Sciences – Tokyo Institute of Technology (TIT), Japan

MPS, Food & Nutrition Planning – University of the Philippines

M.Sc., Biochemistry – University of Agriculture Faisalabad, Pakistan

B.Sc., Botany, Chemistry & Zoology – Government College Multan

Postgraduate Diploma, Biochemistry & Bioengineering – TIT, Japan

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Fayetteville State University | Fayetteville, NC (2006–Present)

Professor of Forensic Biology & Director, Forensic Science Program

- Built and expanded the university's forensic science program.
- Teach forensic biology, forensic science, genetics, and molecular biology.
- Lead recruitment, retention, curriculum development, and accreditation preparation.
- Acquire instrumentation; design and supervise forensic teaching and research labs.
- Mentor undergraduate, graduate, and high school researchers; advise Forensic Science Club.

Indianapolis Marion County Forensic Services Agency | Forensic Scientist (DNA) (2001–2006)

- Conducted forensic DNA casework for major violent crimes.
- Performed STR analysis, database comparisons, and CODIS submissions.
- Testified as an expert witness in superior courts.

ReliaGene Technologies, Inc. | Senior Scientist (2000–2001)

- Analyzed ~26,000 DNA samples for national database development supporting CODIS.

Postdoctoral & Research Roles | Thomas Jefferson University • East Carolina University • TIT Japan (1996–2000)

- Conducted research on gene regulation, receptor characterization, and molecular biology.

SELECT GRANTS & PUBLICATIONS

PI/Co-PI on multiple NSF awards totaling several million dollars, including AI education and forensic program enrichment. Author of 30+ peer-reviewed publications in forensic science, molecular biology, and biochemistry. Recent research includes forensic DNA degradation, AI applications in forensic science, and bed bug-based human DNA profiling.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Academy of Forensic Sciences • International Association for Identification • Southern Association of Forensic Scientists • Council of Forensic Science Educators

CORE COMPETENCIES

Forensic DNA Analysis • Forensic Education • Program Leadership • Laboratory Development • Curriculum Design • Research Mentorship • Grant Writing • Casework Interpretation • Expert Witness Testimony

Charter School Board Member Information Form

Note: To be completed individually by each proposed founding charter school board member. Please include a **one-page** resume with this form and sign by hand.

Serving on a public charter school board is a position of public trust and as a board member of a North Carolina public charter school; you are responsible for ensuring the quality of the school's entire program, competent stewardship of public funds, and the school's fulfillment of its public obligations and all terms of its charter.

As part of the application for a new charter school, the State Board of Education requests that each prospective board member respond individually to this questionnaire. Where narrative responses are required, brief responses are sufficient.

The purpose of this questionnaire is twofold: 1) to give application reviewers a clearer introduction to the applicant team behind each school proposal in advance of the applicant interview, in order to be better prepared for the interview; and 2) to encourage board members to reflect individually as well as collectively on their common mission, purposes, and obligations at the earliest stage of school development.

School Information

Name of charter school

Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA-NC)

Board Member's Information

Board Members

Full name: Khalid Mahmud Lodhi

Home Address: 631 Sppihaw Oaks Dr
Fuquay Varina, NC 27526.

Business Name & Address:
Department of Biological and Forensic Sciences, STB 322
Fayetteville State University
1200 Murchison Rd.
Fayetteville, NC 28301

Tel: (910) 672-1650
Email: klodhi@uncfsu.edu

Telephone No.: 1-910-672-1650 (work) 1-317-508-9016 (cell)

E-mail address: lodhi4@yahoo.com

Board Member Application

Have you previously served on a board of a school district, another charter school, a non-public school, or any non-profit corporation?

No: ☒ Yes: ☐

I have not previously served on a charter school or district board; however, I have extensive governance and advisory experience through service on professional and academic boards. I have served on the Editorial Board of the Journal of Forensic Research, the Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission (FEPAC) as an on-site evaluator, and advisory committees for the Fayetteville Police Department's Unresolved Homicide Project and Fayetteville Technical Community College's Criminal Justice Program. These roles required policy oversight, program evaluation, and compliance review—skills directly relevant to effective charter school governance.

Educational History

- **Doctor of Science (D.Sc.)**, Biological Sciences, *Tokyo Institute of Technology, Japan* (1996)
- **Postgraduate Diploma**, Biochemistry and Bioengineering, *Tokyo Institute of Technology, Japan* (1991)
- **Master of Professional Studies (M.P.S.)**, Food and Nutrition Planning, *University of the Philippines at Los Baños, Philippines* (1987)
- **Master of Science (M.Sc.)**, Biochemistry, *University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Pakistan* (1983)
- **Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.)**, Botany, Chemistry, and Zoology, *Government College, Multan, Pakistan* (1979)

	I have also been the recipient of several international fellowships and awards, including the Fulbright Specialist Award, Kenan Fellowship, UNESCO Fellowship, and Yoneyama Rotary Scholarship.
Employment History	• Professor & Director, Forensic Science Program, Fayetteville State University (FSU), 2016–present • Associate Professor & Director, Forensic Science Program, FSU, 2012–2016 • Assistant Professor & Director, Forensic Science Program, FSU, 2006–2012 • Forensic Scientist, Indianapolis Marion County Forensic Services Agency, 2001–2006 • Senior Scientist, ReliaGene Technologies, Inc., 2000–2001 • Postdoctoral Fellow, Thomas Jefferson University, 1998–2000 • Research Fellow, East Carolina University, 1996–1997 • Scientific Officer, National Institute of Health, Pakistan, 1984–1998 Throughout my career, I have combined teaching, research, and administrative leadership, including managing grant-funded programs and leading FSU’s forensic science program to national recognition.
How were you recruited to join this Board of Directors?	I was invited to join the VALA-NC Board of Directors by the school’s founding team because of my experience in STEM education, academic leadership, and program accreditation. My background in forensic science, curriculum development, and grant management complement the school’s vision for integrating rigorous academics with real-world learning. I was drawn to VALA-NC’s mission to transform virtual education through active learning, project-based instruction, and adaptive technologies that personalize student learning.
Why do you wish to serve on the board of the proposed charter school?	I am passionate about advancing STEM education and equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities for all students, regardless of background or location. Serving on the VALA-NC Board allows me to contribute to an innovative model that prepares students for both college and careers. I strongly support VALA-NC’s 5A Framework (Active Learning, Adaptive Instruction, Accountable Systems, Authentic Experiences, and Accessible Education) as it aligns with my belief that

	education should be student-centered, inquiry-driven, and connected to real-world problem solving.
What is your understanding of the appropriate role of a public charter school board member?	The role of a charter school board member is to govern rather than manage. The board is responsible for establishing the school's mission, vision, and policies, ensuring academic excellence, fiscal accountability, and measurable performance outcomes. Its primary function is to provide strategic oversight and direction. Board members are expected to uphold the highest ethical standards, make data-driven decisions, and ensure that every action taken serves the best interests of students and the broader community.
Describe any previous experience you have that is relevant to serving on the charter school's board (e.g., other board service). If you have not had previous experience of this nature, explain why you can be an effective board member.	While I have not served on a charter school board before, I bring substantial governance, compliance, and leadership experience from my work in higher education and professional organizations. I have served as an on-site evaluator for the Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission (FEPAC), a member of the Fayetteville Police Department's Unresolved Homicide Project Committee, and a member of the Fayetteville Technical Community College Criminal Justice Advisory Committee. These roles required adherence to standards, policy evaluation, and ethical oversight—skills that directly align with effective charter board governance.
Describe the specific knowledge and experience that you would bring to the board.	I bring more than twenty-five years of experience in forensic science, STEM education, and academic administration. My expertise includes curriculum design, program accreditation, faculty mentoring, and managing multimillion-dollar research grants from agencies such as the National Science Foundation and the North Carolina Biotechnology Center. I also have experience fostering collaborations between universities, law enforcement, and community organizations. This background equips me to contribute to data-driven decision-making, academic accountability, and community partnership development within the board.

Describe the role that the board will play in the school's operation.	The board will serve as the school's governing body, providing strategic leadership and oversight. Its primary responsibilities include defining the school's vision and policies, hiring and evaluating the school leader, maintaining fiscal oversight, monitoring academic performance, and ensuring compliance. The board will engage families and the community as partners while focusing on governance and accountability.
How will you know if the school is successful at the end of the first year of operation?	By the end of the first year, the school's success will be shown by meeting enrollment goals, building a strong teaching team, and showing clear signs of student learning. Staying financially stable, meeting all operational requirements, and receiving positive feedback from families and teachers will also confirm that the school is working well and staying true to its mission.
How will you know at the end of five years of the schools is successful?	After five years, success will be shown through steady academic growth, high retention and graduation rates, strong college and career outcomes, and state and community recognition. Continued financial stability and a collaborative, innovative school culture will confirm VALA-NC's lasting impact and excellence.
What specific steps will the charter school board need to take to ensure that the school is successful?	The board's main job is to choose and support a good school leader, set clear rules and goals for the school, and make sure everything is running smoothly, both in learning and in finances. The board should talk openly with teachers, parents, and the community and keep learning new ways to help the school improve. Most importantly, the board should always be honest, fair, and focused on helping students succeed so the school can stay strong and trusted.
How would you handle a situation in which you believe one or more members of the school's board were acting unethically or not in the best interests of the school?	If I noticed unethical behavior by a board member, I would address it thoughtfully and in line with official policies. I would start by reviewing the board's code of ethics and conflict-of-interest policy to confirm the proper procedures. Next, I would bring the concern privately to the board chair for clarification or resolution. If the issue remained unresolved, I would document the situation and report it through the appropriate channels, such as the governance committee. My main priority would be to protect the integrity and transparency of the board while ensuring that all decisions serve the best interests of the students and the school community.

What is your understanding of the school's mission and guiding beliefs?	I understand that VALA-NC's mission is to deliver an engaging, equitable, and high-quality virtual education that integrates active learning, project-based exploration, and adaptive technology to prepare students for higher education, professional success, and meaningful participation in society. The school emphasizes collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking while fostering both intellectual growth and ethical development. I strongly support this vision because it reflects my belief that effective education should not only build academic knowledge but also cultivate curiosity, responsibility, and the ability to apply learning to real-world challenges.
What is your understanding of the school's proposed educational program?	The school's program is designed around a student-centered virtual model that integrates active learning, flipped instruction, and project-based experiences. It combines synchronous instruction with self-paced adaptive learning tools to meet diverse student needs. This approach reflects the most effective methods identified in cognitive science and research-based learning, helping students build a deep understanding of concepts, foster creativity, and develop transferable skills.
What do you believe to be the characteristics of a successful school?	A successful school brings together its mission, people, and daily practices under a common vision focused on helping students succeed. It is guided by strong leadership, responsible governance, and sound financial management, with decisions driven by data and a commitment to continuous improvement. Ultimately, a successful school nurtures learners who are confident, compassionate, and well-prepared to thrive in life.
How will you know that the school is succeeding (or not) in its mission?	Success will be demonstrated through clear and measurable outcomes, including student progress, engagement, and retention, along with high graduation rates, strong college admissions results, and positive family feedback. The school's adherence to state performance and compliance standards will further reflect its effectiveness. In addition to quantitative measures, student reflections and teacher input will provide valuable insight into how well the school upholds its mission.

Certification

I, **Khalid M. Lodhi**, certify to the best of my knowledge and ability that the information I am providing to the North Carolina State Board of Education as a prospective board member for **Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina** Charter School is true and correct in every respect.

Board Member's Signature

Signature



Date: November 17, 2025

**If you responded within the application that disciplinary action has been taken against any past or present professional licenses, provide a detailed response below outlining the disciplinary action and the license validity. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)*

ALTROVISE S. PARKS

Fayetteville, NC • 910-527-9266 • altroviseparks@yahoo.com

Professional Summary

Transformational K–12 and higher education leader with over 15 years of experience enhancing student achievement, equity, and organizational change. Proven success in restorative justice facilitation, culturally responsive leadership, and program development. Dedicated to fostering inclusive, data-driven learning environments that prepare students for college, career, and life through innovation and community collaboration.

Professional Experience

Restorative Justice Facilitator | Gray's Creek Middle School | Hope Mills, NC | 2024–Present

- Lead school-wide restorative practices to reduce disciplinary incidents and foster accountability, belonging, and positive school culture. Partner with staff and families to implement trauma-informed, culturally responsive interventions and professional learning.

Graduate Assistant | Fayetteville State University | Fayetteville, NC | 2024–Present

- Support research, instruction, and program innovation in the School of Education & Leadership. Mentor graduate students and assist faculty with academic projects aligned to educational leadership and equity.

Principal | ICF Weekend/Summer School | Fayetteville, NC | 2022–Present

- Oversee academic and operational functions. Launched and directed the first full-time summer enrichment program (Pre-K–8), designing a curriculum that integrates academics, character development, and cultural identity.

Administrative Intern | Mac Williams Middle School | Fayetteville, NC | 2022–2023

- Supported school leadership in curriculum, PBIS implementation, teacher evaluations, and community engagement. Improved behavior management systems through data analysis and reflective professional development.

Elementary Instructor | Montclair Elementary School | Fayetteville, NC | 2017–2022

- Served as grade-level chair, leading data-driven instruction and collaborative planning. Enhanced student performance through differentiated teaching and family engagement efforts.

Higher Ed Instructor | FTCC & Miller-Motte College | Fayetteville, NC | 2012–2021

- Taught cosmetology sciences and career readiness courses. Developed instructional programs, supervised students, and assisted with accreditation preparation and curriculum enhancement.

Education

- Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), Educational Leadership — Fayetteville State University (Anticipated 2027)
- M.S.A., School Administration — Fayetteville State University, 2023
- M.A.T., Teaching — University of North Carolina at Pembroke, 2021
- B.A., Criminal Justice & Sociology — University of North Carolina at Pembroke, 2012
- Cosmetology Teacher Certification — Capri Cosmetology Institute, 2001

Charter School Board Member Information Form

Note: To be completed individually by each proposed founding charter school board member. Please include a **one-page** resume with this form and sign by hand.

Serving on a public charter school board is a position of public trust and as a board member of a North Carolina public charter school; you are responsible for ensuring the quality of the school's entire program, competent stewardship of public funds, and the school's fulfillment of its public obligations and all terms of its charter.

As part of the application for a new charter school, the State Board of Education requests that each prospective board member respond individually to this questionnaire. Where narrative responses are required, brief responses are sufficient.

The purpose of this questionnaire is twofold: 1) to give application reviewers a clearer introduction to the applicant team behind each school proposal in advance of the applicant interview, in order to be better prepared for the interview; and 2) to encourage board members to reflect individually as well as collectively on their common mission, purposes, and obligations at the earliest stage of school development.

School Information

Name of charter school	Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA-NC)

Board Member's Information

Board Members	Full name: Altrovis Shaunee' Parks
	Home Address: 6404 Whitehall Drive Fayetteville, NC 28303
	Business Name & Address:
	Telephone No.: 910 52-79266
	E-mail address: khadijahsexperience@gmail.com

Board Member Application

Have you previously served on a board of a school district, another charter school, a non-public school, or any non-profit corporation?

No: X

Yes: ☐

Educational History

- Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville, North Carolina, United States Doctor of Education (Anticipated May 2027)
- Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville, North Carolina, United States Master School Administration May 2023
- University of North Carolina at Pembroke, Pembroke, North Carolina, United States Master of Arts in Teaching May 2021
- University of North Carolina at Pembroke, Pembroke, North Carolina, United States Bachelor of Arts Criminal Justice May 2012
- University of North Carolina at Pembroke, Pembroke, North Carolina, United States Bachelor of Arts Sociology May 2012
- Capri Cosmetology Institute, Clifton, New Jersey, United States
- Cosmetology Teacher Instruction, May 2001

Employment History

- Gray's Creek Middle School, Hope Mills, North Carolina, United States Restorative Justice Facilitator, September 2024– Present
- Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville, North Carolina, United States Graduate Assistant, August 2024
- Islamic Center of Fayetteville, Fayetteville, North Carolina, United States Summer/Weekend School Principal, August 2022.
- Mac Williams Middle School, Fayetteville, North Carolina, United States Administrative Intern, July 2022- June 2023
- Montclair Elementary School, Fayetteville, North Carolina, United States Elementary School Instructor, Aug 2017- 2022
- Fayetteville Technical Community College, Fayetteville, North Carolina, United States Adjunct Instructor, Cosmetology Sciences and Continuing Education, June 2021

How were you recruited to join this Board of Directors?

I was invited to consider serving on the board by a community member familiar with my leadership experience in K-12 settings and commitment to equitable, student-centered learning environments.

Why do you wish to serve on the board of the proposed charter school?

I am passionate about expanding access to high-quality education and ensuring all students, regardless of background receive rigorous, culturally responsive instruction. Serving on the board allows me to

	contribute to shaping policy, governance, and community partnerships that promote academic excellence and inclusion.
What is your understanding of the appropriate role of a public charter school board member?	A board member provides governance, oversight, and strategic direction, ensuring the school remains mission-driven, fiscally responsible, and compliant with state and federal regulations without interfering in daily operations. The role emphasizes accountability, ethical leadership, and support for the school's administration and stakeholders.
Describe any previous experience you have that is relevant to serving on the charter school's board (e.g., other board service). If you have not had previous experience of this nature, explain why you can be an effective board member.	I currently serve as a Restorative Justice Facilitator and have held roles as a teacher, administrator resident, and graduate assistant in educational leadership. I have also served on school improvement and curriculum committees, gaining experience in policy development, budgeting, and program evaluation, all transferable to effective board governance.
Describe the specific knowledge and experience that you would bring to the board.	I bring expertise in school administration, instructional leadership, restorative practices, and culturally responsive education. My experience in data-driven decision-making, community engagement, and organizational change equips me to help guide strategic planning and ensure alignment between governance, mission, and student outcomes.

School Mission and Program

What is your understanding of the school's mission and guiding beliefs?	VALA-NC's mission represents a forward-thinking approach to education empowering students to create, think critically, and grow through purposeful, real-world learning enhanced by AI technology. I believe its guiding principles emphasize engagement, equity, and adaptability, ensuring every student can access a meaningful and personalized educational experience that prepares them for success in college, career, and life.

What is your understanding of the school's proposed educational program?	The program redefines virtual learning by integrating project-based and adaptive instruction to promote creativity, collaboration, and accountability. As an instructional leader, I value how it blends innovation with authentic experiences that connect learning to real-life applications. Its design reflects a culturally responsive framework that meets students where they are and supports them through personalized, technology-enhanced pathways to mastery.
What do you believe to be the characteristics of a successful school?	A successful school cultivates a culture of trust, inclusion, and continuous growth. It provides rigorous instruction, strong relationships, and restorative supports that nurture the whole child. When educators collaborate intentionally, students feel seen, heard, and motivated to succeed. Effective schools align their practices with their mission, balancing accountability with compassion and academic excellence with equity.
How will you know that the school is succeeding (or not) in its mission?	Success will be reflected in students' engagement, growth, and sense of belonging. I would look for measurable academic progress, strong participation in real-world and collaborative projects, and data showing equitable access and outcomes across student groups. Just as importantly, positive feedback from families and staff, along with evidence of a restorative, inclusive culture, would confirm that VALA-NC is fulfilling its mission to empower purposeful learners.

Governance

Describe the role that the board will play in the school's operation.	The board's role is to provide governance and strategic oversight, not daily management. It sets policy, ensures compliance with state and federal regulations, approves budgets, and monitors academic and organizational performance. The board supports the school's leadership team while maintaining accountability to the mission, vision, and community it serves.

How will you know if the school is successful at the end of the first year of operation?	Success in the first year would be evident through stable enrollment, effective instructional delivery, strong student engagement in virtual learning, and measurable academic growth. Additionally, establishing clear operational systems, positive stakeholder relationships, and a culture that reflects VALA-NC's mission would signal a strong foundation for future success.
How will you know at the end of five years if the school is successful?	By year five, success would be shown through sustained academic achievement, equitable student outcomes, financial stability, and strong stakeholder trust. The school's model should demonstrate innovation in virtual education and measurable impact in preparing students for college, career, and life; fulfilling the mission of active, purposeful learning and authentic student empowerment.
What specific steps will the charter school board need to take to ensure that the school is successful?	The board must establish clear governance policies, maintain fiscal responsibility, and regularly evaluate performance data. It should support the school leader through accountability and professional development while fostering community partnerships. Ongoing reflection on mission alignment, equity, and student outcomes will ensure long-term sustainability and growth.
How would you handle a situation in which you believe one or more members of the school's board were acting unethically or not in the best interests of the school?	I would address the concern professionally and in accordance with board policy, first by raising the issue privately with the board chair or governance committee. If necessary, I would recommend involving the full board or an external review to ensure transparency and adherence to ethical standards. My focus would remain on integrity, due process, and protecting the school's mission and reputation.

Certification

I, Altrovis S. Parks, certify to the best of my knowledge and ability that the information I am providing to the North Carolina State Board of Education as a prospective board member for Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA-NC) Charter School is true and correct in every respect.

Board Member's Signature

Signature

Altrovis S. Parks

Date 11/06/2025

NIZAR MASHAL

310 Ressler St., Holly Springs, NC 27540 USA • +1 (919) 899-9998 • nizar.mashal@gmail.com

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

My experience includes financial product development, structured finance, corporate restructuring, Merger & Acquisition, Initial Public Offering, Private Placement and due diligence in financial services, oil & gas, real estate and telecommunication.

EDUCATION

DUKE UNIVERSITY, The Fuqua School of Business Durham, NC
Master of Business Administration in Finance, Concentration in Finance 2018
GPA: 3.53, Weekend Executive MBA with 57 credits. I also audited 6 additional credits in Strategy.
Concentration courses; VC & PE, Corporate Restructuring, Corporate Finance, and Investment.

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF KUWAIT, AN AFFILIATE OF DARTMOUTH COLLEGE Kuwait
Business Administration in Finance, Minor in International Studies 2010
Cum Laude, Dean's List, Mission Review Committee, Founders' Award, Student Government
Association Leadership Award, Campus Service Award, Cooperation Club Founder.

KUWAIT UNIVERSITY Kuwait
Bachelor of Arts in Jurisprudence, Concentration in Islamic Business Jurisprudence 2009
GPA: 3.60, Honor List, the concentration delivers an understanding of means by which \$2+ trillion
industry conducts business, raises funds and invests in compliance with AAOIFI & IFSB Standards.

EXPERIENCE

QUANTUM METAL EXCHANGE INC, OTC: QMEI New York, NY
A bullion based fintech firm to empower people and businesses from upstream to downstream of the
precious metal industry through advanced technologies and cutting-edge corporate solutions. 2022 – Current
Chief Financial Officer

- Consolidating all financial reports for QMEI's subsidiaries.
- Leading the process of uplisting QMEI from OTC to Nasdaq.
- Managing financial planning and investors' relations as per the SEC.

RAQABA LLC, Cary, NC
Leading international provider of Islamic financial advisory services and Shari'ah audit. 2017 – Current
Director of Advisory Services

- Leading the engagement for establishing an Islamic Bank in Libya.
- Development of the Internal Shariah Audit Guide for MFIs for Afghanistan with the UNDP.
- Leading the development of AOIFFI's Certified Shariah Expert and Certified Shariah Auditor.
- Developed & audited real estate financing programs and ethical investment funds and ETFs.

AL MADINA FOR FINANCE AND INVESTMENT K.S.C.P., Corporate Finance & Investment Department Kuwait
Publicly-traded private equity firm in control of 7 public firms with \$1.25 B of AUM in financial services, 2013 – 2016
real estate development & contracting, telecom services, oil & gas, insurance and staffing services.
Deputy Manager, Registered with the Capital Markets Authority as a Corporate Finance Professional

- Completed an IPO in Dubai Financial Market, UAE.
- Prepared & executed five PPMs in Kuwait Stock Exchange for existing shareholders and creditors.
- Participated in five major acquisitions on three publicly listed firms and two privately held firms.

Financial Analyst Kuwait
2011 – 2013

- Participated in a debt-restructuring plan & negotiation to settle \$160+ MM.
- Conducted performance reviews on the group's operational units & subsidiaries.
- Delivered sector reviews, investment highlights and DCF valuation reports.

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION

Professional Executive Master in Islamic Finance 2015
General Council for Islamic Banks and Financial Institutions (CIBAFI), Bahrain.
Associate Value Specialist (AVS) 2013
Save International, USA.

Charter School Board Member Information Form

Note: To be completed individually by each proposed founding charter school board member. Please include a **one-page** resume with this form and sign by hand.

Serving on a public charter school board is a position of public trust and as a board member of a North Carolina public charter school; you are responsible for ensuring the quality of the school's entire program, competent stewardship of public funds, and the school's fulfillment of its public obligations and all terms of its charter.

As part of the application for a new charter school, the State Board of Education requests that each prospective board member respond individually to this questionnaire. Where narrative responses are required, brief responses are sufficient.

The purpose of this questionnaire is twofold: 1) to give application reviewers a clearer introduction to the applicant team behind each school proposal in advance of the applicant interview, in order to be better prepared for the interview; and 2) to encourage board members to reflect individually as well as collectively on their common mission, purposes, and obligations at the earliest stage of school development.

School Information

Name of charter school	Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA NC)

Board Member's Information

Board Members	Full name: Nezar Mashal
	Home Address: 310 Ressler St., Holly Springs, NC 27540
	Business Name & Address:
	Telephone No.: (919) 899-9998

	E-mail address: nizar.mashal@gmail.com

Board Member Application	
Have you previously served on a board of a school district, another charter school, a non-public school, or any non-profit corporation?	No: ☒ Yes: ☐ I have not previously served on the governing board of a school district, charter school, or non-public school. However, I have served in senior leadership roles within financial, advisory, and corporate organizations, where I regularly worked with executive committees, oversight bodies, and regulatory institutions. These experiences have strengthened my ability to contribute effectively to board governance and strategic decision-making.
Educational History	• Master of Business Administration (MBA), Finance Concentration, Duke University – Fuqua School of Business (2018) • Bachelor of Business Administration, Major in Finance, Minor in International Studies, American University of Kuwait (2010) • Bachelor of Arts in Jurisprudence, Islamic Business Law, Kuwait University (2009) • Professional Executive Master in Islamic Finance, CIBAFI (2015) • Associate Value Specialist (AVS) Certification, SAVE International (2013)
Employment History	• Chief Financial Officer, Quantum Metal Exchange Inc. (USA): 2022–Present (Oversees consolidated financial reporting, investor relations, SEC-compliant financial planning, and leads efforts to uplist the company from OTC to Nasdaq) • Director of Advisory Services, Raqaba LLC (USA): 2017–Present (Leads major international engagements in Islamic finance, develops Shariah audit guides, designs certification programs, and supports the establishment of Islamic banks)

	• Deputy Manager, Corporate Finance, Al Madina for Finance & Investment (Kuwait): 2013–2016 (Managed corporate finance functions for a publicly traded private equity firm, led IPO work, prepared PPMs, and conducted acquisition and due-diligence projects) • Corporate Finance Analyst, Al Madina for Finance and Investment (Kuwait): 2011–2013 (Participated in debt-restructuring negotiations, conducted performance and sector analyses, and delivered valuation reports)
How were you recruited to join this Board of Directors?	I was invited to join the VALA NC Board based on my financial expertise, leadership background, and commitment to community development. My experience in financial planning, governance structures, and organizational compliance positioned me as someone who could contribute meaningfully to a new charter school. I joined out of interest in supporting a mission-driven educational initiative that empowers North Carolina students.
Why do you wish to serve on the board of the proposed charter school?	I believe in expanding access to high-quality, innovative education, especially models that prepare students for real-world challenges. With my background in finance, strategic planning, and organizational leadership, I am motivated to help VALA NC build a strong, sustainable foundation. Serving on the board allows me to contribute to a school that fosters academic excellence, digital fluency, equity, and future-oriented learning.
What is your understanding of the appropriate role of a public charter school board member?	A charter school board member is responsible for governance, which includes: • Setting mission, vision, and policies • Ensuring academic and financial accountability • Overseeing the school leader • Maintaining transparency, ethical practices, and compliance with state and federal laws The board must focus on long-term sustainability while empowering the school administration to carry out day-to-day operations.
Describe any previous experience you have that is relevant to serving on the charter school's board (e.g., other board service). If	While I have not previously served on a school board, I have extensive experience in:

you have not had previous experience of this nature, explain why you can be an effective board member.	• Financial oversight and reporting • Corporate governance and regulatory compliance • Strategic planning • Risk management • Organizational restructuring and scaling These responsibilities parallel the functions of a charter school board, and they equip me to contribute effectively to the governance and long-term direction of VALA NC.
Describe the specific knowledge and experience that you would bring to the board.	I bring: • Expertise in financial planning, budgeting, and reporting • Experience in corporate governance and regulatory compliance • Skills in strategic decision-making and organizational growth • Background in Islamic finance, ethical investing, and community development • Strong analytical abilities applicable to academic and operational data review These strengths support effective board governance and responsible stewardship of public resources.

School Mission and Program	
What is your understanding of the school's mission and guiding beliefs?	I understand that VALA NC is committed to providing an equitable, innovative virtual education that emphasizes active learning, personalized instruction, technology-enhanced engagement, strong academic foundations in STEM, and character development and community connection. The school aims to prepare students for college, careers, and responsible citizenship.

What is your understanding of the school’s proposed educational program?	The educational program integrates: • Active and project-based learning • Adaptive, technology-supported instruction • STEM-focused coursework • Workplace-relevant skills • Interdisciplinary, inquiry-driven activities • Continuous assessment and reflection This model allows students to learn at their own pace while building essential academic and life skills needed for the 21st century.
What do you believe to be the characteristics of a successful school?	A successful school demonstrates: • Strong leadership and mission alignment • Effective teaching and meaningful student engagement • Academic growth and positive behavioral outcomes • Transparent governance and financial responsibility • Safe, inclusive learning environments • Strong family and community relationships Such schools help students develop academically, emotionally, and socially.
How will you know that the school is succeeding (or not) in its mission?	The school’s success can be assessed through: • Academic performance and growth metrics • Student engagement, attendance, and retention • Family, staff, and community satisfaction • Financial health and regulatory compliance • Progress toward college, career, and skill-readiness goals • Alignment with the school’s mission Declines in these areas would indicate a need for corrective action.

Governance

Describe the role that the board will play in the school's operation.	The board will: • Set mission, vision, and strategic direction • Approve and monitor policies • Oversee academic and financial performance • Hire and evaluate the school leader • Ensure compliance with state and federal requirements • Build community partnerships • Maintain ethical governance The board governs, while the school leader manages daily operations.
How will you know if the school is successful at the end of the first year of operation?	Success in Year 1 includes: • Meeting enrollment targets • Establishing a strong leadership and instructional team • Demonstrating early academic progress and engagement • Maintaining compliance and sound operations • Achieving positive family and staff satisfaction These indicators show that the foundational systems are working.
How will you know at the end of five years of the schools is successful?	After five years, school success will be demonstrated by: • Sustained academic growth • High student retention and graduation rates • Strong college and career readiness outcomes • Financial strength and clean audits • Community confidence and partnerships • State recognition for performance By this stage, VALA NC should be a model for high-quality virtual STEM education.
What specific steps will the charter school board need to take to ensure that the school is successful?	The board must: • Hire and support a strong school leader • Establish clear governance and accountability systems • Monitor academic and financial performance • Maintain transparency and communication • Uphold ethical standards • Build community partnerships • Engage in continuous improvement These actions create stability and long-term growth.

How would you handle a situation in which you believe one or more members of the school's board were acting unethically or not in the best interests of the school?	If I observed unethical behavior, I would: 1. Review the school's ethics and conflict-of-interest policies 2. Address the issue privately with the board chair 3. Document and report the concern to the appropriate committee if unresolved 4. Ensure the process is confidential, fair, and compliant with policies and laws My priority would always be protecting the integrity of the board and acting in the best interests of the students and community.

Certification

I, **NIZAR MASHAL**, certify to the best of my knowledge and ability that the information I am providing to the North Carolina State Board of Education as a prospective board member for **VIRTUAL ACTIVE LEARNING ACADEMY OF NORTH CAROLINA** Charter School is true and correct in every respect.

Board Member's Signature

Signature



Date: 12/12/2025

**If you responded within the application that disciplinary action has been taken against any past or present professional licenses, provide a detailed response below outlining the disciplinary action and the license validity. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)*

ABDELILAH CHOUKRI

Executive Director | Data, Risk & Governance Leadership, Charlotte, NC
choukri.2006@gmail.com | 919-357-2525

Professional Summary

Executive Director with over 10 years of experience leading enterprise-scale data, risk, and governance platforms in highly regulated environments. Proven leader in accountability, financial stewardship, and performance oversight. Actively engaged in nonprofit and community organizations supporting youth development, mentorship, and family engagement

Professional Experience

Wells Fargo – Corporate & Investment Banking

Executive Director | Chief Data & Risk Platforms Leader (2015 – Present)

- Lead enterprise platforms supporting Market Risk, Capital, Stress Testing, and Regulatory Reporting.
- Provide governance oversight for board-visible initiatives requiring transparency and execution discipline.
- Partner with senior leaders to ensure responsible stewardship of complex systems.
- Oversee data quality, controls, operational resilience, and performance measurement at scale.

Selected Impact

- Led initiatives addressing ~\$700M in Stress VaR exposure through improved risk modeling and governance.
- Founder and owner of RFDM, enabling transparent, auditable, and scalable data oversight.
- Contributor to Tier-1 regulatory programs including Enhanced Market Risk, SA-CCR, and FRTB.

Board & Community Involvement

- Active contributor to NAFIS and Pillars, nonprofit organizations focused on youth development and mentorship.
- Experience in mission-driven leadership and community accountability.

Core Competencies

Governance & Oversight | Financial Stewardship | Data-Driven Performance | Risk Management | Digital Platforms | Community Engagement

Education

Bachelor of Science – Computer Technologies, Excelsior University (2016)

Bachelor of Science – Mathematics, Morocco (2008)

Lean Six Sigma Green Belt – Merck (2014)

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The purpose of this questionnaire is twofold: 1) to give application reviewers a clearer introduction to the applicant team behind each school proposal in advance of the applicant interview, in order to be better prepared for the interview; and 2) to encourage board members to reflect individually as well as collectively on their common mission, purposes, and obligations at the earliest stage of school development.

School Information

Name of charter school

Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA-NC)

Board Member's Information

Board Members

Full name: **Abdelilah Choukri**

Home Address: **6100 Underwood Ave. Charlotte NC 28213.**

Business Name & Address: **Wells Fargo – Corporate & Investment Banking**
550 S Tryon St. Charlotte NC 28202

Telephone No.: **919-357-2525**

	E-mail address: choukri.2006@gmail.com

Board Member Application	
Have you previously served on a board of a school district, another charter school, a non-public school, or any non-profit corporation?	No: ☐ Yes: ☒
Educational History	• B.S. in Computer Technologies, Excelsior University (2016) • B.S. in Mathematics (2008)
Employment History	• Executive Director, Corporate & Investment Banking – Wells Fargo (2015–Present) • Over 10 years leading enterprise data, risk, and governance platforms supporting capital, stress testing, and regulatory oversight
How were you recruited to join this Board of Directors?	I was invited to join the board through community and education-focused networks aligned with VALA NC’s mission.
Why do you wish to serve on the board of the proposed charter school?	I wish to serve because I strongly believe in expanding equitable access to high-quality education through innovative virtual models that are accountable,

	inclusive, and grounded in strong governance. VALA NC's statewide reach and learner-centered approach align closely with my professional and community values
What is your understanding of the appropriate role of a public charter school board member?	A charter school board member is responsible for governance, not day-to-day operations. This includes setting strategic direction, ensuring academic quality, overseeing financial stewardship of public funds, holding school leadership accountable, and ensuring compliance with all charter, legal, and ethical obligations
Describe any previous experience you have that is relevant to serving on the charter school's board (e.g., other board service). If you have not had previous experience of this nature, explain why you can be an effective board member.	My professional role requires board-level accountability, regulatory oversight, and stewardship of large-scale, high-impact systems in highly regulated environments. Additionally, my nonprofit involvement with NAFIS and Pillars has provided hands-on experience in governance, community engagement, and mission-driven leadership. These experiences equip me to be an effective and responsible charter school board member
Describe the specific knowledge and experience that you would bring to the board.	• Governance and accountability frameworks • Data-driven oversight and performance measurement • Financial and operational risk management • Scalable digital and technology platforms • Community engagement and family-centered transparency

School Mission and Program	
What is your understanding of the school's mission and guiding beliefs?	VALA NC's mission is to redefine virtual education by providing accessible, high-quality, and engaging learning experiences for students across North Carolina, regardless of geography or circumstance, grounded in active learning, accountability, and inclusion
What is your understanding of the school's proposed educational program?	VALA NC offers a statewide K–12 virtual model that combines daily live instruction, AI-powered adaptive learning, project-based experiences, strong advisory and SEL supports, and real-time mastery-based progress monitoring, aligned with the VALA 5A Learning Framework

What do you believe to be the characteristics of a successful school?	A successful school demonstrates strong academic outcomes, student engagement, family trust, effective educators, sound governance, fiscal responsibility, and a culture of belonging and continuous improvement
How will you know that the school is succeeding (or not) in its mission?	Success will be measured through student mastery and growth data, engagement metrics, family and student feedback, retention, graduation outcomes, and the school's ability to serve diverse learners equitably across the state

Governance

Describe the role that the board will play in the school's operation.	The board will provide governance and oversight across academics, finance, compliance, leadership performance, and strategic planning, while empowering school leadership to manage daily operations effectively
How will you know if the school is successful at the end of the first year of operation?	By evaluating early academic progress, enrollment stability, operational readiness, financial controls, family satisfaction, and the successful execution of the school's instructional and support models
How will you know at the end of five years of the schools is successful?	By sustained academic outcomes, strong governance practices, financial sustainability, positive community impact, consistent compliance, and evidence that the model can scale responsibly while maintaining quality.
What specific steps will the charter school board need to take to ensure that the school is successful?	• Establish clear goals and success metrics • Hire and support strong school leadership • Monitor academic and financial performance regularly • Ensure transparency and compliance • Make timely, data-informed course corrections when needed
How would you handle a situation in which you believe one or more members of the school's board were acting unethically or not in the best interests of the school?	I would address the issue promptly through established governance processes, ensure facts are clearly understood, involve appropriate oversight bodies if necessary, and prioritize the best interests of the school, students, and public trust

Certification

I, **Abdelilah Choukri** , certify to the best of my knowledge and ability that the information I am providing to the North Carolina State Board of Education as a prospective board member for **Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA-NC)** Charter School is true and correct in every respect.

Board Member's Signature

Signature

أ. شكري

Date

12-22-2025

**If you responded within the application that disciplinary action has been taken against any past or present professional licenses, provide a detailed response below outlining the disciplinary action and the license validity.*

Ana Claudia Lemes da Silva, PhD

Email: acraeder@gmail.com • Phone: (919)721-5095 • Oakland Township, MI • LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ana-claudia-lemes-da-silva-0345a633>

Education

PhD, Analytical Chemistry

MS, Analytical Chemistry

BS, Industrial Chemistry

BS, Chemistry Education

University of Campinas (UNICAMP), Brazil

Professional Experience

Chemistry Instructor – Online & On-Campus

Multiple Higher Education Institutions | 2000–Present

- Teach introductory and advanced chemistry courses in both traditional and online settings.
- Design curriculum that supports conceptual understanding, real-world application, and scientific literacy.
- Develop digital instructional materials, assessments, and multimedia content to enhance student engagement.
- Implement student-centered instructional strategies that promote critical thinking, inquiry, and problem-solving.
- Mentor students from diverse backgrounds and support their academic success through individualized feedback and guidance.

Online Curriculum & Course Designer

Higher Education Programs

- Create online science courses using best practices in instructional design and accessibility.
 - Integrate interactive tools, simulations, and visual resources to support multiple learning modalities.
 - Collaborate with faculty teams to align course objectives, assessments, and accreditation standards.
-

Skills

- Curriculum Development & Instructional Design
 - Online Teaching & Learning Technologies
 - Student-Centered Pedagogy
 - Program Assessment & Continuous Improvement
 - Equity-Focused Educational Practices
 - Data-Driven Decision Making
 - Science Communication
 - Collaborative Leadership
-

Professional Interests

• Educational equity • STEM curriculum innovation • Teacher development • Community engagement • Responsible use of AI in education

Charter School Board Member Information Form

Note: To be completed individually by each proposed founding charter school board member. Please include a **one-page** resume with this form and sign by hand.

Serving on a public charter school board is a position of public trust and as a board member of a North Carolina public charter school; you are responsible for ensuring the quality of the school's entire program, competent stewardship of public funds, and the school's fulfillment of its public obligations and all terms of its charter.

As part of the application for a new charter school, the State Board of Education requests that each prospective board member respond individually to this questionnaire. Where narrative responses are required, brief responses are sufficient.

The purpose of this questionnaire is twofold: 1) to give application reviewers a clearer introduction to the applicant team behind each school proposal in advance of the applicant interview, in order to be better prepared for the interview; and 2) to encourage board members to reflect individually as well as collectively on their common mission, purposes, and obligations at the earliest stage of school development.

School Information

Name of charter school	Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA-NC)

Board Member's Information

Board Members	Full name: Ana Claudia Lemes da Silva
	Home Address: 2668 Invitational Dr., Oakland Township, Michigan, 48363
	Business Name & Address:
	Telephone No.: (919) 721-5095
	E-mail address: acraeder@gmail.com

Board Member Application

Have you previously served on a board of a school district, another charter school, a non-public school, or any non-profit corporation?	No: ☒ Yes: ☐
Educational History	Unicamp - São Paulo - Brazil - Bachelor's in Chemistry - 1997 Unicamp - São Paulo - Brazil - Bachelor's in Chemistry Education - 1998 Unicamp - São Paulo - Brazil - Master's in Analytical Chemistry - 2001 Unicamp - São Paulo - Brazil - PhD in Analytical Chemistry - 2006
Employment History	North Carolina State University - Visiting Scholar 2007 - 2008 Fayetteville State University - Adjunct Instructor - 2015 - present North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics - Faculty - 2021 Herzing University - Instructor - 2022 - present
How were you recruited to join this Board of Directors?	I was invited to join the board based on my experience in online Chemistry Education. I believe in the charter school educational philosophy and its commitment to providing students with access to high-quality learning opportunities.
Why do you wish to serve on the board of the proposed charter school?	To help create conditions for the school to thrive, ensuring that the school remains aligned with its mission, providing students with high-quality, equitable education, while pursuing continuous improvement.
How were you recruited to join this Board of Directors?	Click or tap here to enter text.

Why do you wish to serve on the board of the proposed charter school?	Click or tap here to enter text.
What is your understanding of the appropriate role of a public charter school board member?	Help maintain the school’s mission by providing leadership and support to the school staff and its students.
Describe any previous experience you have that is relevant to serving on the charter school’s board (e.g., other board service). If you have not had previous experience of this nature, explain why you can be an effective board member.	Even though I have not previously served on a charter school board, I bring a strong combination of professional expertise, educational experience, and a commitment to student-centered decision-making.
Describe the specific knowledge and experience that you would bring to the board.	My experience in online education has given me deep insight into curriculum development and the creation of high-quality instructional materials to support diverse learners.

School Mission and Program	
What is your understanding of the school’s mission and guiding beliefs?	Enable students to create, think critically, and grow through real-life projects, creating meaningful learning that will empower them in future endeavors.
What is your understanding of the school’s proposed educational program?	Present learners with a program to build strong foundations through active learning, adaptive instruction, and authentic experiences.
What do you believe to be the characteristics of a successful school?	An organization that cultivates a safe, inclusive, and academically rigorous environment where every student can grow and thrive. It equips learners with skills, knowledge, and experience to succeed in the real world.
How will you know that the school is succeeding (or not) in its mission?	Based on the academic performance of students, parent satisfaction, and, when applicable, feedback from future employers and colleges.

Governance

Describe the role that the board will play in the school's operation.	Provide oversight and governance, ensuring that the school remains aligned with its mission and accountable.
How will you know if the school is successful at the end of the first year of operation?	Students and parents' engagement and feedback. Students performance.
How will you know at the end of five years of the schools is successful?	Students' engagement, attendance, and performance. Review of the school's five-year plan.
What specific steps will the charter school board need to take to ensure that the school is successful?	The school will need a solid curriculum, committed and capable instructors, and offer the minimal resources for each learner to succeed.
How would you handle a situation in which you believe one or more members of the school's board were acting unethically or not in the best interests of the school?	I would gather relevant facts and present them to the board for discussion and understanding.

Certification

I, Ana Claudia Lemes da Silva, certify to the best of my knowledge and ability that the information I am providing to the North Carolina State Board of Education as a prospective board member for Virtual Active Learning Academy Charter School is true and correct in every respect.

Board Member's Signature

Signature	<i>Ana Claudia Lemes da Silva</i>	Date	<i>12/06/2025</i>

**If you responded within the application that disciplinary action has been taken against any past or present professional licenses, provide a detailed response below outlining the disciplinary action and the license validity. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)*

HALIL I. DEMIR

Executive Director • Humanitarian Leader • Nonprofit Strategist

Palos Heights, IL • 708-289-7709 • halil@zakat.org

SUMMARY

Forward-thinking nonprofit executive with over 20 years of global leadership experience in humanitarian aid, strategic planning, and organizational development. As Executive Director of the Zakat Foundation of America (ZFA), successfully expanded the organization's annual revenue from \$200K to \$30M by 2025, established international operations across 50 countries, and built a diverse global donor base of more than 50,000 supporters. Widely recognized for operational excellence, crisis-response leadership, community mobilization, media engagement, and pioneering the strategic use of zakat as a catalyst for sustainable social change. Fluent in six languages (Arabic, English, German, Persian, Kurdish, and Turkish) and currently pursuing a Ph.D. focused on innovative models for tuition-free higher education.

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Candidate, Education – University of Vienna, Austria

Executive Leadership Certificate – Harvard University

Master of Nonprofit Management – North Park University

M.A., History – Chicago State University

B.A., Sociology – University of Basel, Switzerland

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Executive Director - Zakat Foundation of America (ZFA), Chicago, IL | 2002–Present

- Founded ZFA and expanded it from zero staff and zero capital to a \$20M global nonprofit with 100 employees, thousands of volunteers, 1M+ social media followers, and programs on five continents.
- Built national and international strategies, establishing 8 U.S. offices and 50-country operations with direct implementation and partner-based models.
- Led crisis response initiatives, including a COVID-19 nationwide network distributing 5 million pounds of food through 65+ partner organizations.
- Directed large-scale humanitarian programs: refugee support, mental health services, education, disaster relief, food assistance, and sustainable development.
- Spearheaded creation of Zahra University for Syrian refugees, the Khalil Center (largest Muslim mental health provider in the U.S.), Rohingya Culture Center, and the Zakat Foundation Institute for nonprofit leadership.
- Served as public spokesperson, meeting U.S. and international officials and securing major media coverage (NPR, Al Jazeera English, TRT World).
- Led policy development, budgeting, donor engagement, and organizational restructuring; contributed to ZFA's 10-year streak of 4/4 Charity Navigator ratings.
- Recognized by Harvard University as a "Change Leader During Crisis" for nationwide food distribution strategy.
- Published works include *The Zakat Handbook* and *9 Myths About Muslim Charities*.

CORE COMPETENCIES

Organizational Leadership • Fundraising and Donor Relations • Strategic Planning • Budget and Operations Management • Public Speaking • Media and Press Relations • Community Mobilization • Program Development • Nonprofit Governance • Policy Development • Project Management

Charter School Board Member Information Form

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Serving on a public charter school board is a position of public trust and as a board member of a North Carolina public charter school; you are responsible for ensuring the quality of the school's entire program, competent stewardship of public funds, and the school's fulfillment of its public obligations and all terms of its charter.

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The purpose of this questionnaire is twofold: 1) to give application reviewers a clearer introduction to the applicant team behind each school proposal in advance of the applicant interview, in order to be better prepared for the interview; and 2) to encourage board members to reflect individually as well as collectively on their common mission, purposes, and obligations at the earliest stage of school development.

School Information

Name of charter school	Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA-NC)

Board Member's Information

Board Members	Full name: Halil I. Demir
	Home Address: 10406 W. 134 Street, Palos Park, Illinois, 60464
	Business Name & Address: 7421 W 100th Place Bridgeview, IL 60455
	Telephone No.: (708) 289 7709

	E-mail address: halil@zakat.com

Board Member Application	
Have you previously served on a board of a school district, another charter school, a non-public school, or any non-profit corporation?	No: ☐ Yes: ☒ Yes. I have served on the boards of several nonprofit organizations, including the YMCA and other community-serving and justice-focused nonprofits. Much of my career has involved nonprofit governance, strategic planning, and organizational leadership through my role as Executive Director of the Zakat Foundation of America.
Educational History	• Ph.D. Candidate in Education, University of Vienna • Executive Leadership Certificate, Harvard University • Master of Nonprofit Management, North Park University • M.A. in History, Chicago State University • B.A. in Sociology, University of Basel, Switzerland My academic training spans leadership, nonprofit management, social sciences, and global education.
Employment History	I currently serve as the Executive Director of the Zakat Foundation of America (ZFA), a position I have held since 2002. During my tenure, ZFA has grown from a small startup to a global humanitarian organization operating in 50 countries with about \$30 million budget. My work includes overseeing international programs, financial management, education initiatives, community engagement, and building sustainable institutions such as Zahra University and the Rohingya Culture Center. Before joining ZFA, I held leadership roles in various nonprofit and community organizations in both Europe and the United States.

How were you recruited to join this Board of Directors?	I was invited to join the VALA-NC founding board by its initiators, who sought individuals with experience in building and managing nonprofit organizations, educational programs, and community-centered initiatives. Because I have helped establish and lead educational institutions around the world, I was identified as someone who could contribute strong governance, strategic insight, and community partnerships to the founding board.
Why do you wish to serve on the board of the proposed charter school?	I am committed to expanding access to high-quality education, especially for underserved and underrepresented communities. Much of my life's work has focused on creating educational opportunities for refugee youth, vulnerable families, and communities around the world. VALA-NC's mission (grounded in equity, innovation, and active learning) aligns with my belief that education must uplift and empower students. Serving on the board enables me to support a school that provides young people with genuine opportunities to succeed academically, personally, and professionally.
What is your understanding of the appropriate role of a public charter school board member?	To bring the best education to the communities. Drawing on my experience in nonprofit leadership, I understand that the board must provide strong oversight, monitor performance data, and maintain ethical and transparent operations at all times. The board supports the school leader by offering guidance and holding them accountable to measurable goals, while refraining from involvement in day-to-day management. Above all, the board must act in the best interests of students, families, and the broader community the school is designed to serve.
Describe any previous experience you have that is relevant to serving on the charter school's board (e.g., other board service). If you have not had previous experience of this nature, explain why you can be an effective board member.	For more than 20 years, I have led a global nonprofit organization, managed multi-million-dollar budgets, and overseen international educational, vocational, and social service programs. I have founded schools, mental health centers, youth programs, and a refugee-led university. I have also served on nonprofit boards and collaborated with governments, community leaders, and partner institutions. These experiences have equipped me with strong skills in governance, accountability, financial oversight, strategic planning, and community engagement, skills directly applicable to charter school board service.

Describe the specific knowledge and experience that you would bring to the board.	I bring: • Deep experience in nonprofit leadership and financial stewardship • A long history of creating and sustaining educational programs around the world • Skills in strategic planning, policy development, and accountability systems • Expertise in community engagement and multicultural collaboration • Experience working with vulnerable, diverse, and underserved populations • A strong understanding of organizational growth, ethics, and transparency These strengths will help ensure the board operates responsibly, effectively, and in alignment with its mission.

School Mission and Program	
What is your understanding of the school's mission and guiding beliefs?	As someone who has spent decades building educational and community programs for diverse and underserved populations around the world, I appreciate the school's commitment to equity, innovation, and opportunity for every student. VALA-NC aims to prepare learners not only for college and careers, but also for meaningful service and leadership within their communities. The model uses technology as a tool to personalize learning, promote collaboration, and expand access, while emphasizing academic rigor, inclusion, and real-world relevance. This approach aligns closely with my belief that education should uplift students, strengthen communities, and open doors to a better future.

What is your understanding of the school's proposed educational program?	The school's educational model emphasizes active, project-based learning supported by inquiry, collaboration, and adaptive technologies that personalize instruction for each student. It integrates STEM with real-world problem solving, character development, and global awareness—values that align closely with my extensive experience in humanitarian service, education, and nonprofit leadership. By combining flipped instruction, teamwork, and continuous reflection, the program helps students build strong academic foundations as well as essential life skills such as resilience, compassion, and critical thinking, preparing them for success in college, careers, and community engagement.
What do you believe to be the characteristics of a successful school?	A successful school has strong mission-driven leadership, responsible governance, and transparent financial practices. It builds strong relationships with families and the community, uses data to improve continuously, and shows positive growth in student learning, character, and opportunity.
How will you know that the school is succeeding (or not) in its mission?	Success will be measured through strong student academic growth, high engagement and retention, positive feedback from families and staff, and consistent financial stability and compliance. Additional indicators include progress toward college and career readiness and clear alignment with the school's mission and guiding principles. If these measures decline or are not met, it would signal that the school is not fully succeeding and that strategic improvements are needed.

Governance

Describe the role that the board will play in the school's operation.	The board sets the school's mission and long-term direction, approves key policies, and oversees both academic performance and financial stability. It hires, evaluates, and supports the school leader, ensuring compliance with all charter and legal requirements. The board also advocates for the school and strengthens community partnerships.

How will you know if the school is successful at the end of the first year of operation?	First-year success will be shown by meeting enrollment goals, building a strong instructional team, demonstrating early student learning, earning positive family and staff feedback, maintaining full compliance, and creating a supportive school culture. Together, these indicators confirm that the school's model is working and ready to grow.
How will you know at the end of five years of the schools is successful?	After five years, success will be evident through strong academic growth, high retention and graduation rates, positive community reputation, financial stability, and state recognition for meeting performance goals, showing that the school has become a model for virtual STEM education.
What specific steps will the charter school board need to take to ensure that the school is successful?	To ensure the school's long-term success, the board must hire and support a strong school leader and regularly monitor academic and financial performance. Transparency with families and stakeholders, ongoing professional development, and meaningful community partnerships are essential. By upholding ethical standards and staying mission-focused, the board can create a stable, inclusive, and high-impact learning environment aligned with my lifelong commitment to service and community-building.
How would you handle a situation in which you believe one or more members of the school's board were acting unethically or not in the best interests of the school?	If I believed a board member was acting unethically, I would follow a professional, policy-driven process: first reviewing the board's ethics and conflict-of-interest policies, then discussing the concern privately with the board chair, and, if needed, formally documenting and reporting it through the proper committee. I would ensure the matter is handled confidentially, transparently, and in full compliance with state law and board bylaws, always prioritizing the integrity of the school and the best interests of students and the community.

Certification

I, Hal I. Demir, certify to the best of my knowledge and ability that the information I am providing to the North Carolina State Board of Education as a prospective board member for VALA-NC Charter School is true and correct in every respect.

Board Member's Signature

Signature

Hal I. Demir

Date

11/25/2025

**If you responded within the application that disciplinary action has been taken against any past or present professional licenses, provide a detailed response below outlining the disciplinary action and the license validity. Click or tap here to enter text.*

GENELL RASHAD

Psychological Services Coordinator

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Licensed mental health professional with over 15 years of experience providing clinical, forensic, and supervisory psychological services in correctional, court-ordered, and inpatient settings. Demonstrated leadership in behavioral health program coordination, crisis management, staff supervision, and risk assessment. Strong background in ethics, compliance, evaluation, and evidence-based practice.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

Psychological Services Coordinator, Lumberton CI Hub, Lumberton, NC, October 2024 - Present

Provide direct clinical psychological services, including mental health triage and screening, crisis intervention and management, comprehensive mental health assessments, treatment planning, case consultations with custody and nursing staff, psychological testing, and restrictive housing reviews and evaluations. Serve as a front-line supervisor, providing both administrative and clinical supervision to Behavioral Health staff at the facility. Conduct community risk assessments for individuals with a history of violent and/or sexual offenses. Participate in crisis and on-call services for hub facilities (including Columbus, Lumberton, and Tabor Correctional Institutions, as well as Robeson CRV) on a rotating basis, with potential supervisory oversight of support staff.

Staff Psychologist II, Lumberton CI Hub, Lumberton, NC, January 2020 - September 2024

Provided comprehensive psychological, diagnostic, and therapeutic services to incarcerated individuals, including those with severe and persistent mental illnesses and personality disorders. Services included individual psychotherapy, crisis intervention, suicide risk assessment, and behavioral management aimed at evaluating, diagnosing, treating, and addressing mental health, psychological adjustment, and behavioral concerns. Collaborated with medical, custody, and classification staff to develop and implement effective behavioral management strategies for individuals with mental illness or developmental disabilities and to oversee suicide precaution protocols. Conducted psychological testing and risk assessments, including evaluations of cognitive abilities, personality traits, motivation, and violence or sexual offense risk. Screened offenders for the Peer Observation Program (POP) and participated in on-call crisis response rotations. The Lumberton CI Hub provides psychological services for Columbus CI, Sampson CI, Tabor CI, and Robeson CRV.

Staff Psychologist II, Central Prison Healthcare Complex, Raleigh, NC, May 2016 -January 2020

Provided inpatient mental health services using evidence-based therapeutic modalities, including comprehensive assessments, crisis intervention, and individual and group psychotherapy. Collaborated with medical, custody, and classification staff to develop and implement effective behavioral management strategies for high-risk and problem offenders. Conducted staff training on key mental health topics, including the management of individuals with mental illness or developmental disabilities and suicide prevention protocols. Completed specialized risk assessment training for individuals with histories of violent or sexual offenses. Assigned to restrictive housing units and successfully managed offenders recommended for reductions in Conditions of Confinement. Participated in weekend and holiday inpatient clinical rotations.

Staff Psychologist II, Cumberland County Court Order Care, Fayetteville, NC, May 2008 to June 2014

Provided direct psychological and forensic services to clients involved in the Cumberland County court system, including individuals with severe and persistent mental illness, personality disorders, substance use disorders, and intellectual disabilities. Administered and interpreted a wide range of psychological assessment instruments for both children and adults. Prepared comprehensive psychological and forensic evaluation reports, including diagnostic impressions and evidence-based treatment and behavioral recommendations. Served as a consultant and resource to the Cumberland County court system and other professionals regarding the identification of needs and development of appropriate services for clients. Collaborated closely with DSS Child Protective Services on parenting capacity evaluations and child assessments.

PO Box 9486
Fayetteville, NC 28311
Work: (910)785-8543
Cell: (910)644-4141 cell
genell.rashad@dac.nc.gov

EDUCATION

Master of Arts in Psychology- May 2006, Suma Cum Laude, Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville, NC

Bachelor of Science in Psychology – December 2001, Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville, NC

LICENSES

- Licensed Psychological associate with health service provider associate designation (LPA HSP-PA)
- Licensed clinical mental health counselor (LCMHC)

AWARDS

- Team Captain for Miles for Wellness
- State and DPS Champions 2022&2023
- NCDPS CPMH employee of the month 10/2018,
- Cumberland County Mental Health Star Performer Award: 10/2009 and 01/2012
- Lonnie E. Mitchell substance abuse consortium scholarship: Mar. 2003 and Mar. 2004
- Chancellor's & Dean's List 2001
- Mentors in the adoption process NAMHE Conference Presenter, November 2001
- U.S. Army Meritorious Service Medal, September 1999

PUBLICATIONS

Clozapine Reduces Repetitive, Treatment-Resistant Self-Injurious Behavior in a State Prison Population, The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law. June 2018

AFFILIATION

North Carolina's Association of Professional Psychologists

Charter School Board Member Information Form

Note: To be completed individually by each proposed founding charter school board member. Please include a **one-page** resume with this form and sign by hand.

Serving on a public charter school board is a position of public trust and as a board member of a North Carolina public charter school; you are responsible for ensuring the quality of the school's entire program, competent stewardship of public funds, and the school's fulfillment of its public obligations and all terms of its charter.

As part of the application for a new charter school, the State Board of Education requests that each prospective board member respond individually to this questionnaire. Where narrative responses are required, brief responses are sufficient.

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School Information

Name of charter school

Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA NC)

Board Member's Information

Board Members

Full name: Genell N. Rashad

Home Address: PO Box 9486, Fayetteville, NC 28311

Business Name & Address:

Telephone No.: (910) 644 4141

	E-mail address: pray5t@hotmail.com

Board Member Application	
Have you previously served on a board of a school district, another charter school, a non-public school, or any non-profit corporation?	No: ☐ Yes: ☒ Yes. I currently serve as a board member for the Islamic Center of Fayetteville (ICF), a nonprofit organization that provides religious, educational, and community services. In this role, I contribute to governance, support the development of educational and outreach programs, help ensure financial and organizational stability, and work to uphold the integrity and mission of the Center. This experience has strengthened my leadership, collaboration, and decision-making skills, qualities that I will bring to the VALA NC Board of Directors.
Educational History	My educational and professional training includes: • Bachelor of Science, earned during my service in the United States Army (2000) • Master of Arts in Psychology (Summa Cum Laude), Fayetteville State University (2006) • North Carolina Public Safety Psychologist, serving in this role since 2016 • Licensed Psychological Associate (LPA HSP-PA) • Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor (LCMHC) In addition to formal degrees and licensure, I have completed extensive clinical, behavioral health, and public-safety–related professional development throughout my career.
Employment History	My professional background includes roles such as: • Psychological Services Coordinator, Public Safety Hub, Robeson County (2024–Present) • Staff Psychologist, Robeson County Public Safety (2020–2024) • Staff Psychologist, Hospital Healthcare Complex, Wake County (2016–2020)

	• Staff Psychologist, Court Order Care, Cumberland County (2008-2024). In these positions, I have provided psychological evaluations, crisis intervention, treatment planning, counseling, suicide-prevention oversight, clinical documentation, and supervision of behavioral health teams.
How were you recruited to join this Board of Directors?	I was asked to serve on the VALA NC Board through my involvement with the ICF Board, where my community engagement and leadership were well recognized. I was also invited because of my professional expertise in mental health, trauma-informed care, and supporting diverse and vulnerable populations. I strongly believe in VALA NC's mission to expand access to high-quality, student-centered education, and I welcomed the opportunity to contribute to a school committed to well-being, engagement, and equitable learning opportunities for all students.
Why do you wish to serve on the board of the proposed charter school?	I wish to serve on the VALA NC Board because I am committed to helping students grow academically, emotionally, and socially. I believe that a virtual school grounded in equity, innovation, and individualized support can make a meaningful difference, especially for students who face emotional, environmental, or access-related challenges. Serving on this board allows me to support a school model that aligns with my passion for student wellness, trauma-informed care, and community empowerment. In addition, I am motivated to help establish and maintain the school's direction, ensure accountability in both programming and staffing, and provide strong leadership and support for the school and its students. I see VALA NC as an opportunity to positively impact young people and to help build a learning environment where every student can thrive.
What is your understanding of the appropriate role of a public charter school board member?	A charter school board member is responsible for governance, not day-to-day management. The board sets the mission, vision, and policies; ensures academic and financial accountability; monitors performance; supports and evaluates the school leader; and ensures ethical and transparent operations. Board members must always act in the best interest of students and the community.

Describe any previous experience you have that is relevant to serving on the charter school's board (e.g., other board service). If you have not had previous experience of this nature, explain why you can be an effective board member.	I currently serve on the Board of the ICF, where I hold various leadership and committee roles. In this capacity, I contribute to organizational planning, community engagement, policy discussions, and the oversight of programs that support diverse families. This experience has strengthened my skills in governance, ethical decision-making, conflict resolution, and collaborative leadership. In addition to my board service, my professional background in mental health, crisis intervention, policy implementation, and interdisciplinary teamwork has consistently required sound judgment, accountability, and cultural competence. These combined experiences equip me to be an effective, responsible, and mission-driven board member for VALA NC.
Describe the specific knowledge and experience that you would bring to the board.	I bring expertise in mental health, trauma-informed practices, counseling, behavioral assessment, ethical standards, and crisis intervention. I also have experience supervising teams, managing sensitive cases, supporting workforce development, and engaging with families and communities. These strengths will help VALA NC create a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment where students can thrive.

School Mission and Program	
What is your understanding of the school's mission and guiding beliefs?	I understand that VALA NC's mission is to provide a high-quality, accessible virtual education that emphasizes active learning, personalized support, equity, character development, and real-world readiness. The school is committed to preparing students for college, careers, and responsible citizenship through rigorous academics and holistic support.
What is your understanding of the school's proposed educational program?	The program combines active and project-based learning, flipped instruction, adaptive technology tools, interdisciplinary STEM integration, character education, and continuous reflection. It is designed to personalize learning and develop both academic knowledge and essential life skills so that students become confident, capable, and well-rounded learners.

What do you believe to be the characteristics of a successful school?	A successful school has strong leadership, clear mission alignment, high-quality instruction, meaningful student engagement, a safe and inclusive environment, strong family and community partnerships, responsible governance, and continuous improvement supported by data and feedback. It nurtures both academic success and student well-being.
How will you know that the school is succeeding (or not) in its mission?	I will look for evidence of academic growth, positive student engagement, strong attendance and retention, high levels of family and staff satisfaction, financial and regulatory compliance, and mission alignment. Declines in these areas would indicate the need for further attention or strategic adjustments.

Governance

Describe the role that the board will play in the school's operation.	The board provides strategic oversight by setting mission and policy, supporting and evaluating the school leader, monitoring academic and financial health, ensuring compliance, and engaging the community. The board governs responsibly while allowing school leadership to manage daily operations.
How will you know if the school is successful at the end of the first year of operation?	First-year success will be reflected by meeting enrollment targets, forming a strong instructional and leadership team, showing early evidence of academic progress and engagement, earning positive family satisfaction, and maintaining full financial and operational compliance.
How will you know at the end of five years of the schools is successful?	After five years, success will be shown through sustained academic growth, high retention and graduation rates, strong community reputation, financial stability, and recognition from the state or other organizations. The school should be known as a model for accessible, high-quality virtual education.

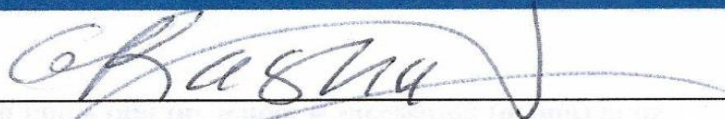
What specific steps will the charter school board need to take to ensure that the school is successful?	The board must hire and support an excellent school leader, create strong governance systems, monitor academic and financial performance, maintain transparency, support staff development, build community partnerships, and uphold ethical and mission-aligned decision-making.
How would you handle a situation in which you believe one or more members of the school's board were acting unethically or not in the best interests of the school?	I would follow a clear, professional, and policy-guided process: review the ethics and conflict-of-interest policies, address the issue privately with the board chair, and if needed, document and report the concern through the appropriate committee. My priority would always be to protect the school's integrity and ensure that all actions support students and the community.

Certification

I, **Genell N. Rashad**, certify to the best of my knowledge and ability that the information I am providing to the North Carolina State Board of Education as a prospective board member for **Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina** Charter School is true and correct in every respect.

Board Member's Signature

Signature



Date: 12/11/2025

**If you responded within the application that disciplinary action has been taken against any past or present professional licenses, provide a detailed response below outlining the disciplinary action and the license validity. Click or tap here to enter text.*



Appendix A: Surveys and Survey Results

Surveys

Parent Interest Survey

Is your child not thriving in their current school?

We're building a new FREE online public school option for North Carolina families. We are gathering input from the first 150 families to help shape this school.

This survey takes just **1–2 minutes** to complete.

Note: Completing this survey does **not obligate** you to enroll your child in VALA NC.

 Complete the survey and be entered to win one of three \$50 Amazon gift cards.

* Indicates required question

1. **Your Name:** *

2. **Your Email Address:** (This information will not be shared, only being collected to keep you updated on the progress of the school.) *

3. **Your Phone Number**

4. **Your Physical Address:** (This information will not be shared, only being collected to track areas of interest.) *

Student Enrollment Interest

This section helps us understand your interest in enrolling a student and the grade levels you are considering. Your responses will assist us in planning programs and services that meet community needs.

5. How many school-aged children are in your household?

Mark only one oval.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5+

6. What grade(s) will your child(ren) enter in August 2028? (Check all that apply)

Check all that apply.

☐ Kindergarten

☐ First

☐ Second

☐ Third

☐ Fourth

☐ Fifth

☐ Sixth

☐ Seventh

☐ Eighth

☐ High School

☐ Other:

7. Would your family be interested in registering for a new, FREE, statewide virtual public charter school (VALA NC)?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes, definitely
- ☐ Possibly
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ No

8. If VALA NC is approved to open, how likely are you to apply?

Mark only one oval.

- 1 2 3 4 5
- Very ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very likely

9. Has your child previously participated in virtual or online learning?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes, full-time
- ☐ Yes, part-time
- ☐ No

10. Why might a virtual public charter school be a good fit for your family? (Check all that apply.)

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Desire for more personalized, flexible learning
- ☐ Need for a safer or more supportive learning environment
- ☐ Wanting more engaging, hands-on virtual learning experiences
- ☐ Interest in project-based learning
- ☐ Comfort with learning from home / home-based learning
- ☐ Better alignment with my child's academic needs
- ☐ My child benefits from a quieter or more individualized environment
- ☐ More frequent progress monitoring and feedback
- ☐ Need for flexibility due to health, family, or scheduling reasons
- ☐ Interest in a tuition-free public alternative to homeschooling or private school
- ☐ Access to statewide virtual learning regardless of location
- ☐ Other: _____

11. Does your household have reliable high-speed internet?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Mostly
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ No

Reasons for Interest & Home Learning Readiness

This section helps us understand why families may be interested in VALA NC and their readiness for learning at home in a virtual environment.

12. Does your child have access to a computer or laptop for daily learning?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes, each child has their own device
- ☐ Yes, but devices are shared
- ☐ No

13. Would your family benefit from school-provided technology (laptop, hotspot, etc.)

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No

14. Does your child have access to a quiet space for learning at home?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ No

15. Which of the following are important to you in your child's education? (Check all that apply.)

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Personalized learning and individualized pacing
- ☐ High-engagement, active learning experiences
- ☐ Real-world projects and interactive virtual activities
- ☐ Frequent teacher check-ins and support
- ☐ Access to tutoring, small-group instruction, or WIN (What I Need) time
- ☐ Flexibility in daily schedules
- ☐ Opportunities for virtual clubs, enrichment, and community connection
- ☐ Support for diverse learning needs (academic, social-emotional, or accessibility needs)
- ☐ AI-powered tools that provide real-time feedback
- ☐ Transparency in data, progress, and communication
- ☐ Strong family-school communication and partnership

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Google Forms

What Matters Most to Your Family

This section helps us understand what matters most to your family in a virtual learning environment. Your responses will guide how VALA NC designs instruction, student supports, schedules, and enrichment opportunities to best meet family and student needs.

Encuesta de Interés Comunitario

¿Su hijo(a) no está prosperando en su escuela actual?

Estamos creando una nueva opción de escuela pública en línea GRATUITA para las familias de Carolina del Norte. Estamos recopilando opiniones de las primeras 150 familias para ayudar a dar forma a esta escuela.

Esta encuesta toma solo 1–2 minutos en completarse.

Nota: Completar esta encuesta no le obliga a inscribir a su hijo(a) en VALA NC.

 Complete la encuesta y participe para ganar **una de tres tarjetas de regalo de Amazon de \$50.**

* Indicates required question

1. **Nombre:** *

2. **Su correo electrónico:** *

(Esta información no será compartida; solo se recopila para mantenerle informado(a) sobre el progreso de la escuela.)

3. **Su número de teléfono:**

4. **Su dirección física:** *

(Esta información no será compartida; solo se recopila para identificar las áreas de interés.)

Interés en la inscripción del estudiante

Esta sección nos ayuda a comprender su interés en inscribir a un estudiante y los niveles de grado que está considerando. Sus respuestas nos ayudarán a planificar programas y servicios que respondan a las necesidades de la comunidad.

5. ¿Cuántos niños en edad escolar hay en su hogar?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5+

6. ¿En qué grado(s) ingresará(n) su(s) hijo(s) en agosto de 2028? (Seleccione todas las opciones que correspondan)

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Jardín de infancia
- ☐ Primer grado
- ☐ Segundo grado
- ☐ Tercer grado
- ☐ Cuarto grado
- ☐ Quinto grado
- ☐ Sexto grado
- ☐ Séptimo grado
- ☐ Octavo grado
- ☐ Escuela secundaria

7. ¿Estaría su familia interesada en inscribirse en una nueva escuela pública charter virtual GRATUITA a nivel estatal (VALA NC)?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Sí, definitivamente
- ☐ Posiblemente
- ☐ No estoy seguro(a)
- ☐ No

8. Si VALA NC es aprobada para abrir, ¿qué tan probable es que presente una solicitud?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Muy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Muy probable

9. ¿Ha participado su hijo(a) anteriormente en aprendizaje virtual o en línea?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Sí, a tiempo completo
- ☐ Sí, a tiempo parcial
- ☐ No

Razones de interés y preparación para el aprendizaje en el hogar

Esta sección nos ayuda a comprender por qué las familias pueden estar interesadas en VALA NC y su nivel de preparación para el aprendizaje en el hogar en un entorno virtual.

10. ¿Por qué una escuela pública charter virtual podría ser una buena opción para su familia? (Marque todas las opciones que correspondan).

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Deseo de un aprendizaje más personalizado y flexible
- ☐ Necesidad de un entorno de aprendizaje más seguro y de mayor apoyo
- ☐ Deseo de experiencias de aprendizaje virtual más dinámicas y prácticas
- ☐ Interés en el aprendizaje basado en proyectos
- ☐ Comodidad con el aprendizaje desde el hogar / aprendizaje basado en el hogar
- ☐ Mejor alineación con las necesidades académicas de mi hijo(a)
- ☐ Mi hijo(a) se beneficia de un entorno más tranquilo o más individualizado
- ☐ Monitoreo más frecuente del progreso y retroalimentación
- ☐ Necesidad de flexibilidad debido a razones de salud, familiares o de horario
- ☐ Interés en una alternativa pública gratuita en lugar de la educación en el hogar o una escuela privada
- ☐ Acceso al aprendizaje virtual en todo el estado independientemente de la ubicación
- ☐ Otro (especifique)

11. ¿Su hogar cuenta con Internet de alta velocidad confiable?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Sí
- ☐ Principalmente
- ☐ A veces
- ☐ No estoy seguro(a)
- ☐ No

12. ¿Su hijo(a) tiene acceso a una computadora o laptop para el aprendizaje diario?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Sí, cada hijo(a) tiene su propio dispositivo
- ☐ Sí, pero los dispositivos son compartidos
- ☐ No

13. ¿Su familia se beneficiaría de la tecnología proporcionada por la escuela (computadora portátil, punto de acceso, etc.)?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Sí
- ☐ Tal vez
- ☐ No

14. ¿Su hijo(a) tiene acceso a un espacio tranquilo para estudiar en casa?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Sí
- ☐ En cierta medida
- ☐ No

Lo que más le importa a tu familia

Esta sección nos ayuda a comprender qué es lo más importante para su familia en un entorno de aprendizaje virtual. Sus respuestas orientarán cómo VALA NC diseñará la instrucción, los apoyos para los estudiantes, los horarios y las oportunidades de enriquecimiento para satisfacer mejor las necesidades de las familias y los estudiantes.

15. ¿Cuáles de los siguientes son importantes para usted en la educación de su hijo? (Marque todas las que correspondan).

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Aprendizaje personalizado y ritmo individualizado
- ☐ Experiencias de aprendizaje activo y de alto compromiso
- ☐ Proyectos del mundo real y actividades virtuales interactivas
- ☐ Controles y apoyo frecuentes por parte de los profesores
- ☐ Acceso a tutorías, instrucción en grupos pequeños o tiempo WIN (Lo que necesito)
- ☐ Flexibilidad en los horarios diarios
- ☐ Oportunidades para clubes virtuales, enriquecimiento y conexión comunitaria
- ☐ Apoyo para diversas necesidades de aprendizaje (académicas, socioemocionales o de accesibilidad)
- ☐ Herramientas impulsadas por inteligencia artificial que brindan retroalimentación en tiempo real
- ☐ Transparencia en los datos, el progreso y la comunicación
- ☐ Comunicación y colaboración sólidas entre la familia y la escuela

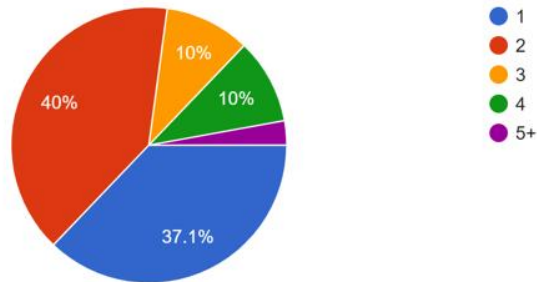
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Google Forms

Survey Results

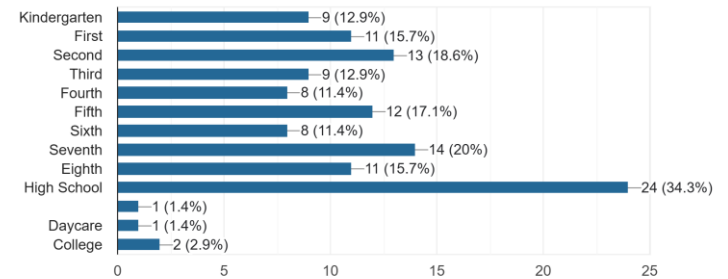
How many school-aged children are in your household?

70 responses



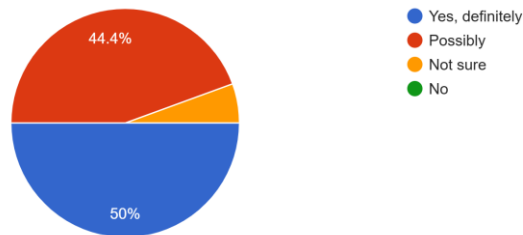
What grade(s) will your child(ren) enter in August 2028? (Check all that apply)

70 responses



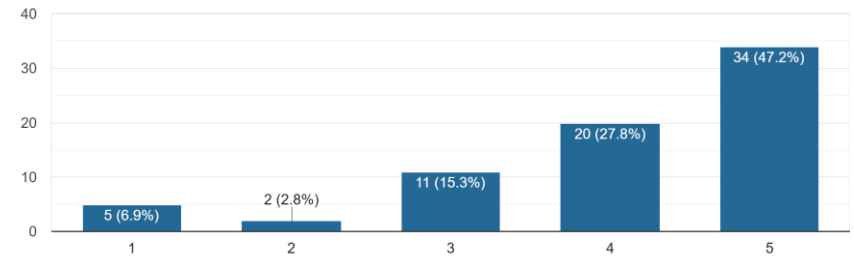
Would your family be interested in registering for a new, FREE, statewide virtual public charter school (VALA NC)?

72 responses



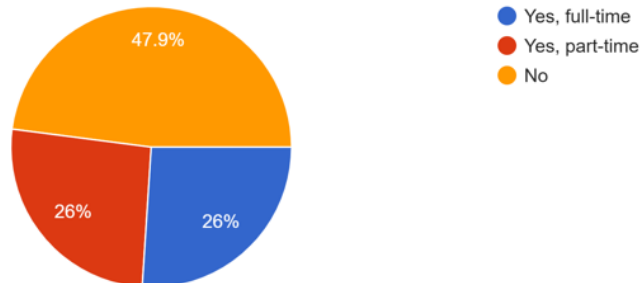
If VALA NC is approved to open, how likely are you to apply?

72 responses



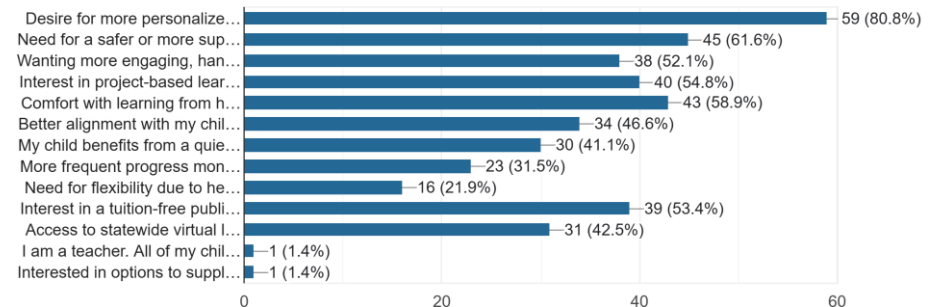
Has your child previously participated in virtual or online learning?

73 responses



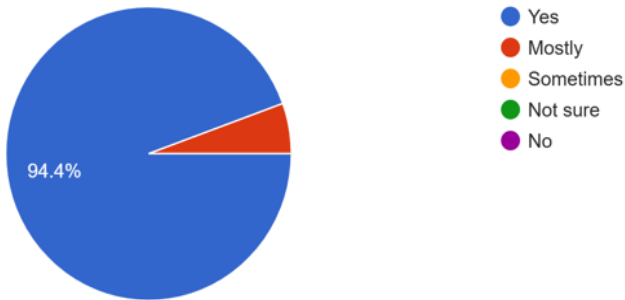
Why might a virtual public charter school be a good fit for your family? (Check all that apply.)

73 responses



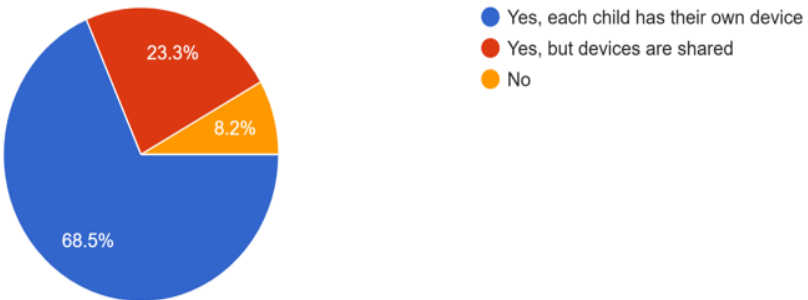
Does your household have reliable high-speed internet?

72 responses



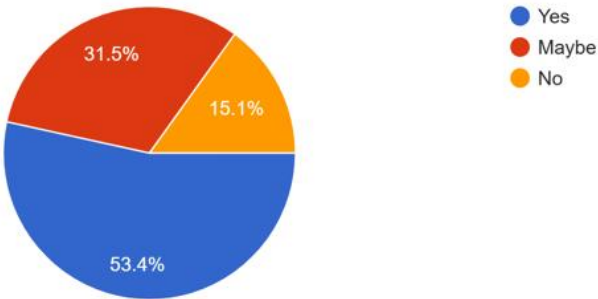
Does your child have access to a computer or laptop for daily learning?

73 responses



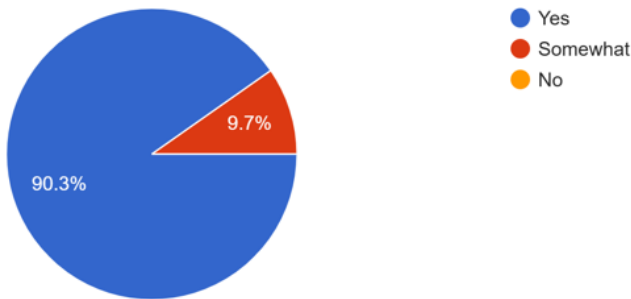
Would your family benefit from school-provided technology (laptop, hotspot, etc.)?

73 responses



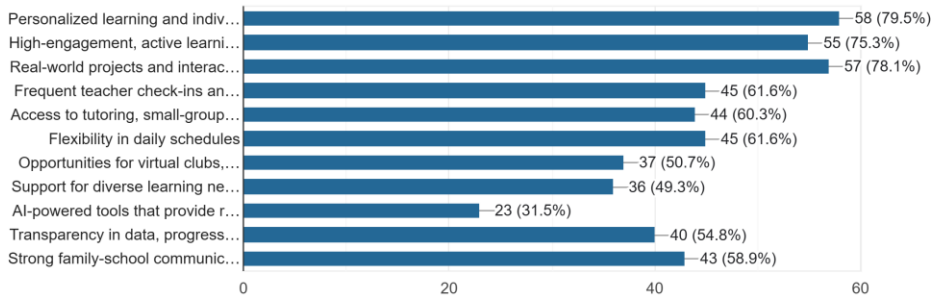
Does your child have access to a quiet space for learning at home?

72 responses



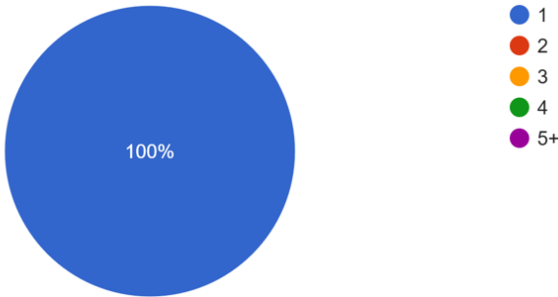
Which of the following are important to you in your child's education? (Check all that apply.)

73 responses



¿Cuántos niños en edad escolar hay en su hogar?

1 response



¿Estaría su familia interesada en inscribirse en una nueva escuela pública charter virtual GRATUITA a nivel estatal (VALA NC)?

1 response



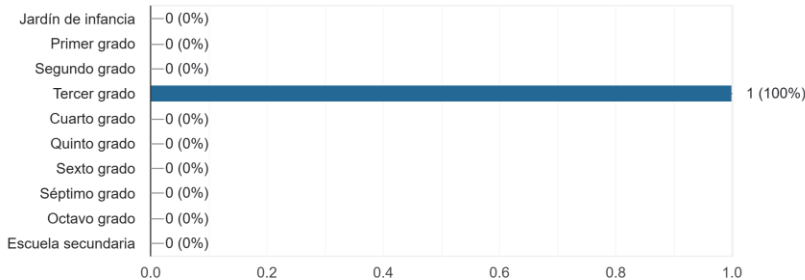
¿Ha participado su hijo(a) anteriormente en aprendizaje virtual o en línea?

1 response



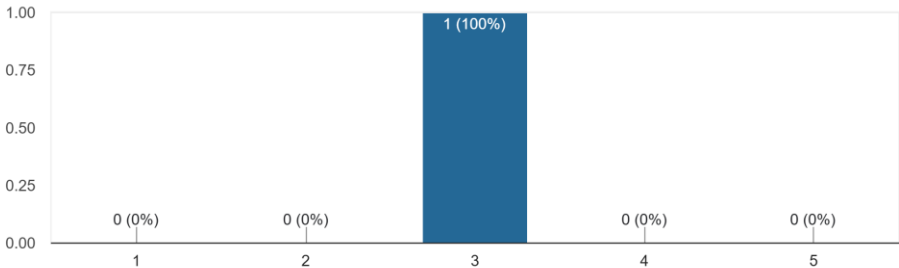
¿En qué grado(s) ingresará(n) su(s) hijo(s) en agosto de 2028? (Seleccione todas las opciones que correspondan)

1 response



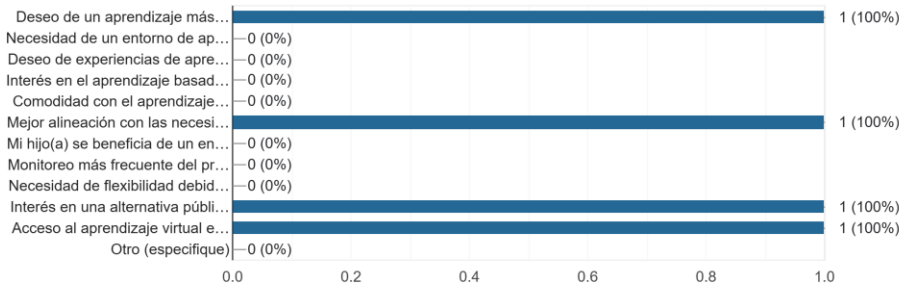
Si VALA NC es aprobada para abrir, ¿qué tan probable es que presente una solicitud?

1 response



¿Por qué una escuela pública chárter virtual podría ser una buena opción para su familia? (Marque todas las opciones que correspondan).

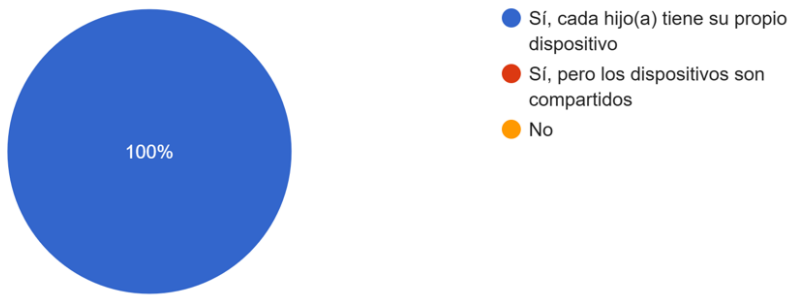
1 response



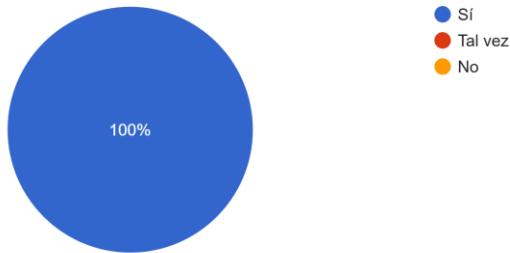
¿Su hogar cuenta con Internet de alta velocidad confiable?
1 response



¿Su hijo(a) tiene acceso a una computadora o laptop para el aprendizaje diario?
1 response



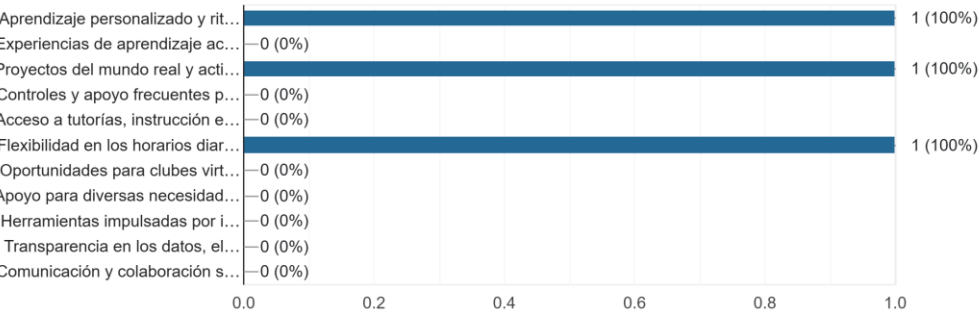
¿Su familia se beneficiaría de la tecnología proporcionada por la escuela (computadora portátil, punto de acceso, etc.)?
1 response



¿Su hijo(a) tiene acceso a un espacio tranquilo para estudiar en casa?
1 response



¿Cuáles de los siguientes son importantes para usted en la educación de su hijo? (Marque todas las que correspondan).
1 response





Appendix A: Marketing Materials

Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina Website

www.vala.academy

The VALA NC website (www.vala.academy) serves as a comprehensive, user-friendly platform designed to inform, engage, and support prospective families, stakeholders, and community members across North Carolina. The website provides clear and accessible information about the school's mission, vision, instructional model, and academic programs, including detailed sections on curriculum, daily schedules, student life, and the 5A Learning Framework. Families can explore how learning works at VALA NC, review the school's core values and CRISP–RISE character development model, and gain insight into the school's emphasis on active, personalized, and project-based learning. The site also includes dedicated sections for enrollment, frequently asked questions, and step-by-step guidance on how to apply.

In addition to academic information, the website promotes transparency and stakeholder engagement by providing access to board member information, policies such as the privacy policy, and contact details for school leadership. It also features digital resources, student support services, and information about clubs, athletics, and enrichment opportunities that contribute to a well-rounded virtual school experience. The integrated Parent Interest Survey allows families to express interest and provide feedback, supporting community-driven planning. The website is complemented by connected social media platforms to enhance communication and outreach, ensuring that VALA NC remains accessible, responsive, and aligned with the needs of North Carolina families.



Learn Anywhere... Succeed Everywhere...

Welcome to the [Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina \(VALA NC\)](http://www.vala.academy)

A tuition-free, statewide K-12 virtual charter school



Is Your Child Bored, Overwhelmed, or Not Thriving in School?

We are building a new tuition-free online public charter school for North Carolina families—designed to provide active, personalized, and real-world learning so every student can succeed in school and beyond.



Join the First 150 Founding Families

✓ Be the first to receive updates and help shape a better online school for North Carolina students.

🕒 Takes less than 10 seconds

✓ No obligation to enroll

Take Our 2-Minute Parent Interest Survey

✓ Completing this survey does not obligate you to enroll your child in VALA NC

🕒 Takes less than 2 minutes

🎁 Participants will be entered to win one of three \$50 Amazon gift cards



Contact Information

Mailing Address
847 Bay Bouquet Lane
Apex, NC 27523

Email address
info@vala.academy

Phone number
(910) 476 0447

Quick Links

[About Us](#)[Daily Schedules](#)[Mission Statement](#)[Academics](#)[Digital Resources](#)[Parent Survey](#)[Athletics and Welln...](#)[Enrollment](#)[PRISMA Learning C...](#)[Board Members](#)[Events](#)[Privacy Policy](#)[Character Develop...](#)[FAQs](#)[RADAR System](#)[Clubs](#)[How Learning Works](#)[Student Life](#)[Contact Us](#)[How to Apply](#)[Student Support Ser...](#)[Core Values](#)[How We Teach](#)[Vision Statement](#)[Core Virtues](#)[Join Our List](#)[Why VALA NC?](#)[CRISP RISE](#)[Learning Model](#)

Stay Connected With VALA NC



Flyers



Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA NC)

A New Tuition-Free K-12 Virtual Public Charter School Coming to North Carolina in Fall 2028!

VALA NC delivers a **high-quality**, engaging, and flexible **online learning** experience accessible from anywhere in North Carolina. Our instructional model is intentionally designed to meet the diverse needs of today's learners while maintaining high academic standards and meaningful student engagement.

Guided by our 5A Learning Framework (active learning, adaptive instruction, accountable systems, authentic experiences, and accessible education), instruction is student-centered, responsive, and future-focused while maintaining high academic standards.

Through **active learning**, hands-on activities, and inquiry-based projects, students develop deep understanding and real-world problem-solving skills.

AI-supported **adaptive instruction** personalizes learning, while strong **accountability** ensures clear expectations, consistent teacher support, and continuous progress monitoring.

Authentic STEAM-focused experiences connect learning to real-world applications, careers, and community engagement.

VALA NC also prioritizes **accessibility** through flexible models, adaptive technologies, multilingual supports, and strong family partnerships.

Together, these elements—along with a focus on character development and partnerships with universities and industry—prepare students for success in higher education, careers, and a rapidly changing world.

Our Mission: The mission of VALA NC is to empower students across North Carolina through engaging Advanced virtual learning, STEAM education, real-world experiences, strong character development, and family partnership for success in school, work, and life.




Upcoming Virtual Information Sessions
 Wed, Mar 18, 2026 | 6:30 – 8:00 PM ET
 Thu, Mar 19, 2026 | 6:30 – 8:00 PM ET
 Sat, Mar 21, 2026 | 10:00 – 11:30 AM ET

Scan the QR code to join a virtual information session via Google Meet.

We Want to Hear From You!
 We are conducting a brief Community Interest Survey to better understand what North Carolina families value in a high-quality virtual school.

Please scan and take a moment to complete the Community Interest Survey.

Please note: Completing this survey does not obligate you to enroll. It is used only to help demonstrate community interest.




(910) 476-0447
www.vala.nc.edu
 Facebook LinkedIn YouTube



Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA NC)

A New Tuition-Free K-12 Virtual Public Charter School Coming to North Carolina in Fall 2028!

VALA NC delivers a **high-quality**, engaging, and flexible **online learning** experience accessible from anywhere in North Carolina. Our instructional model is intentionally designed to meet the diverse needs of today's learners while maintaining high academic standards and meaningful student engagement.

Guided by our 5A Learning Framework (active learning, adaptive instruction, accountable systems, authentic experiences, and accessible education), instruction is student-centered, responsive, and future-focused while maintaining high academic standards.

Through **active learning**, hands-on activities, and inquiry-based projects, students develop deep understanding and real-world problem-solving skills.

AI-supported **adaptive instruction** personalizes learning, while strong **accountability** ensures clear expectations, consistent teacher support, and continuous progress monitoring.

Authentic STEAM-focused experiences connect learning to real-world applications, careers, and community engagement.

VALA NC also prioritizes **accessibility** through flexible models, adaptive technologies, multilingual supports, and strong family partnerships.

Together, these elements—along with a focus on character development and partnerships with universities and industry—prepare students for success in higher education, careers, and a rapidly changing world.

Our Mission: The mission of VALA NC is to empower students across North Carolina through engaging Advanced virtual learning, STEAM education, real-world experiences, strong character development, and family partnership for success in school, work, and life.




Upcoming Virtual Information Sessions
 Wed, Mar 18, 2026 | 6:30 – 8:00 PM ET
 Thu, Mar 19, 2026 | 6:30 – 8:00 PM ET
 Sat, Mar 21, 2026 | 10:00 – 11:30 AM ET

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Please scan the QR code to share your voice and join our community interest list.

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 Facebook LinkedIn YouTube



IS ANYONE ELSE FRUSTRATED WITH THEIR CHILD'S SCHOOL RIGHT NOW?

We've been talking to more and more NC families whose kids are either **BORED, OVERWHELMED**, or just **NOT GETTING** what they need.

Some are falling behind... Some aren't being challenged... Some are just **disengaged**.

We're building a new **FREE** online public school option designed to be more flexible and personalized!

WE'RE LOOKING FOR 150 FAMILIES TO HELP SHAPE IT!

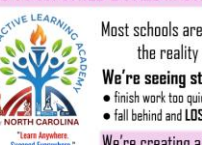



Visit www.vala.nc.edu to join the first 150 Founding Families and take the survey. No obligation to enroll. Takes less than 2 minutes.

Participants will be entered to win one of three \$50 Amazon gift cards.

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VALA NC is a tuition-free, STEAM-focused online public charter school.



IS YOUR CHILD BORED... OR COMPLETELY OVERWHELMED?

Most schools are built for the "AVERAGE" student, but the reality is, most kids don't fit that mold.

We're seeing students who:

- finish work too quickly and **DISENGAGE**, or
- fall behind and **LOSE CONFIDENCE**

We're creating a different kind of **ACTIVE, PERSONALIZED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT** for North Carolina families!

JOIN THE FIRST 150 FAMILIES




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WHAT IF SCHOOL ACTUALLY WORKED FOR YOUR CHILD?

Not one-size-fits-all... Not sit-and-get. **But, Flexible. Personalized. AI-powered.**

With live teaching, small classes, and daily WIN support. Real-world STEAM learning. Strong family partnership. Built around how your child learns best.

That's what we're working on right now.

We're inviting a small group of families to help shape it!

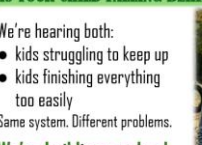



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IS YOUR CHILD FALLING BEHIND... OR NOT BEING CHALLENGED?

We're hearing both:

- kids struggling to keep up
- kids finishing everything too easily

Same system. Different problems.

We're building a school... ..designed to meet students where they are.

JOIN THE FIRST 150 FAMILIES




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Participants will be entered to win one of three \$50 Amazon gift cards.

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VALA NC is a tuition-free, STEAM-focused online public charter school.



We've had 40+ conversations with NC parents recently, and a pattern is emerging...

"My child **isn't engaged**."
"My child is **stressed**."
"My child needs **something different**."

So, we're building something different.

WE'D LOVE YOUR INPUT

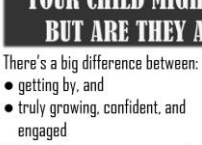



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VALA NC is a tuition-free, STEAM-focused online public charter school.



YOUR CHILD MIGHT BE DOING "FINE"... BUT ARE THEY ACTUALLY THRIVING?

There's a big difference between:

- getting by, and
- truly growing, confident, and engaged

We're designing a new school with that in mind.

BE ONE OF THE FIRST FAMILIES

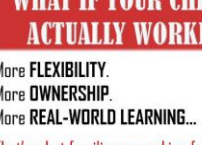



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WHAT IF YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL SCHEDULE ACTUALLY WORKED FOR YOUR FAMILY?

More **FLEXIBILITY**.
More **OWNERSHIP**.
More **REAL-WORLD LEARNING**...

That's what families are asking for—**and WHAT WE'RE BUILDING.**

JOIN THE FIRST 150 FAMILIES!




Visit www.vala.nc.edu to join the first 150 Founding Families and take the survey. No obligation to enroll. Survey takes less than 2 minutes.

Participants will be entered to win one of three \$50 Amazon gift cards.

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VALA NC is a tuition-free, STEAM-focused online public charter school.



HONEST QUESTION FOR NC PARENTS... If you could redesign your child's school experience from scratch... What would you change?

We're asking because we're actually building something new.

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS HERE (2 MIN)




Visit www.vala.nc.edu to join the first 150 Founding Families and take the survey. No obligation to enroll. Survey takes less than 2 minutes.

Participants will be entered to win one of three \$50 Amazon gift cards.

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VALA NC is a tuition-free, STEAM-focused online public charter school.



Buscamos 150 familias que quieren algo mejor para sus hijos.

No más de lo mismo. No es un modelo único para todos.

Pero algo diseñado intencionalmente, pensando en los estudiantes y sus familias.

SI ESE ES USTED, UNASE A NOSOTROS




Visite www.vala.nc.edu para unirse a las primeras 150 familias fundadoras y completar la encuesta. Sin obligación de inscribirse. La encuesta toma menos de 2 minutos.

Los participantes participarán en un sorteo para ganar uno de tres tarjetas de regalo de \$50 de Amazon.

E: info@vala.nc.edu | P: (910) 476-0447

VALA NC es una escuela pública charter en línea, gratuita y enfocada en STEAM.



Appendix A: Evidence of Community/Parent Support

Community Interest and Demand Analysis for the Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina

Executive Summary

The VALA NC Parent Interest Survey, consisting of 66 English responses and 1 Spanish response (n = 67), provides strong, data-driven evidence of community demand for a high-quality, fully online K–12 charter school in North Carolina. The findings demonstrate both substantial interest in virtual education and a clear preference for a more engaging, personalized, and academically rigorous instructional model—directly aligned with the proposed design of the Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA NC).

Survey results indicate exceptionally high levels of interest in VALA NC. A total of 94.1% of respondents expressed positive interest in enrolling their child (49.3% “definitely” and 44.8% “possibly”), while only a small fraction reported uncertainty. In addition, 71.7% of families indicated a high likelihood of applying (ratings of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale), demonstrating strong behavioral intent beyond general interest. These findings provide compelling evidence of unmet demand for a high-quality online learning option in North Carolina.

The survey also highlights that families are not simply seeking virtual education for convenience, but rather are motivated by specific educational priorities. Respondents consistently emphasized the importance of personalized learning, engaging and interactive instruction, strong teacher support, academic rigor (particularly in STEAM disciplines), and safe, flexible learning environments. These priorities align closely with VALA NC’s 5A Learning Framework—Active Learning, Adaptive Instruction, Accountable Systems, Authentic Experiences, and Accessible Education—confirming that the proposed model is well-matched to community expectations.

In terms of readiness, the majority of families report having the necessary infrastructure to support online learning. Specifically, 91.0% of respondents indicated reliable internet access, and 89.6% reported having a suitable learning space at home. However, device access remains a notable area of need: while 68.7% of families reported that each child has access to a dedicated device, more than 80% of respondents indicated that they would either need or potentially need school-provided technology. This finding underscores the importance of incorporating device and connectivity support into the school’s operational and financial planning to ensure equitable access for all students.

The survey further reveals that approximately half of the respondents (47.8%) have no prior experience with online learning, while the remaining families have either full-time or part-time experience. This mixed level of familiarity highlights the importance of providing structured onboarding, clear expectations, and ongoing support for both students and families—elements that are integral to VALA NC’s instructional and support model.

In addition to survey data, VALA NC conducted complementary outreach efforts, including community presentations, flyer distribution, and targeted digital campaigns, to engage families across multiple regions of North Carolina. These efforts generated strong participation and

real-time feedback, further validating the widespread demand for a high-quality, flexible virtual learning option.

Overall, the survey results provide strong validation for the proposed school. Families across North Carolina are seeking an educational option that combines flexibility with high-quality instruction, personalization with accountability, and innovation with strong teacher support. These findings are further reinforced through in-person community presentations and outreach efforts, where families demonstrated high levels of engagement, asked thoughtful questions, and expressed a clear desire for more structured, interactive, and supportive virtual learning options. The consistency between survey data and direct community feedback strengthens the evidence of demand. The high levels of interest, clear enrollment intent, and alignment between family priorities and the VALA NC model demonstrate both the feasibility and the necessity of the proposed charter school. Collectively, these findings offer compelling evidence that VALA NC is well-positioned to meet the evolving educational needs of students and families throughout the state.

Detailed Analysis and Interpretation of Survey Findings

The VALA NC Parent Interest Survey, which includes 66 English responses and 1 Spanish response (n = 67), provides strong and compelling evidence of community demand for a high-quality, fully online K–12 charter school in North Carolina. The results reflect not only general interest in virtual education but also a clear preference for a more engaging, personalized, and academically rigorous instructional model aligned with the proposed design of the Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA NC).

The demographic distribution of respondents indicates that the majority of participating families have one or two school-aged children, accounting for approximately 71.6% of responses. Specifically, 37.3% of families reported having two children, while 34.3% reported having one child. Smaller percentages of families reported three children (10.4%), four children (10.4%), and five or more children (3.0%). This distribution reflects a typical cross-section of K–12 households and suggests that the survey captures a representative sample of families who are actively making educational decisions for their children. The predominance of small-to-moderate family sizes also supports the feasibility of sustained parent engagement in an online learning environment, which is a critical factor in student success in virtual settings (Borup et al., 2020).

The survey reveals exceptionally strong interest in VALA NC as a potential educational option. Nearly half of respondents (49.3%) indicated that they would “definitely” be interested in enrolling their child, while an additional 44.8% responded “possibly.” Only a very small fraction expressed uncertainty (3.0%). When combined, these results show that approximately 94.1% of surveyed families express positive interest in the proposed school. This level of interest is particularly significant in the context of charter school applications, where demonstrating clear community demand is essential. The data strongly suggest that VALA NC addresses an unmet need within the current educational landscape in North Carolina, particularly for families seeking alternatives to traditional brick-and-mortar schooling.

Further reinforcing this demand, the survey assessed families' likelihood of applying to VALA NC using a five-point scale. The results indicate that 44.8% of respondents are "very likely" to apply (rating of 5), and 26.9% selected a rating of 4. An additional 14.9% selected a neutral rating (3), while only 3.0% and 7.5% selected ratings of 2 and 1, respectively. Overall, 71.7% of families fall into the high-likelihood category (ratings of 4 or 5), demonstrating strong behavioral intent rather than passive interest. This distinction is critical, as research suggests that stated likelihood to enroll is a strong predictor of actual enrollment behavior in school choice contexts (Dynarski et al., 2018). The relatively small proportion of low-likelihood responses (10.5%) further underscores the strength of demand.

The survey also examined families' prior experience with online learning. Results indicate that 47.8% of respondents have no prior experience with virtual education, while 25.4% have experience with full-time online learning and another 25.4% have participated in part-time or hybrid online learning environments. These findings suggest that while a slight majority of families (52.2%) have some familiarity with online learning, a substantial portion of the target population is new to this modality. This has important implications for program design, as successful virtual schools must provide robust onboarding, orientation, and ongoing support for both students and families. Research has consistently shown that structured support systems, including clear expectations, teacher presence, and guided learning routines, are essential for student success in online environments, particularly for first-time participants (Garrison et al., 2000; Borup et al., 2020).

In terms of technological readiness, the survey results are highly encouraging. A large majority of respondents (91.0%) reported having reliable internet access, with an additional 6.0% indicating mostly reliable access. Similarly, 89.6% of families reported having a quiet space for learning, with 7.5% indicating partial availability. These findings suggest that most families are well-positioned to support virtual learning at home. However, device access presents a more nuanced picture. While 68.7% of families reported that each child has access to their own device, 22.4% indicated that devices are shared, and 7.5% reported having no dedicated device. Correspondingly, 53.7% of families indicated that they would need a school-provided device, and an additional 28.4% responded "maybe." In total, more than 80% of respondents expressed potential need for technology support. This highlights the importance of incorporating device distribution and connectivity support into the school's operational and financial planning. Access to appropriate technology is widely recognized as a foundational requirement for equitable participation and success in online learning environments (Means et al., 2014).

The survey also explored the reasons families are interested in virtual schooling and their educational priorities for their children. Although these questions allowed for multiple selections, clear patterns emerged across responses. Families consistently identified flexibility, personalized learning, and a safe and comfortable learning environment as key motivators. In addition, many respondents expressed a desire for more engaging and effective instruction than what they perceive to be available in traditional settings. These preferences align closely with contemporary research on effective learning environments, which emphasizes the importance of active engagement, learner-centered instruction, and relevance to students' lives (Freeman et al., 2014; Bransford et al., 2000).

Educational priorities identified by families further reinforce these themes. Respondents placed strong emphasis on personalized instruction, active and engaging teaching methods, strong teacher support, academic rigor (particularly in STEAM disciplines), and social-emotional development. These priorities are highly consistent with VALA NC's proposed 5A Learning Framework—Active Learning, Adaptive Instruction, Accountable Systems, Authentic Experiences, and Accessible Education. Research indicates that active learning strategies significantly improve student performance compared to traditional lecture-based approaches (Freeman et al., 2014), while personalized and adaptive learning systems can lead to measurable gains in student achievement when implemented effectively (Pane et al., 2015). Furthermore, strong teacher presence and meaningful interaction are essential components of successful online learning environments (Garrison et al., 2000).

Overall, the survey results provide strong, data-driven validation for the VALA NC model. Families across North Carolina are not simply interested in online education as an alternative format; rather, they are actively seeking a more engaging, personalized, and supportive learning experience that addresses the limitations of both traditional and existing virtual schools. The combination of high interest levels (94.1%), strong likelihood of enrollment (71.7%), substantial technological readiness, and clearly articulated instructional preferences demonstrates both the feasibility and the necessity of the proposed school. These findings offer compelling evidence to support the charter application and confirm that VALA NC is well-positioned to meet the evolving educational needs of students and families in North Carolina.

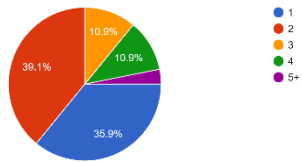
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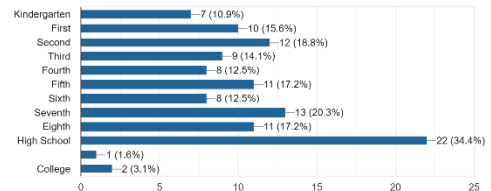
Pane, J. F.; Steiner, E. D.; Baird, M. D.; Hamilton, L. S. *Continued Progress: Promising Evidence on Personalized Learning*; RAND Corporation: Santa Monica, CA, 2015.

Summary of Survey Responses (English, n = 66)

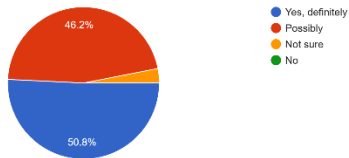
How many school-aged children are in your household?
64 responses



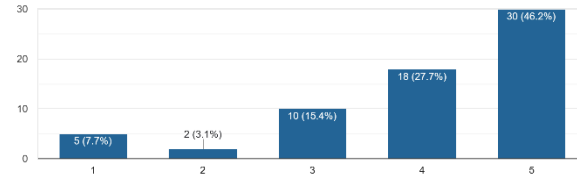
What grade(s) will your child(ren) enter in August 2028? (Check all that apply)
64 responses



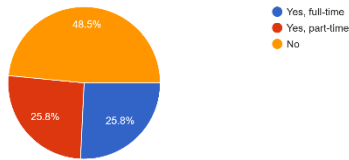
Would your family be interested in registering for a new, FREE, statewide virtual public charter school (VALA NC)?
65 responses



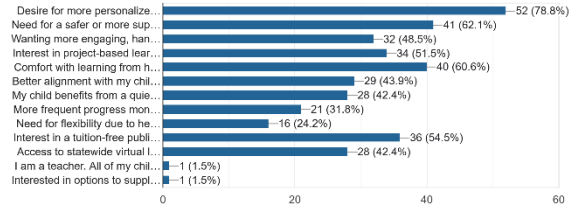
If VALA NC is approved to open, how likely are you to apply?
65 responses



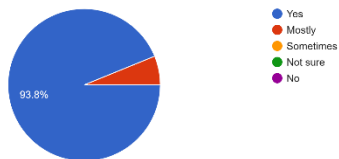
Has your child previously participated in virtual or online learning?
66 responses



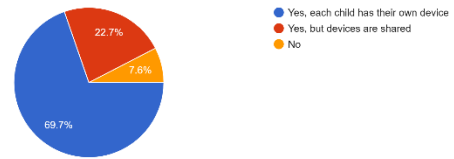
Why might a virtual public charter school be a good fit for your family? (Check all that apply.)
66 responses



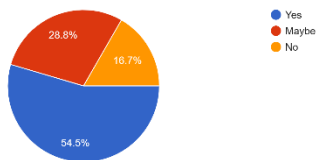
Does your household have reliable high-speed internet?
65 responses



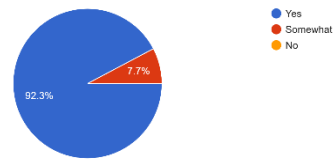
Does your child have access to a computer or laptop for daily learning?
66 responses

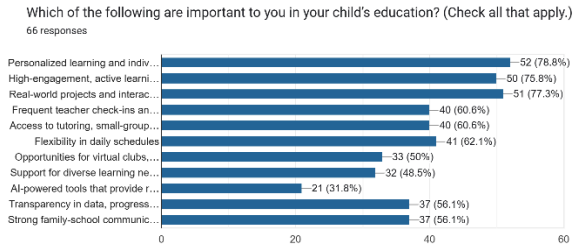


Would your family benefit from school-provided technology (laptop, hotspot, etc.)?
66 responses



Does your child have access to a quiet space for learning at home?
65 responses





Summary of Survey Responses (Spanish, n = 1)

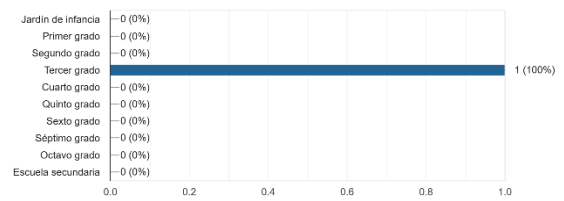
¿Cuántos niños en edad escolar hay en su hogar?

1 response



¿En qué grado(s) ingresará(n) su(s) hijo(s) en agosto de 2028? (Seleccione todas las opciones que correspondan)

1 response



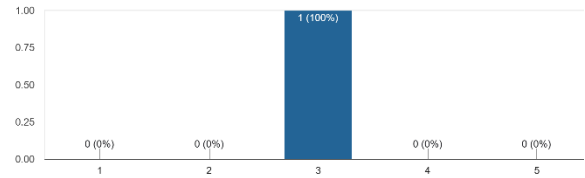
¿Estaría su familia interesada en inscribirse en una nueva escuela pública charter virtual GRATUITA a nivel estatal (VALA NC)?

1 response



Si VALA NC es aprobada para abrir, ¿qué tan probable es que presente una solicitud?

1 response



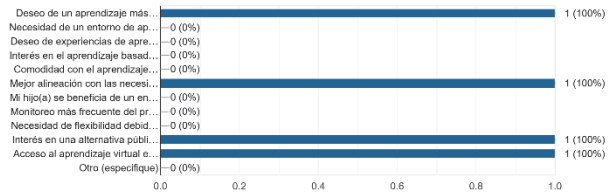
¿Ha participado su hijo(a) anteriormente en aprendizaje virtual o en línea?

1 response



¿Por qué una escuela pública charter virtual podría ser una buena opción para su familia? (Marque todas las opciones que correspondan).

1 response



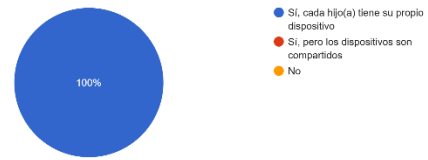
¿Su hogar cuenta con Internet de alta velocidad confiable?

1 response



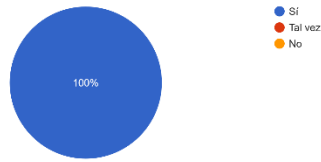
¿Su hijo(a) tiene acceso a una computadora o laptop para el aprendizaje diario?

1 response



¿Su familia se beneficiaría de la tecnología proporcionada por la escuela (computadora portátil, punto de acceso, etc.)?

1 response



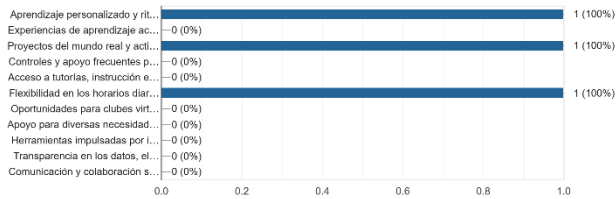
¿Su hijo(a) tiene acceso a un espacio tranquilo para estudiar en casa?

1 response



¿Cuáles de los siguientes son importantes para usted en la educación de su hijo? (Marque todas las que correspondan).

1 response



Additional Evidence of Community Outreach and Demand

While the parent interest survey provides strong, data-driven validation of demand for VALA NC, these findings are further reinforced through additional outreach efforts conducted across North Carolina. To ensure that interest extended beyond survey respondents and to engage families through multiple access points, VALA NC implemented a comprehensive outreach strategy that included in-person community presentations, printed materials, and targeted digital campaigns. These efforts provided opportunities to both share the proposed school model and gather real-time feedback from families, further confirming the need for a high-quality, flexible, and student-centered virtual learning option.

1. Community Presentations / Speaking Events

Type of Contact: In-person presentations at community gatherings

Dates: Multiple events (Spring 2026)

Attendance:

- Event 1: Approximately 300 attendees
- Event 2: Approximately 100 attendees

Indication of Demand:

These presentations generated strong engagement, including active participation, follow-up questions, and requests for additional information. Families consistently expressed a need for more structured, engaging, and supportive virtual learning options, reinforcing the priorities identified in the survey data.

2. Flyer Distribution (English & Spanish)

Type of Contact: Printed outreach materials

Dates: Ongoing (Spring 2026)

Scope: Hundreds of flyers distributed

Locations: Community events, community centers, and faith-based organizations

Indication of Demand:

Flyer distribution expanded awareness of VALA NC and contributed to increased survey participation, website visits, and direct inquiries from families seeking enrollment information, further demonstrating sustained and growing interest.

3. Digital Outreach and Social Media Campaigns

Type of Contact: Social media campaigns (e.g., Facebook), online parent/community groups

Dates: Ongoing (Spring 2026)

Reach: Approximately 15,000 individuals across North Carolina

Indication of Demand:

Digital outreach significantly expanded statewide awareness and generated measurable engagement, including link clicks, shares, and survey responses. Campaigns successfully reached diverse audiences, including families actively seeking alternative, flexible, and virtual education options.

Collectively, these outreach efforts provide strong and credible evidence of sustained and growing community and parent demand for VALA NC. Across survey responses, in-person engagement, and digital outreach, families consistently expressed a desire for a more personalized, engaging, and flexible educational experience that is not currently being met through existing options. Interest spans multiple regions of North Carolina, diverse student backgrounds, and all grade levels, reinforcing the need for a statewide virtual charter school that expands access to high-quality learning opportunities. The consistency of feedback across multiple forms of engagement, combined with high levels of interest and intent to enroll, demonstrates that VALA NC is well-positioned to meet a clear and evolving need for innovative, student-centered virtual education.



Letters of Support

Dr. Daniel E. Autrey

Chair, Department of Chemistry, Physics, and Materials Science
Fayetteville State University
Fayetteville, North Carolina

April 22, 2026

North Carolina Charter School Review Board

Dear Members of the North Carolina Charter School Review Board,

I am pleased to offer my strong support for the Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA NC), an innovative statewide virtual charter school initiative led by Dr. Cevdet Akbay.

I have had the privilege of working closely with Dr. Akbay for many years at Fayetteville State University (FSU). From 2014 to 2020, I served as Assistant Chair of the Department of Chemistry, Physics, and Materials Science while Dr. Akbay served as Department Chair. During this time, I witnessed firsthand his exceptional leadership, commitment to student success, and dedication to advancing evidence-based instructional practices.

Dr. Akbay has been a leader in implementing active learning strategies in higher education. I had the opportunity to serve as Co-Principal Investigator alongside him on the National Science Foundation (NSF) grant that established the Studio Classroom at FSU—an initiative that transformed traditional instruction into a highly interactive, student-centered learning environment. More recently, I am serving as Co-PI on the NSF S-STEM S8 Program, a \$2.5 million grant under Dr. Akbay's leadership, which focuses on student-centered strategies, academic support, and increasing student success in STEM disciplines.

Through these collaborations, I have seen the measurable impact of active learning on student engagement, retention, and achievement. Dr. Akbay's work consistently reflects a deep understanding of how students learn and how instructional environments can be designed to maximize success for diverse learners.

The VALA NC initiative builds on this strong foundation by bringing active learning, personalized instruction, and structured support systems into the K–12 virtual education space. I believe this is both timely and necessary. While virtual education continues to expand, there remains a significant need for models that go beyond passive, self-paced instruction and instead emphasize engagement, accountability, and meaningful teacher-student interaction.

Dr. Akbay's vision for VALA NC—grounded in active learning, adaptive instruction, and strong support systems—has the potential to set a new standard for virtual education in North Carolina. His experience in leading large-scale educational initiatives, securing and managing federal funding, and implementing innovative instructional models positions him uniquely to successfully lead this effort.



Department of Chemistry, Physics, &
Materials Science

I strongly support the establishment of VALA NC and am confident that it will provide a high-quality, student-centered educational option for families across North Carolina.

Please feel free to contact me if additional information would be helpful.

Sincerely,

Dr. Daniel E. Autrey
Chair, Department of Chemistry, Physics, and Materials Science
Fayetteville State University

Dr. Cameron Harmon
Dean, Mathematics and Sciences
Fayetteville Technical Community College
Fayetteville, North Carolina

April 22, 2026

North Carolina Charter School Review Board
Department of Public Instruction
301 N Wilmington Street
Raleigh, NC 27601-2825

Dear Members of the North Carolina Charter School Review Board,

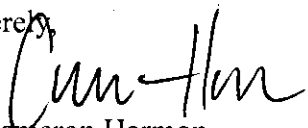
I am pleased to offer my support for the Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA NC) and its vision to implement a student-centered, active learning model within a statewide virtual public charter school.

As Dean of Mathematics and Sciences at Fayetteville Technical Community College (FTCC) and senior personnel on the National Science Foundation (NSF)-supported S-STEM S8 Program, I have seen firsthand the impact of active learning on student engagement, persistence, and academic success. These approaches are especially critical in online environments, where intentional design, meaningful interaction, and structured support are necessary to ensure that students remain engaged and achieve at high levels. VALA NC's emphasis on active, personalized, and data-informed instruction reflects the type of model that is needed to strengthen virtual education.

Equally important is the opportunity for collaboration between K-12 institutions and community colleges. A partnership between VALA NC and community colleges in the state of North Carolina has strong potential to create clear and supportive pathways for students, including early college exposure, dual enrollment opportunities, and workforce readiness in high-demand fields. By aligning expectations and supporting students' academic transitions, such collaboration can significantly enhance student outcomes and long-term success.

I strongly support the VALA NC initiative and believe it represents an important step forward in expanding access to high-quality, student-centered virtual education in North Carolina.

Sincerely,



Dr. Cameron Harmon
Dean, Mathematics and Sciences
Fayetteville Technical Community College
910-678-8244 | harmonm@faytechcc.edu



Appendix: School Leader's Resume

CEVDET AKBAY, Ph.D.

Professor of Chemistry | Fayetteville State University
Email: cakbay@uncfsu.edu | Phone: (910) 672-1943

847 Bay Bouquet Ln, Apex, NC 27523
Email: vala-nc@vala.academy
Phone: (910) 476-0447

PROFILE

Accomplished professor, researcher, and educational innovator with over 30 years of experience in STEM leadership and active-learning pedagogy. As an experienced grant writer, has secured nearly \$5 million in external funding as Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-PI. Director of the NSF-funded S8 Program, fostering student-centered research and mentoring. A founding member of the Forensic Science Program Planning Committee and creator of several chemistry and forensic science courses. Initiator of VALA-NC, a virtual K–12 charter school emphasizing active, project-based, AI-supported learning.

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Analytical Chemistry, Louisiana State University (2002)

M.S., Analytical Chemistry, Louisiana State University (1999)

B.S., Chemistry Education, İnönü University, Türkiye (1990)

ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Professor of Chemistry (2013–Present)

Chair and Assistant Chair, Department of Chemistry, Physics, and Materials Science (2012–2020)
Fayetteville State University (FSU), Fayetteville, NC

- Spearheaded American Chemical Society (ACS) accreditation of chemistry program
- Established Studio-Classroom Initiative with the funds from NSF under the student-centered active learning environment with upside-down pedagogies (SCALE-UP) model to implement student-centered, active and interactive learning.
- Mentored dozens of undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral researchers; led departmental growth in research and student success.

Postdoctoral Research Associate, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA (2002–2004)

Chemistry Instructor, Celal Bayar University, Manisa, Türkiye (1993–1997)

Science and Chemistry Teacher, Public Schools, Malatya, Türkiye (1990–1993)

RESEARCH AND GRANT LEADERSHIP

PI and Co-PI on multiple NSF, NIH, and DoD grants totaling about \$5M. Research expertise includes separation science, analytical chemistry, surfactant chemistry, and STEM pedagogy. Published 27 peer-reviewed journal articles and 60+ conference presentations.

LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

- Director, NSF-funded S8 Program (2023–2030) – Student-centered strategies and scholarship program for students' success in sciences.
- Founding Organizer, VALA-NC – Charter proposal developer for a statewide virtual K–12 academy integrating active and adaptive learning.
- Former Governing Board Member, Fulton Science Academy & Technology Enriched Accelerated Charter High School, Atlanta, GA.
- Founder and President, Akbay LLC (2019–Present) – Online business specializing in the resale of second-hand laboratory and medical equipment.
- Founding member of the Forensic Science Program Planning Committee at FSU.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Recognition for Excellence in Sponsored Research and Program Development (FSU). Departmental Teacher of the Year, FSU (2012).



Appendix C: 9-12 Core Content and Electives

VALA NC’s high school program is intentionally designed to both meet and exceed North Carolina graduation requirements while preparing students for success in college, careers, and an evolving workforce. The program is fully aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) and the Future-Ready Course of Study (FRC), which establishes a minimum requirement of 22 credits across core academic subjects and electives. In addition, for students entering grade 9 in the 2026–27 school year and beyond, North Carolina requires completion of at least one Computer Science credit, reflecting the growing importance of digital literacy, computational thinking, and technology-driven problem solving in modern education and the workforce (NC DPI, 2026).

Building upon this state framework, VALA NC implements a pathway-based course design that integrates rigorous core instruction with workforce-aligned electives and advanced 21st-century learning opportunities, including fields such as data science, artificial intelligence, engineering, and health sciences. This structure ensures compliance with state policy while also positioning students to develop relevant skills for high-demand careers. Research indicates that aligning high school coursework with labor market trends and postsecondary expectations significantly enhances college readiness, career preparedness, and long-term student outcomes (Holzman et al., 2024; Plasman, 2025).

Furthermore, while the FRC defines minimum credit requirements, NC DPI explicitly allows schools to recommend additional coursework to strengthen student readiness for life after high school. VALA NC leverages this flexibility by encouraging students to pursue advanced mathematics, computer science, world languages, and pathway-specific electives as part of individualized four-year plans. This approach promotes deeper content mastery, supports diverse postsecondary goals, and ensures that students graduate not only meeting state requirements, but also equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in a rapidly changing global economy (NC DPI, 2026).

Table 1. Graduation Requirements and VALA NC Course Structure

Graduation Area	NC Minimum Requirement	VALA NC Plan	Meets/Exceeds
English Language Arts	4 credits	English I, II, III, IV; Honors/AP options as enrollment supports	Meets/Exceeds
Mathematics	4 credits	NC Math 1, 2, 3, and a 4th math aligned to student plans; options include Math IV, Precalculus, Statistics, Calculus, Data Science	Exceeds
Social Studies	4 credits	Founding Principles/Civic Literacy, Economics and Personal Finance, American History, World History	Meets
Health/PE	1 credit	Health/PE with CPR instruction	Meets
Required Electives	2 credits from CTE, Arts, or World Language	Students complete at least 2 credits from these areas; VALA NC strongly recommends	Exceeds

		completing more than the minimum	
Additional Electives	4 credits for current 22-credit framework; 3 additional electives after 2026–27 CS requirement	Students complete pathway-based electives tied to college/career goals	Meets/Exceeds
Computer Science	Required for students entering grade 9 in 2026–27 and later	VALA NC will require/offer Computer Science Foundations and pathway options in AI, programming, cybersecurity, robotics, and data science	Meets/Exceeds
Postsecondary Readiness	Not a separate state credit area	Advising, capstone/research, college/career planning, dual enrollment where feasible, and pathway-based electives	Exceeds

Table 2. Recommended Core Content by Grade Span

Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
English I	English II	English III	English IV
NC Math 1	NC Math 2	NC Math 3	4th Math aligned to the pathway
Physical Science or Biology	Biology or Earth/Environmental Science	Chemistry / Physics/pathway science	Advanced science/pathway science
World History	Civic Literacy / Founding Principles	American History	Economics and Personal Finance
Health/PE	World Language / CTE / Arts	CTE / Arts / CS / AP / DE	CTE / Arts / CS / AP / DE
Computer Science Foundations or pathway elective	Pathway elective	Pathway elective	Capstone/internship / advanced elective

Table 3. Workforce-Aligned Elective Pathways

Pathway	Representative Courses	NC Workforce Alignment & Rationale
Health Science & Human Services	Health Science I–II; Anatomy & Physiology; Public Health; Biotechnology; Medical Terminology; Psychology; Medical Spanish	Healthcare is North Carolina’s largest industry sector (13% of total employment) and is projected to add ~80,000 new jobs, the highest growth among all sectors. High-demand roles include Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, and Healthcare Managers (UNC System, 2026).
Computer Science, AI & Data Science	Computer Science Foundations; Programming (Python/Java); Data	Computer and mathematical occupations are projected to add 19,309 jobs. High-demand roles include Software

	Science; Artificial Intelligence; Prompt Engineering; Cybersecurity; Machine Learning	Developers, Data Scientists, and Information Security Analysts. AI-related jobs are growing rapidly and reshaping workforce needs (UNC System, 2026; BLS, 2025).
Engineering, Robotics & Advanced Manufacturing	Engineering Design; Robotics; CAD; Electronics; Biomedical Engineering; Materials Science	Engineering occupations are projected to grow, and North Carolina continues investment in advanced manufacturing, biotechnology, and defense industries, requiring technically skilled workers (UNC System, 2026).
Business, Finance & Entrepreneurship	Entrepreneurship; Marketing; Accounting; Personal Finance; Business Analytics; Project Management; E-Commerce	Business and financial operations are projected to add 25,412 jobs, and management occupations nearly 28,000 jobs, supporting strong demand for leadership and business skills (UNC System, 2026).
Education, Leadership & Public Service	Teacher Cadet; Leadership; Public Speaking; Child Development; Education & Society; Service Learning	Education-related occupations are projected to add 8,873 jobs, and North Carolina continues to face teacher shortages across multiple subject areas (UNC System, 2026).
Arts, Media & Communication	Visual Arts; Digital Media; Graphic Design; Music; Theater; Creative Writing; Broadcasting/Podcasting; UX/UI Design	Arts and media occupations are projected to add 4,516 jobs, while also developing essential 21st-century communication and creative skills (NC DPI, 2026).
World Languages & Global Competency	Spanish I–IV; Medical Spanish; Business Spanish; (additional languages as enrollment allows)	Supports NC graduation requirements and workforce communication needs, particularly in healthcare, education, and service sectors (NC DPI, 2026).

NCSSM-Inspired Advanced Electives

To position VALA NC as a high-quality virtual school with rigorous and future-ready offerings, the school will adapt selected elective concepts that are inspired by the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (NCSSM). NCSSM’s publicly available course catalog includes offerings such as Foundations of Data Science, Advanced Data Science, Machine Learning, Robotics Design, Entrepreneurship, Biomedical Engineering, Honors Public Health, Data Ethics and Data Justice in the Age of AI, and AI-related coursework. VALA NC does not propose to duplicate NCSSM’s entire program, but it does propose to borrow the spirit of these advanced offerings in ways that are scalable and appropriate for a statewide virtual charter school.

Accordingly, VALA NC’s advanced elective menu may include courses such as Artificial Intelligence Foundations, Prompt Engineering and Applied Generative AI, Data Science, Machine Learning, Robotics and Automation, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Biomedical

Engineering, Public Health, Data Ethics, and Research/Capstone Seminar. These courses are justified not only by NCSSM's example but also by North Carolina's projected demand in healthcare, computing, engineering, management, and knowledge-based sectors.

Staffing, Budget Alignment, and Flexible Instructional Delivery Model

VALA NC's high school course offerings are intentionally designed to balance academic rigor, breadth of opportunity, and fiscal responsibility within a scalable virtual learning environment. While all core graduation requirements will be delivered by full-time, North Carolina-licensed teachers, the school will implement a flexible instructional delivery model for specialized and advanced electives. This approach allows VALA NC to expand access to high-quality and future-oriented coursework without overextending staffing capacity or creating unsustainable budget commitments. Research and policy guidance emphasize that effective virtual and secondary school models must combine strong core instruction with flexible staffing and partnership structures to meet diverse student needs while maintaining financial sustainability (NC DPI, 2026; Plasman, 2025).

All required courses (including English, mathematics, science, social studies, Health/Physical Education, and foundational computer science) will be delivered by full-time, state-licensed teachers. This ensures full alignment with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, consistency in curriculum implementation and assessment practices, and the development of strong student-teacher relationships that support engagement and accountability. Studies of effective online and blended learning environments consistently show that teacher presence, instructional coherence, and structured support systems are critical factors in student success and persistence (Borup et al., 2020; Chui, 2025).

For specialized electives, particularly in rapidly evolving or high-demand fields such as Artificial Intelligence, cybersecurity, data science, entrepreneurship, and biomedical sciences, VALA NC will strategically utilize adjunct and part-time instructors. These may include industry professionals, university faculty, graduate-level instructors, and retired educators with specialized expertise. This model provides students with access to current, real-world knowledge and industry-relevant skills, which are increasingly important in preparing students for modern workforce demands (UNC System, 2026). At the same time, it allows the school to offer niche or emerging courses without requiring full-time staffing for low-enrollment subjects, thereby improving cost efficiency and program flexibility.

To ensure instructional quality and compliance, all adjunct-led courses will operate under clearly defined quality assurance structures. Adjunct instructors will either meet state instructional requirements or be paired with a licensed teacher of record, consistent with North Carolina policy. Curriculum, pacing, and assessments will be aligned with VALA NC standards, and school leadership will monitor instruction through regular review processes. This hybrid model—combining certified oversight with content expertise—reflects best practices in expanding advanced course access while maintaining accountability (NC DPI, 2026).

VALA NC will also leverage dual enrollment opportunities through North Carolina's Career and College Promise (CCP) program as a central strategy for expanding course offerings. Through

CCP, eligible students may enroll in community college courses (both technical and transfer pathways) and, where available, university-affiliated courses. These opportunities allow students to earn dual credit (high school and college), accelerate their academic progress, and gain early exposure to college-level expectations. Research indicates that dual enrollment programs improve college readiness, increase postsecondary enrollment, and reduce time to degree completion (NC DPI, 2026; Plasman, 2025). In addition, CCP participation supports workforce development by connecting students to high-demand fields such as healthcare, information technology, and advanced manufacturing, which are identified as priority sectors in North Carolina's economic projections (UNC System, 2026).

Beyond CCP, VALA NC will pursue additional partnership opportunities to enhance course access and relevance. These may include articulation agreements with community colleges, virtual enrichment or honors seminars led by university partners, and workforce-aligned certification programs in areas such as IT support, cybersecurity, and healthcare services. Such partnerships strengthen the connection between high school education and real-world pathways while expanding opportunities for students without significantly increasing staffing costs.

To further broaden course offerings while maintaining efficiency, VALA NC may adopt a blended and consortium-based approach to elective delivery. This includes collaborating with other schools or virtual programs to share low-enrollment advanced courses, such as AP Physics, AI Ethics, or world languages with limited demand. The school may also utilize vetted online course providers, such as the North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS) or equivalent platforms, for select advanced or specialized courses. In addition, VALA NC may implement a teacher-of-record plus content expert model, in which a licensed teacher ensures compliance and instructional oversight while a subject-matter expert contributes specialized knowledge. These approaches are consistent with emerging models in online and hybrid education that emphasize flexibility, resource sharing, and expanded access to high-quality instruction (Borup et al., 2020; NC DPI, 2026).

VALA NC's course scheduling will be guided by a pathway-based and demand-driven approach. Rather than offering all electives every year, the school will prioritize high-demand pathways—such as healthcare, computer science/AI, and business—and offer electives in rotating cycles based on student interest and enrollment levels. As the student population grows, additional courses will be introduced in a phased manner. This strategy ensures efficient use of staffing, maintains viable class sizes, and supports sustainable budget growth while still providing students with meaningful choice and pathway continuity.

Overall, this multi-layered staffing and instructional model allows VALA NC to maintain high-quality core instruction, reduce fixed personnel costs, and scale advanced offerings responsibly. By aligning staffing decisions with enrollment patterns and leveraging partnerships and flexible delivery models, the school can provide a broad and future-ready curriculum without compromising financial sustainability. Research and policy guidance consistently indicate that flexible staffing structures, dual enrollment opportunities, and industry partnerships enhance both educational access and cost-effectiveness while improving student readiness for college and careers (NC DPI, 2026; UNC System, 2026; Plasman, 2025).

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Appendix B: Curriculum Outline per Grade Span

Executive Summary

The VALA NC K–12 Science Instructional Framework provides a coherent, standards-aligned approach to science education grounded in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and informed by research-based best practices. Built upon the 5A Learning Framework (Active Learning, Adaptive Instruction, Accountable Systems, Authentic Experiences, and Accessible Education) the model engages students in phenomenon-driven learning that integrates scientific content with real-world problem solving. Across all grade levels, students develop critical skills in modeling, data analysis, explanation, and evidence-based reasoning through multimodal, student-centered instruction. The framework ensures vertical alignment from kindergarten through high school, incorporates Universal Design for Learning (UDL 3.0) principles for equitable access, and emphasizes performance-based assessment to support mastery and college and career readiness.

Introduction

This document presents the K–12 Science Instructional Framework for the Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALA NC), designed to align fully with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study while advancing a coherent, research-based vision for science teaching and learning. The framework reflects VALA NC’s commitment to developing scientifically literate students who can think critically, solve complex problems, and apply their knowledge to real-world contexts.

Grounded in the principles of the 5A Learning Framework (Active Learning, Adaptive Instruction, Accountable Systems, Authentic Experiences, and Accessible Education) this model ensures that students are not passive recipients of information but active participants in constructing knowledge. Across all grade levels, instruction is intentionally designed to engage students in meaningful scientific practices, including modeling, data analysis, explanation, and evidence-based argumentation, which are essential for deep conceptual understanding and long-term retention.

The instructional design follows an **OpenSciEd**-inspired, phenomenon-driven approach, in which learning is anchored in compelling, real-world questions and observable events. These phenomena provide coherence across units and grade levels, allowing students to build knowledge progressively while making connections across physical science, life science, and Earth and space science domains. This approach reflects established research demonstrating that integrating disciplinary core ideas with science and engineering practices enhances student engagement and understanding. This document is organized to provide:

- Grade-level instructional model statements (K–12) explicitly aligned to North Carolina standards
- Unit-level structures with driving questions, core concepts, and practices
- Learning modalities and assessment approaches that reflect best practices in science education
- A clear vertical progression of scientific knowledge and skills, ensuring coherence from early elementary through high school

Instruction across all grades is multimodal, student-centered, and inclusive, incorporating hands-on and virtual investigations, simulations, data-rich experiences, and collaborative discourse. Consistent with Universal Design for Learning (UDL 3.0), the

framework ensures that all students—regardless of background, ability, or learning needs—have equitable access to rigorous and engaging science instruction.

Assessment is embedded throughout the learning process and emphasizes performance-based demonstrations of understanding, including modeling, explanation, data analysis, and design solutions. This approach supports continuous feedback, mastery-oriented learning, and preparation for college, careers, and informed citizenship.

Overall, this framework reflects VALA NC's vision to create a coherent, engaging, and future-ready science program in which students learn not only scientific content, but also how to think, investigate, and innovate as scientists and problem-solvers in an increasingly complex world.

KINDERGARTEN

Grade	Unit	Driving Question	Description	Core Concepts	Key Practices	Learning Modalities & Tools	Assessment
K	K.1 Energy: Sunlight	Why do some surfaces get hot, and how can we make them less hot?	Students observe how sunlight warms different surfaces and compare which materials become hotter. They design simple solutions (e.g., shade) to reduce heating.	Sunlight warms Earth's surfaces; materials respond differently to sunlight; solutions can reduce heating.	Observing; comparing; asking questions; designing solutions; testing ideas; communicating.	Outdoor observations; classroom materials; simple investigations; drawings; teacher-guided discussion; visual supports.	Observation notes; drawings/models; oral explanations; simple design task.
K	K.2 Weather	How can we be prepared for the weather?	Students observe daily weather, record data, identify patterns, and learn how weather information helps people prepare and stay safe.	Weather changes daily; patterns can be observed; weather affects daily life.	Observing; recording data; identifying patterns; communicating information.	Weather charts; class calendars; outdoor observations; videos; read-alouds; visual symbols.	Weather journals; class discussions; oral explanations; simple pattern recognition tasks.
K	K.3 Forces & Motion	How can we move things to where we want them to go?	Students explore pushes and pulls and how they change motion. They apply learning to move objects toward a target.	Pushes and pulls cause motion; strength and direction affect movement.	Investigating; testing; comparing; describing motion; applying ideas.	Ramps; balls; classroom manipulatives; hands-on exploration; collaborative play; teacher modeling.	Performance tasks; teacher observations; drawings; oral explanations.
K	K.4 Plants, Animals, & Their Environments	Do birds, other animals, and plants need people to help them live?	Students observe living things, identify their needs, and explore how environments and human actions affect their survival.	Living things have needs; plants and animals depend on environments; humans can	Observing; comparing; classifying; modeling; communicating.	Nature observations; classroom plants; images/videos; sorting activities; drawings; discussions.	Drawings/models; classification tasks; oral explanations; teacher observation checklists.

				help or harm living things.			

Instructional Model Statement (Kindergarten)

Instruction in Kindergarten establishes the foundation for scientific sensemaking by developing students' ability to observe, describe, compare patterns, and communicate evidence-based ideas about the natural world. At VALA NC, instruction is explicitly aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (2023) for Kindergarten Science, including:

- PS.K.1 – Properties of Objects and Materials: Students observe and describe physical properties of materials and how they are used (Unit K.1).
- PS.K.2 – Motion and Stability: Students investigate pushes and pulls and how they affect the motion of objects (Unit K.3).
- ESS.K.1 – Weather and Climate Patterns: Students observe, describe, and record daily and seasonal weather patterns (Unit K.2).
- LS.K.1 – Characteristics of Living Organisms: Students identify basic needs and characteristics of living things (Unit K.4).
- LS.K.2 – Organisms and Environments: Students recognize how living things depend on their environment and how human actions affect them (Unit K.4).

Learning is organized through an OpenSciEd-inspired, phenomenon-based approach, where students explore meaningful questions about sunlight and surface heating, weather patterns, motion through pushes and pulls, and how plants and animals meet their needs. This ensures strong integration of disciplinary core ideas with science and engineering practices.

Instruction emphasizes developmentally appropriate science and engineering practices, including observing, comparing, classifying, using simple models, analyzing patterns, and communicating ideas through drawings, talk, and physical representations. Students apply these practices by investigating sunlight effects (Unit K.1), tracking weather and identifying patterns (Unit K.2), exploring motion and forces (Unit K.3), and reasoning about living organisms and their environments (Unit K.4).

Students engage with crosscutting concepts such as patterns (weather and motion), cause and effect (forces and environmental changes), and structure and function (organisms and materials). These concepts support early systems thinking and conceptual coherence. Research shows that early science learning grounded in familiar phenomena, structured discourse, and hands-on investigation strengthens engagement, language development, and long-term understanding (National Research Council, 2012; National Academies, 2022; Walker et al., 2025).

Instruction is hands-on, multimodal, and accessible, incorporating investigations, visual models, structured discussions, and age-appropriate tools. Teachers provide scaffolds such as guided questioning, vocabulary supports, and flexible grouping, aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL 3.0) principles (CAST, 2024).

Assessment is continuous, formative, and performance-based, embedded within instruction. Students demonstrate understanding through drawings, models, observations, and oral explanations. This supports a developmental progression from exploration to description to early explanation, preparing students for increasingly sophisticated modeling and reasoning in later grades.

GRADE 1

Grade	Unit	Driving Question	Description	Core Concepts	Key Practices	Learning Modalities & Tools	Assessment
1	1.1 Waves: Light	How can we read under covers when it is dark?	Students investigate how light interacts with materials (transparent, translucent, opaque) and how light enables visibility. They design simple solutions to allow reading in dark conditions.	Light is needed to see; materials affect light transmission; light can be reflected.	Observing; testing materials; comparing; modeling; explaining with evidence.	Flashlights; fabric/plastic/paper testing; hands-on investigations; drawings; digital visuals.	Student models; comparison charts; oral explanations; performance task (design solution).
1	1.2 Waves: Sound	How can we communicate using objects that make sound?	Students explore how vibrations produce sound and how sound can transmit information. They design and test sound-based communication devices.	Vibrations create sound; sound transmits energy; sound carries information.	Investigating; designing; testing; revising; modeling; communicating.	Sound tools; instruments; cups/string devices; engineering materials; collaborative builds.	Design rubric; student explanations; sketches; observation notes.
1	1.3 Space: Sky Patterns	What patterns of the Sun, Moon, and stars can we observe, describe, and predict?	Students observe and record patterns of the Sun, Moon, and stars and use data to make simple predictions about daily and seasonal cycles.	Celestial patterns; predictability; day/night cycles; seasonal light changes.	Observing; recording; identifying patterns; graphing; predicting; explaining.	Sky journals; charts; outdoor observations; videos; digital simulations.	Journals; graphs; prediction tasks; oral explanations; teacher conferencing.
1	1.4 Animal & Plant Traits	How do the ways plants and animals look and act help them live and grow?	Students examine how structures and behaviors help plants and animals survive and meet their needs in different environments.	Structure and function; organism needs; environment interactions.	Observing; comparing; classifying; modeling; explaining;	Nature observations; plant studies; videos; sorting tasks; drawings; discussions.	Drawings/models; classification tasks; oral explanations; performance tasks.

Condensed Instructional Model Statement (Grade 1)

Instruction in Grade 1 advances students' ability to construct explanations, recognize patterns, and use simple models to understand the natural world. At VALA NC, instruction is explicitly aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (2023) for K–2 Science, including:

- PS.1.1 – Light and Its Interactions: Students explain how light interacts with objects and materials and how it enables visibility (Unit 1.1).
- PS.1.2 – Sound and Vibrations: Students investigate how vibrations produce sound and how sound can be used to communicate and transfer information (Unit 1.2).
- ESS.1.1 – Patterns in the Sky: Students observe, describe, and predict patterns of the Sun, Moon, and stars (Unit 1.3).
- LS.1.1 – Structure and Function of Organisms: Students analyze how external structures of plants and animals support survival and growth (Unit 1.4).
- LS.1.2 – Needs of Living Organisms: Students explain how plants and animals obtain what they need to survive within their environments (Unit 1.4).

Learning is organized through an OpenSciEd-inspired, phenomenon-based approach, where students investigate real-world questions such as visibility in the dark, sound-based communication, observable sky patterns, and how plant and animal traits support survival. This ensures strong alignment between disciplinary core ideas and science and engineering practices.

Instruction emphasizes science and engineering practices, including planning and carrying out investigations, analyzing patterns, developing and using models, constructing explanations, and designing simple solutions. Students apply these practices by exploring light and visibility (Unit 1.1), investigating sound and vibrations (Unit 1.2), modeling sky patterns (Unit 1.3), and explaining how organism structures and needs support survival (Unit 1.4).

Students engage deeply with crosscutting concepts such as patterns (sky observations and sound), cause and effect (light and sound interactions), and structure and function (organisms). These concepts support coherent understanding and transfer across domains. Research shows that anchoring learning in meaningful phenomena and engaging students in structured discourse improves conceptual understanding and retention (National Research Council, 2012; National Academies, 2022; Walker et al., 2025).

Instruction is multimodal and accessible, incorporating hands-on investigations, visual models, structured discussions, and age-appropriate digital tools. Teachers provide scaffolds such as guided questioning, academic vocabulary supports, and flexible grouping, aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL 3.0) principles (CAST, 2024).

Assessment is continuous, formative, and performance-based, aligned with NC standards and embedded within instruction. Students demonstrate understanding through drawings, models, oral explanations, data representations, and simple engineering design tasks. This supports a clear developmental progression from early explanation to modeling and design, preparing students for increasing rigor in later grades.

GRADE 2

Grade	Unit	Driving Question	Description	Core Concepts	Key Practices	Learning Modalities & Tools	Assessment
2	2.1 Earth: Land Changing Shape	How do wind and water change the shape of the land and what can we do about it?	Students investigate how wind and water change land through processes such as erosion and deposition. They design and test solutions to reduce these effects.	Wind and water change land; erosion and deposition; landforms can change over time; solutions can reduce impacts.	Observing; modeling; investigating; analyzing cause and effect; designing solutions; testing and revising.	Stream tables; sand/soil models; water flow investigations; videos; diagrams; collaborative problem-solving.	Models; investigation records; explanations; engineering design task; performance rubric.
2	2.2 Structure & Properties of Matter	How can we design a new toy?	Students investigate properties of materials and how those properties determine how materials can be used. They apply learning to design and build a toy.	Materials have observable properties; properties determine function; different materials are suited for different purposes.	Testing; comparing; classifying; designing; building; evaluating solutions.	Hands-on material testing; building materials; sorting activities; design sketches; collaborative construction.	Design rubric; material comparison charts; student explanations; prototypes.
2	2.3 Habitats & Biodiversity	What lives where?	Students investigate habitats and biodiversity, exploring how plants and animals depend on their environments and how different habitats support different organisms.	Organisms live in specific habitats; biodiversity varies by environment; organisms depend on resources.	Observing; classifying; analyzing patterns; modeling ecosystems; explaining relationships.	Habitat models; videos; field observations; sorting tasks; diagrams; discussions.	Models; classification tasks; explanations; ecosystem diagrams; teacher observations.
2	2.4 Plants	How can plants grow in different places?	Students explore plant growth, needs, and life cycles, and how environmental	Plants need water, light, and nutrients; growth depends on conditions; plant	Investigating; measuring; recording data; comparing;	Plant experiments; growth tracking charts; classroom	Growth journals; data charts; explanations;

			conditions affect plant development.	structures support survival.	explaining; modeling growth.	plants; digital visuals; notebooks.	performance tasks; teacher conferencing.

Instructional Model Statement (Grade 2)

Instruction in Grade 2 strengthens students’ ability to analyze relationships, recognize patterns, and apply knowledge through investigation and design. At VALA NC, instruction is explicitly aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (2023) for K–2 Science, including:

- ESS.2.1 – Earth Surface Processes: Students investigate how wind and water shape Earth’s surface and design solutions to reduce the effects of erosion (Unit 2.1).
- PS.2.1 – Structure and Properties of Matter: Students analyze properties of materials and determine how those properties make materials suitable for specific purposes (Unit 2.2).
- LS.2.1 – Ecosystems and Interactions: Students examine relationships among organisms and their environments, including how habitats support survival (Unit 2.3).
- LS.2.2 – Growth and Development of Plants: Students investigate plant needs and factors affecting growth and survival (Unit 2.4).

Learning is organized through an OpenSciEd-inspired, phenomenon-based approach, where students investigate real-world questions about land changes caused by wind and water, material properties for designing objects, relationships between organisms and habitats, and how plants grow under different conditions. This ensures strong alignment between disciplinary core ideas and science and engineering practices.

Instruction emphasizes science and engineering practices, including planning and carrying out investigations, analyzing and interpreting data, developing and using models, constructing explanations, and designing solutions. Students apply these practices by modeling erosion and testing mitigation strategies (Unit 2.1), designing and building objects based on material properties (Unit 2.2), analyzing habitat relationships (Unit 2.3), and investigating plant growth under varying conditions (Unit 2.4).

Students engage deeply with crosscutting concepts such as cause and effect (erosion and environmental change), structure and function (materials and organisms), systems and system models (ecosystems), and patterns (plant growth and biodiversity). These concepts support deeper conceptual understanding and transfer across domains. Research shows that integrating practices with content and anchoring learning in meaningful phenomena enhances student engagement and long-term retention (National Research Council, 2012; National Academies, 2022; Walker et al., 2025).

Instruction is multimodal and accessible, incorporating hands-on investigations, modeling, collaborative problem-solving, structured discussions, and digital tools. Teachers provide scaffolds such as guided questioning, academic vocabulary supports, and flexible grouping, aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL 3.0) principles (CAST, 2024).

Assessment is formative and performance-based, embedded throughout instruction and aligned with NC standards. Students demonstrate understanding through models, data collection, explanations, and engineering design tasks. This supports progression from observation and explanation to modeling and design, preparing students for increasing rigor in upper elementary grades.

GRADE 3

Grade	Unit	Driving Question	Description	Core Concepts	Key Practices	Learning Modalities & Tools	Assessment
3	3.1 Forces & Interactions	How can we design objects to balance and move in different ways?	Students investigate forces, motion, and balance, exploring how pushes and pulls affect movement and stability. They design and test objects that balance and move in controlled ways.	Forces affect motion; balance and stability depend on design; motion can be controlled through force and structure.	Planning investigations; testing; measuring; analyzing motion; designing solutions; revising models.	Ramps; weights; balance tools; hands-on engineering tasks; simulations; collaborative design challenges.	Performance tasks; design rubrics; data tables; student explanations; model evaluations.
3	3.2 Weather & Hazards	Why do plants only grow well in certain places, and how can we protect them?	Students explore how weather and climate influence plant growth and investigate environmental hazards. They design solutions to reduce the impact of hazards on plants.	Weather and climate affect living things; environmental conditions influence growth; hazards impact ecosystems; solutions can reduce effects.	Analyzing data; identifying patterns; modeling systems; designing solutions; constructing explanations.	Climate maps; plant growth investigations; data analysis charts; videos; simulations; collaborative problem-solving.	Data analysis tasks; models; explanations; design solutions; performance-based assessments.
3	3.3 Trait Variations	Why do animals look and act the way they do?	Students investigate inherited and learned traits and how variations help organisms survive. They analyze patterns in traits and connect them to environmental adaptation.	Traits vary among organisms; inherited and learned traits; traits support survival; variation leads to differences in populations.	Observing; comparing; analyzing patterns; using data; constructing explanations; argument from evidence.	Trait comparison charts; videos; data sets; modeling activities; discussions; visual supports.	Explanations; comparison charts; models; oral arguments; teacher observations.

3	3.4 Ecosystem Change & Survival	Why do animals and plants live where they do and what should we do when it changes?	Students examine ecosystems, organism interactions, and environmental changes. They analyze how changes affect survival and propose solutions to support ecosystems.	Ecosystems involve interactions; organisms depend on resources; environmental changes impact survival; humans can influence outcomes.	Modeling ecosystems; analyzing cause and effect; interpreting data; designing solutions; communicating evidence.	Ecosystem models; food web diagrams; simulations; case studies; discussions; digital tools.	Models; data interpretation; explanations; solution design tasks; performance assessments.

Instructional Model Statement (Grade 3)

Instruction in Grade 3 advances students' ability to analyze systems, interpret data, and explain interactions within physical, life, and Earth systems. At VALA NC, instruction is explicitly aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (2023) for Grades 3–5 Science, including:

- PS.3.1 – Forces and Motion: Students investigate how forces affect motion and stability and design solutions involving balanced and unbalanced forces (Unit 3.1).
- ESS.3.1 – Weather, Climate, and Environmental Conditions: Students analyze how weather and environmental conditions affect organisms and design solutions to reduce the impact of hazards (Unit 3.2).
- LS.3.1 – Inheritance and Variation of Traits: Students explain how traits are inherited and how variation exists within populations (Unit 3.3).
- LS.3.2 – Ecosystems and Interactions: Students examine how organisms interact with each other and their environment and how changes affect survival (Unit 3.4).

Learning is organized through an OpenSciEd-inspired, phenomenon-based approach, where students investigate real-world questions about motion and balance, environmental conditions affecting plant growth, variation in organism traits, and ecosystem stability and change. This ensures strong integration of disciplinary core ideas with science and engineering practices. Instruction emphasizes science and engineering practices, including planning and carrying out investigations, analyzing and interpreting data, developing and using models, constructing explanations, and designing solutions. Students apply these practices by designing balanced and moving systems (Unit 3.1), analyzing weather and environmental impacts and proposing mitigation strategies (Unit 3.2), explaining trait variation and inheritance (Unit 3.3), and modeling ecosystem interactions and responses to change (Unit 3.4).

Students engage deeply with crosscutting concepts such as cause and effect (forces and environmental change), systems and system models (ecosystems), patterns (trait variation and weather), and structure and function (organism traits). These concepts support coherent understanding and transfer of knowledge across scientific domains. Research indicates that integrating practices, crosscutting

concepts, and disciplinary core ideas improves conceptual understanding and long-term retention (National Research Council, 2012; National Academies, 2022; Walker et al., 2025).

Instruction is multimodal and student-centered, incorporating hands-on investigations, data analysis, modeling, collaborative discourse, and digital tools. Teachers provide scaffolds such as structured questioning, academic vocabulary supports, and differentiated instruction aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL 3.0) principles (CAST, 2024).

Assessment is formative, performance-based, and embedded within instruction, aligned with NC standards. Students demonstrate understanding through models, data interpretation, explanations, and engineering design tasks. This supports progression toward analytical thinking, systems modeling, and solution design, preparing students for upper elementary rigor.

GRADE 4

Grade	Unit	Driving Question	Description	Core Concepts	Key Practices	Learning Modalities & Tools	Assessment
4	4.1 Energy Transfer: Collisions	Why does an object's motion change?	Students investigate how energy is transferred during collisions and how forces affect motion. They analyze how speed, mass, and contact interactions influence changes in motion.	Energy transfer through collisions; forces change motion; motion depends on mass and speed; interactions between objects.	Planning investigations; measuring; analyzing data; modeling interactions; constructing explanations.	Motion experiments; ramps; collision setups; data tables; simulations; collaborative investigations.	Data analysis; models; explanations; performance tasks; investigation reports.
4	4.2 Energy Transfer: Electricity	How do we power clocks and other devices?	Students explore how electrical energy flows in circuits and how energy is transferred to power devices. They design and test simple circuits to solve real-world problems.	Energy transfer in circuits; electrical flow requires a complete circuit; energy can be converted into light, sound, or motion.	Designing circuits; testing; troubleshooting; modeling systems; explaining energy transfer.	Circuit kits; batteries; wires; bulbs; simulations; collaborative design tasks.	Circuit design tasks; models; explanations; troubleshooting logs; performance-based assessments.
4	4.3 Earth Processes	What causes land and things on it	Students investigate weathering, erosion, and deposition and analyze	Earth surface processes; weathering,	Modeling processes; analyzing data;	Stream tables; soil/rock investigations;	Models; data interpretation; explanations;

		to change? How can we reduce the impacts on humans?	how these processes shape Earth's surface. They design solutions to reduce the impact of natural processes on humans.	erosion, deposition; natural hazards; human mitigation strategies.	identifying cause and effect; designing solutions; evaluating outcomes.	maps; videos; simulations; case studies.	engineering solutions; performance tasks.
4	4.4 Structure & Function	How do plants' and animals' structures function together to meet their needs?	Students examine internal and external structures of plants and animals and how these structures support survival, growth, and reproduction.	Structure-function relationships; systems within organisms; survival and reproduction; adaptation.	Observing; modeling systems; comparing structures; explaining relationships; argument from evidence.	Diagrams; models; videos; dissections (virtual/physical); data sets; discussions.	Models; explanations; comparison charts; system diagrams; teacher observations.

Instructional Model Statement (Grade 4)

Instruction in Grade 4 advances students' ability to analyze energy systems, interpret interactions, and apply scientific understanding through modeling and engineering design. At VALA NC, instruction is explicitly aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (2023) for Grades 3–5 Science, including:

- PS.4.1 – Energy and Motion: Students analyze how energy is transferred during collisions and how motion changes as a result of forces acting on objects (Unit 4.1).
- PS.4.2 – Energy Transfer and Electrical Systems: Students investigate how energy is transferred in electrical systems, including the design and function of simple circuits (Unit 4.2).
- ESS.4.1 – Earth Processes, Landforms, and Hazards: Students explain how natural processes shape Earth's surface and evaluate solutions to reduce the impacts of natural hazards (Unit 4.3).
- LS.4.1 – Structure, Function, and Information Processing: Students analyze how internal and external structures of organisms support survival, growth, and response to the environment (Unit 4.4).

Learning is organized through an OpenSciEd-inspired, phenomenon-based approach, where students investigate real-world questions about motion changes due to collisions, energy transfer in electrical systems, Earth processes shaping landforms, and how organism structures support survival. This ensures strong integration of disciplinary core ideas with science and engineering practices. Instruction emphasizes science and engineering practices, including planning and carrying out investigations, analyzing and interpreting data, developing and using models, constructing explanations, and designing solutions. Students apply these practices by analyzing motion and collisions (Unit 4.1), designing and troubleshooting electrical circuits (Unit 4.2), modeling Earth processes and mitigating hazards (Unit 4.3), and explaining structure–function relationships in organisms (Unit 4.4).

Students engage deeply with crosscutting concepts such as energy and matter (energy transfer), cause and effect (forces and Earth processes), systems and system models (circuits, organisms, and Earth systems), and structure and function (biological systems). These concepts support deeper conceptual understanding and transfer across domains. Research shows that integrating practices with content and engaging students in modeling and design enhances scientific reasoning and retention (National Research Council, 2012; National Academies, 2022; Walker et al., 2025).

Instruction is multimodal and student-centered, incorporating hands-on investigations, modeling, data analysis, collaborative discourse, and digital tools. Teachers provide scaffolds such as guided questioning, academic vocabulary supports, and differentiation aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL 3.0) principles (CAST, 2024).

Assessment is formative and performance-based, embedded within instruction and aligned with NC standards. Students demonstrate understanding through models, data analysis, explanations, and engineering design tasks. This supports progression toward systems thinking, energy reasoning, and applied problem-solving, preparing students for the increased rigor of upper elementary and middle school science.

GRADE 5

Grade	Unit	Driving Question	Description	Core Concepts	Key Practices	Learning Modalities & Tools	Assessment
5	5.1 Ecosystems & Matter Cycling	How does a nurse log help other things live and grow?	Students investigate how matter cycles through ecosystems, focusing on decomposition and how organisms depend on one another for survival. They model how nutrients are recycled and support life.	Matter cycles through ecosystems; decomposition supports life; organisms depend on one another; energy and matter flow through systems.	Modeling systems; analyzing relationships; interpreting data; constructing explanations; argument from evidence.	Ecosystem models; decomposition investigations; food web diagrams; videos; simulations; collaborative discussions.	Models; explanations; system diagrams; data interpretation; performance tasks.
5	5.2 Matter Properties	How can we make water healthy for all living things?	Students investigate properties of matter, mixtures, and solutions, and design methods to	Matter has properties; mixtures can be separated; solutions form from	Investigating; measuring; analyzing data; designing solutions;	Water filtration experiments; lab investigations;	Lab reports; data analysis; design solutions; explanations;

			separate substances and improve water quality.	dissolved substances; water quality affects living systems.	testing and refining methods.	measurement tools; data charts; simulations; collaborative problem-solving.	performance-based assessments.
5	5.3 Earth Systems	How does changing the flow of water impact Earth's systems, and how can humans help?	Students investigate interactions among Earth systems, focusing on how water movement shapes land and affects ecosystems and human activity. They design solutions to reduce negative impacts.	Earth systems interact; water drives changes in land and ecosystems; human actions affect natural systems; mitigation strategies can reduce impacts.	Modeling systems; analyzing cause and effect; interpreting data; designing solutions; evaluating outcomes.	Watershed models; maps; simulations; case studies; data analysis; collaborative tasks.	Models; data interpretation; explanations; engineering solutions; performance tasks.
5	5.4 Sun, Moon, & Star Patterns	How and why does what I see in the sky change?	Students investigate patterns of celestial objects and explain changes in appearance based on Earth's rotation and position relative to the Sun and Moon.	Earth's rotation causes day/night; celestial patterns are predictable; relative positions affect observations; systems operate in cycles.	Observing; modeling; analyzing patterns; explaining systems; using data.	Sky simulations; models; diagrams; videos; data charts; interactive tools.	Models; explanations; pattern analysis; diagrams; teacher conferencing.

Instructional Model Statement (Grade 5)

Instruction in Grade 5 advances students' ability to analyze complex systems, trace matter and energy, and apply scientific understanding through modeling and engineering design. At VALA NC, instruction is explicitly aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (2023) for Grades 3–5 Science, including:

- LS.5.1 – Ecosystems and Interactions: Students develop models to describe the movement of matter among organisms, ecosystems, and the environment, and analyze interactions within ecosystems (Unit 5.1).
- LS.5.2 – Energy Flow in Ecosystems: Students explain how energy flows through food webs from producers to consumers and decomposers (Unit 5.1).
- PS.5.1 – Structure and Properties of Matter: Students investigate properties of matter, including mixtures and solutions, and apply methods for separating substances based on physical properties (Unit 5.2).

- ESS.5.1 – Earth Systems and Water Processes: Students analyze interactions among Earth’s systems, including the role of water in shaping Earth’s surface and supporting life (Unit 5.3).
- ESS.5.2 – Earth–Space Relationships: Students use models to explain patterns of the Sun, Moon, and stars, including their apparent motion and observable cycles (Unit 5.4).

Learning is organized through an OpenSciEd-inspired, phenomenon-based approach, where students investigate real-world questions about nutrient cycling in ecosystems, water quality and material properties, interactions within Earth systems, and patterns of the Sun, Moon, and stars. This ensures strong integration of disciplinary core ideas with science and engineering practices. Instruction emphasizes science and engineering practices, including developing and using models, analyzing and interpreting data, constructing explanations, engaging in argument from evidence, and designing solutions. Students apply these practices by modeling ecosystem interactions and matter cycling (Unit 5.1), designing and testing separation and filtration systems (Unit 5.2), analyzing human impacts on Earth systems and proposing mitigation strategies (Unit 5.3), and explaining celestial patterns using system models (Unit 5.4).

Students engage deeply with crosscutting concepts such as systems and system models (ecosystems and Earth systems), energy and matter (cycling and transfer), cause and effect (human and environmental interactions), and patterns (celestial movements). These concepts support deeper understanding and transfer across domains. Research shows that integrating modeling, systems thinking, and problem-solving enhances conceptual understanding and prepares students for advanced scientific reasoning (National Research Council, 2012; National Academies, 2022; Walker et al., 2025).

Instruction is multimodal and student-centered, incorporating investigations, modeling, data analysis, collaborative discourse, and digital tools. Teachers provide scaffolds such as structured questioning, academic vocabulary supports, and differentiation aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL 3.0) principles (CAST, 2024).

Assessment is formative, performance-based, and embedded within instruction, aligned with NC standards. Students demonstrate understanding through models, data analysis, explanations, and engineering design tasks. This supports progression toward systems thinking, evidence-based reasoning, and real-world problem solving, preparing students for middle school science.

GRADE 6

Grade	Unit	Driving Question	Description	Core Concepts	Key Practices	Learning Modalities & Tools	Assessment
6	6.1 Light & Matter	Why do we sometimes see different things when	Students investigate how light interacts with matter through reflection, refraction,	Light-matter interactions; reflection, refraction,	Modeling light paths; investigating; analyzing	Ray diagrams; mirrors/lenses; simulations; visual	Models; explanations; diagrams; investigation

		looking at the same object?	and absorption, explaining how perception depends on light behavior and material properties.	absorption; perception depends on light pathways; properties of materials affect visibility.	observations; constructing explanations; using evidence.	experiments; collaborative discussions.	analysis; performance tasks.
6	6.2 Thermal Energy	How can containers keep stuff from warming up or cooling down?	Students explore thermal energy transfer (conduction, convection, radiation) and design solutions to control temperature changes in systems.	Energy transfer mechanisms; thermal equilibrium; insulation reduces energy transfer; system interactions.	Designing investigations; measuring temperature; analyzing data; modeling systems; engineering design.	Insulation experiments; thermometers; data tables; simulations; design challenges.	Lab reports; data analysis; design solutions; explanations; performance assessments.
6	6.3 Weather, Climate & Water Cycling	Why does a lot of hail, rain, or snow fall at some times and not others?	Students investigate atmospheric processes, water cycling, and factors influencing weather and climate patterns.	Water cycle; atmospheric conditions; weather vs. climate; phase changes; system interactions.	Analyzing data; modeling cycles; interpreting patterns; explaining processes; using simulations.	Weather data sets; maps; simulations; videos; graphing tools; collaborative analysis.	Data interpretation; models; explanations; pattern analysis; assessments.
6	6.4 Plate Tectonics & Rock Cycling	What causes Earth's surface to change?	Students examine plate tectonics and the rock cycle to explain how Earth's surface changes over time.	Plate movement; Earth's internal processes; rock cycle; surface change over time; geologic systems.	Modeling systems; analyzing evidence; interpreting data; constructing explanations.	Plate models; rock samples; simulations; diagrams; case studies.	Models; explanations; diagrams; data interpretation; performance tasks.
6	6.5 Natural Hazards	Where do natural hazards happen and how do we	Students analyze patterns of natural hazards and design strategies to reduce	Natural hazards; risk and probability; human mitigation	Analyzing patterns; using data; modeling risk; designing solutions;	Maps; hazard data sets; simulations; case studies;	Risk analysis; design solutions; explanations; presentations;

		prepare for them?	risks and impacts on communities.	strategies; system interactions.	evaluating outcomes.	collaborative design tasks.	performance tasks.
6	6.6 Cells & Systems	How do living things heal?	Students investigate cells, body systems, and how organisms maintain stability and repair damage.	Cells as basic units of life; body systems interactions; structure-function relationships; homeostasis and repair.	Modeling systems; analyzing interactions; explaining processes; argument from evidence.	Microscopy (virtual/physical); diagrams; simulations; data sets; discussions.	Models; explanations; system diagrams; assessments; teacher observations.

Instructional Model Statement (Grade 6)

Instruction in Grade 6 advances students' ability to analyze complex systems, trace energy and matter interactions, and apply scientific understanding through modeling and engineering design. At VALA NC, instruction is explicitly aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (2023) for Grades 6–8 Science, including:

- PS.6.1 – Energy Transfer and Interactions: Students develop and use models to explain how energy is transferred through light and thermal processes, including reflection, absorption, and heat transfer mechanisms (conduction, convection, and radiation) (Units 6.1, 6.2).
- ESS.6.1 – Earth Systems, Weather, and Climate: Students analyze how water cycles through Earth's systems and how interactions among the atmosphere, hydrosphere, and geosphere influence weather and climate patterns (Unit 6.3).
- ESS.6.2 – Earth's Changing Surface: Students explain how internal processes (plate tectonics) and surface processes (weathering, erosion, deposition) shape Earth's surface over time (Unit 6.4).
- ESS.6.3 – Natural Hazards and Human Impacts: Students analyze patterns of natural hazards and design solutions to reduce risks and impacts on human communities (Unit 6.5).
- LS.6.1 – Structure, Function, and Organization of Living Systems: Students investigate cells as the fundamental unit of life and explain how body systems interact to maintain homeostasis and support healing and repair (Unit 6.6).

Learning is organized through an OpenSciEd-inspired, phenomenon-based approach, where students investigate real-world questions about light perception, thermal insulation, weather variability, Earth surface changes, hazard mitigation, and biological repair. This ensures strong alignment between disciplinary core ideas and science and engineering practices.

Instruction emphasizes science and engineering practices, including developing and using models, analyzing and interpreting data, constructing explanations, engaging in argument from evidence, and designing solutions. Students apply these practices by modeling light behavior and perception (Unit 6.1), designing thermal systems (Unit 6.2), analyzing atmospheric and water cycle patterns (Unit 6.3), explaining plate tectonics and rock cycling (Unit 6.4), evaluating hazard risks and mitigation strategies (Unit 6.5), and modeling cellular and system interactions (Unit 6.6).

Students engage deeply with crosscutting concepts such as energy and matter (thermal and Earth systems), cause and effect (natural hazards and system changes), systems and system models (climate, tectonic, and biological systems), and structure and function (cells and tissues). These concepts support increasingly sophisticated reasoning and transfer across domains. Research shows that integrating modeling, systems thinking, and design-based learning enhances conceptual understanding and scientific literacy (National Research Council, 2012; National Academies, 2022; Walker et al., 2025).

Instruction is multimodal and student-centered, incorporating investigations, modeling, data analysis, simulations, and collaborative discourse. Teachers provide scaffolds such as structured questioning, academic vocabulary supports, and differentiation aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL 3.0) principles (CAST, 2024).

Assessment is formative, performance-based, and embedded, aligned with NC standards. Students demonstrate understanding through models, data analysis, explanations, and engineering design solutions. This supports progression toward systems thinking, evidence-based reasoning, and real-world problem solving, preparing students for advanced middle school science and high school coursework.

GRADE 7

Grade	Unit	Driving Question	Description	Core Concepts	Key Practices	Learning Modalities & Tools	Assessment
7	7.1 Chemical Reactions & Matter	How can we make something new that was not there before?	Students investigate chemical reactions and how substances combine to form new materials with different properties.	Chemical reactions create new substances; conservation of matter; atoms rearrange in reactions; observable evidence of change.	Investigating reactions; analyzing data; modeling particle interactions; constructing explanations.	Lab experiments; reaction observations; models; simulations; collaborative analysis.	Lab reports; models; explanations; performance tasks.
7	7.2 Chemical Reactions & Energy	How can we use chemical reactions to design a solution to a problem?	Students explore how energy is absorbed or released during chemical reactions and apply this	Energy changes in reactions; exothermic and endothermic processes; energy transfer; application	Designing investigations; measuring energy changes; modeling; engineering	Lab experiments; temperature probes; data analysis; simulations;	Design solutions; data analysis; explanations; performance-

			knowledge to design solutions.	in real-world systems.	design; evaluating solutions.	design challenges.	based assessments.
7	7.3 Metabolic Reactions	How do things inside our bodies work together to make us feel the way we do?	Students investigate how cells and body systems interact through metabolic processes to maintain stability.	Cells carry out life processes; systems interact; metabolism and energy use; homeostasis.	Modeling systems; analyzing interactions; explaining processes; argument from evidence.	Simulations; diagrams; data sets; case studies; discussions.	Models; explanations; system diagrams; assessments.
7	7.4 Matter Cycling & Photosynthesis	Where does food come from and where does it go next?	Students explore photosynthesis, cellular respiration, and matter cycling in ecosystems.	Matter cycles through ecosystems; photosynthesis converts energy; energy and matter flow; interconnected systems.	Modeling cycles; analyzing data; constructing explanations; tracing matter and energy.	Models; simulations; diagrams; lab investigations; discussions.	Models; explanations; cycle diagrams; performance tasks.
7	7.5 Ecosystem Dynamics	How does changing an ecosystem affect what lives there?	Students investigate how changes in ecosystems impact populations and biodiversity.	Ecosystem interactions; population dynamics; stability and change; cause and effect relationships.	Analyzing data; modeling ecosystems; predicting outcomes; constructing explanations.	Simulations; data sets; ecosystem models; case studies; collaborative discussions.	Data analysis; models; explanations; scenario-based assessments.
7	7.6 Earth's Resources & Human Impact	How do changes in the Earth's system impact our communities and what can we do about it?	Students analyze how human activities affect Earth systems and design solutions for sustainability.	Earth's resources; human impact; sustainability; environmental systems; mitigation strategies.	Analyzing systems; evaluating evidence; designing solutions; argument from evidence.	Maps; data sets; simulations; case studies; design challenges.	Solutions; explanations; presentations; performance tasks.

Instructional Model Statement (Grade 7)

Instruction in Grade 7 advances students' ability to analyze chemical systems, trace energy and matter transformations, and explain interactions within biological and Earth systems. At VALA NC, instruction is explicitly aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (2023) for Grades 6–8 Science, including:

- PS.7.1 – Structure, Properties, and Interactions of Matter: Students analyze how substances combine, rearrange, and conserve mass during chemical reactions (Unit 7.1).
- PS.7.2 – Energy in Chemical Processes and Systems: Students investigate how energy is transferred, absorbed, or released during chemical reactions and apply these concepts to design solutions (Unit 7.2).
- LS.7.1 – Structure and Function of Living Systems: Students explain how cells, tissues, and body systems interact to maintain homeostasis through metabolic processes (Unit 7.3).
- LS.7.2 – Matter and Energy in Organisms and Ecosystems: Students analyze photosynthesis, cellular respiration, and the cycling of matter and flow of energy through ecosystems (Unit 7.4).
- LS.7.3 – Ecosystem Dynamics, Functioning, and Resilience: Students evaluate how changes in environmental conditions affect populations, biodiversity, and ecosystem stability (Unit 7.5).
- ESS.7.1 – Earth's Systems, Resources, and Human Impacts: Students analyze how human activities influence Earth systems and design solutions to promote sustainability (Unit 7.6).

Learning is organized through an OpenSciEd-inspired, phenomenon-based approach, where students investigate real-world questions about chemical transformations, energy changes in reactions, body system interactions, ecosystem dynamics, and human impacts on Earth. This ensures strong integration of disciplinary core ideas with science and engineering practices.

Instruction emphasizes science and engineering practices, including developing and using models, analyzing and interpreting data, constructing explanations, engaging in argument from evidence, and designing solutions. Students apply these practices by modeling chemical reactions (Unit 7.1), designing solutions using energy changes (Unit 7.2), explaining metabolic and body system interactions (Unit 7.3), tracing matter and energy in ecosystems (Unit 7.4), analyzing ecosystem changes (Unit 7.5), and designing sustainability solutions (Unit 7.6).

Students engage deeply with crosscutting concepts such as energy and matter (chemical and biological systems), cause and effect (chemical reactions and ecosystem changes), systems and system models (cells, organisms, ecosystems, and Earth systems), and stability and change (homeostasis and environmental impacts). These concepts support increasingly sophisticated reasoning and transfer across domains. Research shows that integrating modeling, systems thinking, and design-based learning enhances conceptual understanding and scientific literacy (National Research Council, 2012; National Academies, 2022; Walker et al., 2025).

Instruction is multimodal and student-centered, incorporating laboratory investigations, modeling, simulations, data analysis, and collaborative discourse. Teachers provide scaffolds such as structured questioning, academic vocabulary supports, and differentiation aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL 3.0) principles (CAST, 2024).

Assessment is formative, performance-based, and embedded, aligned with NC standards. Students demonstrate understanding through models, data analysis, explanations, and engineering design solutions. This supports progression toward chemical reasoning, systems thinking, and real-world problem solving, preparing students for advanced middle school science and high school coursework.

GRADE 8

Course	Unit	Driving Question	Description	Core Concepts	Key Practices	Learning Modalities & Tools	Assessment
8	8.1 Contact Forces	Why do things sometimes get damaged when they hit each other?	Students investigate how forces during collisions affect motion and energy transfer, explaining why objects deform or break.	Forces during collisions; energy transfer; motion changes; deformation and damage.	Investigating; measuring; analyzing data; modeling interactions; constructing explanations.	Collision experiments; motion sensors; simulations; data tables; collaborative analysis.	Lab reports; models; explanations; performance tasks.
8	8.2 Sound Waves	How can a sound make something move?	Students explore sound as a mechanical wave and how vibrations transfer energy through matter.	Waves transfer energy; sound is vibration; amplitude and frequency affect motion; wave interactions.	Modeling waves; analyzing data; investigating; explaining phenomena.	Wave simulations; sound experiments; tuning forks; visualizations; data analysis.	Models; explanations; data interpretation; performance tasks.
8	8.3 Forces at a Distance	How can a magnet move another object without touching it?	Students investigate non-contact forces such as magnetism and gravity and how fields influence motion.	Forces act at a distance; fields mediate interactions; gravitational and magnetic forces.	Modeling fields; analyzing patterns; investigating interactions; explaining cause and effect.	Magnet experiments; simulations; field models; diagrams; collaborative tasks.	Models; explanations; diagrams; assignments.
8	8.4 Earth in Space	How are we connected to the patterns we see in the sky and space?	Students investigate Earth's place in the solar system and explain observable patterns such as seasons, phases, and eclipses.	Earth-Sun-Moon system; gravity and motion; cycles and patterns; celestial interactions.	Modeling systems; analyzing patterns; interpreting data; constructing explanations.	Simulations; models; diagrams; sky observations; digital tools.	Models; explanations; pattern analysis; diagrams; assessments.

8	8.5 Genetics	Why are living things different from one another?	Students explore inheritance, genetic variation, and how traits are passed from one generation to another.	DNA and inheritance; genetic variation; traits and reproduction; probability of traits.	Modeling inheritance; analyzing data; constructing explanations; argument from evidence.	Punnett squares; simulations; data sets; diagrams; discussions.	Models; explanations; data analysis; assessments.
8	8.6 Natural Selection & Common Ancestry	How could things living today be connected to the things that lived long ago?	Students investigate evolution, natural selection, and evidence for common ancestry across species.	Natural selection; adaptation; evolution over time; common ancestry; evidence from fossils and traits.	Analyzing evidence; modeling evolution; constructing explanations; argument from evidence.	Fossil records; simulations; data sets; case studies; discussions.	Explanations; models; evidence-based arguments; performance tasks.

Instructional Model Statement (Grade 8)

Instruction in Grade 8 advances students' ability to analyze interactions involving forces and waves, model complex Earth–space systems, and explain biological processes of inheritance and evolution. At VALA NC, instruction is explicitly aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (2023) for Grades 6–8 Science, including:

- PS.8.1 – Forces and Motion: Students investigate how forces during interactions, including collisions, affect motion, energy transfer, deformation, and system behavior (Unit 8.1).
- PS.8.2 – Waves and Energy Transfer: Students analyze mechanical waves, including sound, and explain how vibrations transfer energy through matter (Unit 8.2).
- PS.8.3 – Forces at a Distance: Students examine how gravitational and magnetic fields influence motion through non-contact interactions (Unit 8.3).
- ESS.8.1 – Earth in Space Systems: Students model interactions within the Earth–Sun–Moon system to explain observable patterns such as seasons, phases, and eclipses (Unit 8.4).
- LS.8.1 – Inheritance and Variation of Traits: Students investigate genetic inheritance, variation, and probability of traits across generations (Unit 8.5).
- LS.8.2 – Biological Evolution and Common Ancestry: Students analyze evidence for evolution, including natural selection, adaptation over time, and common ancestry (Unit 8.6).

Learning is organized through an OpenSciEd-inspired, phenomenon-based approach, where students investigate authentic questions such as why collisions cause damage, how sound travels, how magnets act at a distance, how celestial patterns occur, why organisms differ, and how living things are connected over time. These phenomena provide coherence across units and integrate

physical, Earth–space, and life science concepts through meaningful real-world contexts (National Research Council, 2012; NGSS Lead States, 2013; Walker et al., 2025).

Instruction emphasizes science and engineering practices, including investigating phenomena, developing and using models, analyzing and interpreting data, constructing explanations, and engaging in argument from evidence. Students apply these practices by modeling force interactions and collisions (Unit 8.1), analyzing wave behavior and energy transfer (Unit 8.2), explaining field-based interactions (Unit 8.3), modeling Earth–space systems and interpreting patterns (Unit 8.4), analyzing genetic data and inheritance patterns (Unit 8.5), and evaluating evolutionary evidence from fossils and traits (Unit 8.6). This integration strengthens conceptual understanding and scientific reasoning (National Academies, 2022; Walker et al., 2025).

Students engage deeply with crosscutting concepts, including energy and matter (forces and waves), cause and effect (interactions and motion), systems and system models (fields, Earth–space, and biological systems), patterns (genetics and celestial cycles), and stability and change (evolution and system dynamics). These concepts support transfer of knowledge across disciplines and preparation for high school science (National Research Council, 2012).

Instruction is multimodal and student-centered, incorporating laboratory investigations, simulations, data analysis, modeling tools, and collaborative discourse. Teachers provide scaffolds such as structured inquiry, academic vocabulary supports, and differentiation aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL 3.0) principles to ensure accessibility for all learners (CAST, 2024).

Assessment is formative, performance-based, and embedded, aligned with NC standards. Students demonstrate understanding through models, explanations, data analysis, diagrams, and evidence-based arguments. This approach supports progression toward advanced scientific reasoning, systems modeling, and evidence-based decision-making, preparing students for high school science and beyond.

HIGH SCHOOL BIOLOGY

Course	Unit	Driving Question	Description	Core Concepts	Key Practices	Learning Modalities & Tools	Assessment
HS Biology	B.1 Ecosystem Interactions & Dynamics	How do ecosystems work, and how can understanding them help us protect them?	Students investigate interactions among organisms and their environment, analyzing how ecosystems function and how human actions influence stability.	Ecosystem interactions; population dynamics; feedback systems; human impact; ecological balance.	Modeling ecosystems; analyzing data; constructing explanations; argument from evidence.	Ecosystem simulations; data sets; case studies; field observations (virtual/in-person); collaborative discussions.	Models; explanations; data analysis; performance tasks; presentations.

HS Biology	B.2 Ecosystems: Matter & Energy	What causes fires in ecosystems to burn, and how should we manage them?	Students explore how energy flows and matter cycles through ecosystems, using wildfire as a context to analyze system dynamics and management strategies.	Energy flow; matter cycling; combustion; ecosystem resilience; disturbance and recovery.	Analyzing systems; interpreting data; modeling cycles; designing solutions.	Simulations; fire ecology case studies; data analysis; modeling tools; collaborative tasks.	Data analysis; models; explanations; solution design; performance assessments.
HS Biology	B.3 Inheritance & Variation of Traits	Who gets cancer and why? What can we do about it?	Students investigate genetic inheritance, mutations, and variation, connecting molecular processes to disease and prevention strategies.	DNA structure and function; gene expression; mutations; inheritance patterns; variation.	Modeling genetic processes; analyzing data; constructing explanations; argument from evidence.	DNA models; simulations; data sets; case studies; discussions.	Models; explanations; genetic analysis; evidence-based arguments.
HS Biology	B.4 Natural Selection & Evolution of Populations	How does urbanization affect nonhuman populations, and how can we minimize harmful effects?	Students analyze how environmental changes influence natural selection and population dynamics, focusing on urban ecosystems.	Natural selection; adaptation; population change; environmental pressures; biodiversity.	Analyzing data; modeling populations; predicting outcomes; designing solutions.	Simulations; population data sets; case studies; mapping tools; discussions.	Data analysis; models; explanations; solution design; performance tasks.
HS Biology	B.5 Common Ancestry & Speciation	What will happen to Arctic bear populations as their environment changes?	Students examine evidence for common ancestry and speciation, using real-world environmental changes to predict evolutionary outcomes.	Evolutionary relationships; speciation; genetic divergence; environmental change; phylogenetics.	Analyzing evidence; modeling evolutionary processes; constructing explanations; argumentation.	Phylogenetic trees; simulations; data sets; case studies; collaborative discussions.	Models; explanations; evidence-based arguments; performance assessments.

Instructional Model Statement (High School Biology)

Instruction in High School Biology advances students' ability to analyze complex biological systems, model interactions across scales, and apply scientific reasoning to real-world and environmental challenges. At VALA NC, instruction is explicitly aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (2023) for Biology, including:

- PS.Bio.1 – Structure, Function, and Organization of Living Systems: Students analyze cellular and molecular structures, gene expression, and system interactions that support life processes (Unit B.3).
- PS.Bio.2 – Matter and Energy in Living Systems: Students investigate how matter and energy flow through organisms and ecosystems, including cycling, combustion, and ecological resilience (Units B.1, B.2).
- PS.Bio.3 – Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems: Students analyze ecosystem interactions, population dynamics, feedback systems, biodiversity, and human impacts on ecological stability (Units B.1, B.2).
- PS.Bio.4 – Inheritance and Variation of Traits: Students examine DNA structure, gene expression, mutations, and inheritance patterns, connecting molecular processes to disease and variation (Unit B.3).
- PS.Bio.5 – Evolution and Natural Selection: Students evaluate evidence for evolution, including natural selection, adaptation, common ancestry, and speciation, and predict how populations respond to environmental change (Units B.4, B.5).

Learning is organized through an OpenSciEd-inspired, phenomenon-based approach, anchored in authentic driving questions such as how ecosystems function and can be protected (B.1), how wildfires and disturbances impact ecosystems and how they can be managed (B.2), how genetic processes influence diseases like cancer (B.3), how urbanization affects biodiversity (B.4), and how species adapt to environmental change over time (B.5). These phenomena provide coherence across units and integrate ecosystem dynamics, energy flow, genetics, population biology, and evolution within meaningful real-world contexts (National Research Council, 2012; NGSS Lead States, 2013; Walker et al., 2025).

Instruction emphasizes science and engineering practices, including developing and using models, analyzing and interpreting data, constructing explanations, engaging in argument from evidence, and designing solutions. Students apply these practices by modeling ecosystem interactions and human impacts (B.1), analyzing matter and energy flow and designing management strategies (B.2), modeling genetic processes and explaining variation and disease (B.3), predicting population changes and proposing solutions to environmental challenges (B.4), and evaluating evolutionary evidence using phylogenetic and comparative data (B.5). This integration of practices with content strengthens scientific reasoning and real-world problem-solving (National Academies, 2022; Walker et al., 2025).

Students engage deeply with crosscutting concepts, including systems and system models (ecosystems and biological networks), energy and matter (biochemical and ecological processes), cause and effect (genetic and environmental interactions), stability and change (ecosystem resilience and evolution), and patterns (inheritance, biodiversity, and phylogeny). These concepts support transfer of knowledge across domains and development of systems thinking essential for modern biology (National Research Council, 2012).

Instruction is multimodal and student-centered, incorporating simulations (e.g., ecosystems, population dynamics), data analysis from real-world and case-study datasets, laboratory and modeling experiences, and collaborative discourse. Teachers provide structured inquiry, academic vocabulary supports, and differentiation aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL 3.0) principles to ensure accessibility and engagement for all learners (CAST, 2024).

Assessment is formative, performance-based, and embedded, aligned with NC standards. Students demonstrate understanding through data analysis, models, explanations, solution design, and performance tasks, including evidence-based arguments and evaluation of real-world biological issues. This approach supports progression toward advanced scientific reasoning, systems modeling, and evidence-based decision-making, preparing students for college-level science and STEM careers.

HIGH SCHOOL CHEMISTRY

Course	Topic	Driving Question	Description	Core Concepts	Key Practices	Learning Modalities & Tools	Assessment
HS Chemistry	C.1 Thermodynamics in Earth's Systems	How can we slow the flow of energy on Earth to protect vulnerable coastal communities?	Students investigate energy transfer and thermodynamic processes in Earth systems, analyzing how heat flow impacts climate and coastal environments.	Energy transfer; thermodynamics; heat flow; climate systems; human impact.	Modeling energy systems; analyzing data; constructing explanations; evaluating solutions.	Simulations; climate data sets; thermal experiments; modeling tools; case studies.	Data analysis; models; explanations; solution evaluations; performance tasks.
HS Chemistry	C.2 Structure & Properties of Matter	What causes lightning and why are some places safer than others when it strikes?	Students explore atomic structure, electron behavior, and properties of matter to explain electrical phenomena such as lightning.	Atomic structure; electron configuration; electrical charge; properties of matter; electrostatic forces.	Modeling atomic systems; analyzing patterns; explaining phenomena; argument from evidence.	Atomic models; simulations; data sets; demonstrations; discussions.	Models; explanations; data interpretation; performance assessments.
HS Chemistry	C.3 Molecular Processes in Earth Systems	How can we find, make, and recycle the substances we need to live on	Students investigate molecular processes, chemical cycles, and resource management, including synthesis	Chemical cycles; molecular interactions; resource sustainability;	Modeling systems; analyzing processes; designing solutions;	Lab investigations; simulations; case studies; data analysis;	Lab reports; models; explanations; solution design;

		and beyond Earth?	and recycling of materials.	synthesis and recycling.	evaluating impacts.	collaborative projects.	performance tasks.
HS Chemistry	C.4 Chemical Reactions in our World	Why are oysters dying, and how can we use chemistry to protect them?	Students examine chemical reactions in environmental systems, focusing on acid-base chemistry and its impact on ecosystems.	Chemical reactions; pH and acidity; environmental chemistry; equilibrium; system interactions.	Conducting experiments; analyzing data; modeling reactions; designing solutions.	Lab experiments; pH testing; simulations; data sets; environmental case studies.	Lab reports; data analysis; explanations; solution proposals; performance assessments.
HS Chemistry	C.5 Energy from Chemical & Nuclear Processes	How can chemistry help us evaluate fuels and transportation options to benefit the Earth and our communities?	Students analyze chemical and nuclear energy processes, comparing energy sources and evaluating their environmental and societal impacts.	Energy transformations; chemical and nuclear reactions; energy efficiency; sustainability; environmental impact.	Analyzing data; modeling energy systems; evaluating evidence; designing solutions.	Simulations; energy data sets; case studies; modeling tools; discussions.	Data analysis; models; explanations; evaluations; performance tasks.

Instructional Model Statement (High School Chemistry)

Instruction in High School Chemistry advances students' ability to analyze matter and energy at atomic and molecular levels, model complex chemical systems, and apply scientific reasoning to real-world and environmental challenges. At VALA NC, instruction is explicitly aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (2023) for Chemistry, including:

- PS.Chem.1 – Structure and Properties of Matter: Students analyze atomic structure, electron configuration, periodic trends, and electrostatic interactions to explain chemical and physical properties (Unit C.2).
- PS.Chem.2 – Chemical Reactions and Processes: Students investigate chemical reactions, including acid–base chemistry, equilibrium, and system interactions, and apply these concepts to environmental contexts (Unit C.4).
- PS.Chem.3 – Energy in Chemical Systems: Students analyze energy transfer and transformations, including thermodynamics, heat flow, and energy efficiency in Earth and engineered systems (Unit C.1).
- PS.PSc.3 – Nuclear Processes: Students model nuclear reactions (fission, fusion, radioactive decay) and evaluate their applications in energy production and sustainability (Unit C.5).
- PS.Chem.4 – Earth and Environmental Chemistry: Students analyze chemical processes within Earth systems, including chemical cycles, resource use, synthesis, recycling, and human environmental impacts (Units C.1, C.3, C.4).

Learning in High School Chemistry at VALA NC is organized through an OpenSciEd-inspired, phenomenon-based approach anchored in authentic driving questions, such as how to slow energy transfer to protect coastal communities (C.1), what causes

lightning and why some places are safer (C.2), how substances can be produced and recycled sustainably (C.3), why oysters are dying and how chemistry can help (C.4), and how chemistry informs energy and transportation decisions (C.5). These questions provide coherence across units and connect core ideas in thermodynamics, atomic structure, molecular processes, environmental chemistry, and energy systems, supporting integrated and transferable understanding (National Research Council, 2012; NGSS Lead States, 2013; Walker et al., 2025).

Instruction centers on science and engineering practices, including developing and using models, analyzing and interpreting data, constructing explanations, engaging in argument from evidence, and designing solutions. Students apply these practices within each unit—for example, modeling energy systems and climate impacts (C.1), explaining atomic and electrical interactions (C.2), designing sustainable chemical processes (C.3), analyzing environmental reactions (C.4), and evaluating energy and nuclear systems for societal impact (C.5). This integrated approach strengthens conceptual understanding and retention (National Academies, 2022; Walker et al., 2025).

Students engage with crosscutting concepts such as energy and matter, systems and system models, cause and effect, stability and change, and patterns, enabling them to connect ideas across disciplines and apply knowledge in new contexts (National Research Council, 2012). Instruction is multimodal and student-centered, incorporating laboratory investigations, simulations, data analysis, case studies, and collaborative discourse. Teachers provide scaffolds such as structured inquiry, academic vocabulary supports, and differentiation aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL 3.0) principles to ensure accessibility for all learners (CAST, 2024).

Assessment is formative, performance-based, and embedded throughout instruction. Students demonstrate understanding through data analysis, modeling, scientific explanations, laboratory reports, and design solutions, including evaluation of real-world impacts. This approach supports the development of advanced chemical reasoning, systems thinking, and evidence-based decision-making, preparing students for college-level STEM pathways and careers.

HIGH SCHOOL PHYSICS

Course	Unit	Driving Question	Description	Core Concepts	Key Practices	Learning Modalities & Tools	Assessment
HS Physics	P.1 Energy Flow from Earth's Systems	How can we design more reliable systems to meet our communities' energy needs?	Students investigate energy production, transfer, and efficiency in Earth-based systems, evaluating solutions for sustainable energy.	Energy conservation; energy transfer; efficiency; systems; sustainability.	Modeling systems; analyzing data; designing solutions; evaluating evidence.	Energy simulations; data sets; engineering design challenges; case studies.	Design solutions; data analysis; explanations; performance tasks.

HS Physics	P.2 Energy, Forces, & Earth's Crust	How do forces in Earth's interior determine what will happen to the surface we see?	Students explore forces and energy within Earth's interior and how they influence surface features and geological activity.	Forces and motion; energy transfer; tectonic forces; Earth systems.	Modeling systems; analyzing cause and effect; interpreting data; constructing explanations.	Simulations; models; data sets; case studies; collaborative tasks; problem sets.	Models; explanations; data analysis; performance assessments.
HS Physics	P.3 Collisions & Momentum	What can we do to make driving safer for everyone?	Students investigate motion, momentum, and collisions to design solutions that improve safety in real-world contexts.	Newton's laws; momentum; impulse; energy transfer; safety engineering.	Conducting experiments; analyzing data; modeling; engineering design.	Motion sensors; lab experiments; simulations; crash data analysis; design challenges.	Lab reports; models; safety designs; performance tasks.
HS Physics	P.4 Meteors, Orbits, & Gravity	How have collisions with objects from space changed Earth in the past, and how could they affect our future?	Students analyze gravitational interactions, orbital motion, and impacts of celestial objects on Earth.	Gravity; orbital motion; energy; celestial interactions; impact events.	Modeling systems; analyzing data; constructing explanations; predicting outcomes.	Simulations; orbital models; data sets; case studies; visualizations; problem sets.	Models; explanations; predictions; performance assessments.
HS Physics	P.5 Electromagnetic Radiation	How do we use radiation in our lives, and is it safe for humans?	Students investigate electromagnetic waves, their applications, and their effects on matter and human health.	Electromagnetic spectrum; wave properties; energy transfer; radiation effects.	Analyzing data; modeling waves; evaluating evidence; argument from evidence.	Simulations; lab investigations; data sets; case studies; discussions.	Data analysis; explanations; evidence-based arguments; performance tasks.
HS Physics	P.6 Stars & the Big Bang	Why do stars shine and will they shine forever?	Students explore nuclear processes in stars and the origins of the universe, including	Nuclear fusion; stellar life cycles; energy production;	Modeling processes; analyzing evidence; constructing	Simulations; data sets; models; astronomical	Models; explanations; evidence-based arguments;

			stellar evolution and the Big Bang theory.	universe expansion.	explanations; argumentation.	observations; visualizations.	performance assessments.

Instructional Model Statement (High School Physics)

Instruction in High School Physics advances students' ability to analyze forces, energy, waves, and interactions across systems, while applying quantitative reasoning and modeling to real-world challenges. At VALA NC, instruction is explicitly aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (2023) for Physics, including:

- PS.Phy.6 – Energy, Work, and Power: Students analyze relationships among kinetic and potential energy, work, and power, and model energy conservation and transfer within physical and engineered systems (Unit P.1).
- PS.Phy.1–PS.Phy.3 – Motion, Forces, and Momentum: Students investigate kinematics, apply Newton's Laws, and analyze momentum and impulse to explain motion and collisions in physical systems (Units P.2, P.3).
- PS.Phy.2 – Gravitational Forces: Students model gravitational interactions using the Law of Universal Gravitation to explain orbital motion and large-scale system behavior (Unit P.4).
- PS.Phy.7 – Waves and Electromagnetic Radiation: Students analyze properties of mechanical and electromagnetic waves, including frequency, wavelength, and energy transfer, and evaluate real-world applications of wave technologies (Unit P.5).
- PS.PSc.3 – Nuclear Processes: Students model nuclear reactions (fusion, fission, and radioactive decay), analyze quantitative relationships (e.g., half-life), and evaluate applications in energy, medicine, and Earth/space systems (Unit P.6).

Learning is organized through an OpenSciEd-inspired, phenomenon-based approach, where students investigate authentic problems such as energy system design, vehicle safety, gravitational interactions, radiation use, and stellar processes. This ensures deep integration of disciplinary core ideas with science and engineering practices.

Instruction emphasizes science and engineering practices, including developing and using models, analyzing and interpreting data, using mathematics and computational thinking, constructing explanations, engaging in argument from evidence, and designing solutions. Students apply these practices by designing energy systems (P.1), modeling motion and collisions (P.2–P.3), analyzing gravitational systems (P.4), evaluating electromagnetic applications (P.5), and explaining nuclear and cosmic processes (P.6).

Students engage deeply with crosscutting concepts such as energy and matter (energy transfer and nuclear processes), cause and effect (forces and motion), systems and system models (Earth and space systems), scale, proportion, and quantity (astronomical phenomena), and stability and change (energy systems and cosmic evolution). These concepts support advanced reasoning and transfer across disciplines. Research indicates that integrating mathematical modeling, real-world problem solving, and systems thinking enhances conceptual understanding and STEM readiness (National Research Council, 2012; National Academies, 2022; Walker et al., 2025).

Instruction is multimodal and student-centered, incorporating laboratory investigations, simulations, quantitative analysis, modeling, and collaborative discourse. Teachers provide scaffolds such as structured problem-solving strategies, academic language supports, and differentiation aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL 3.0) principles (CAST, 2024).

Assessment is formative, performance-based, and embedded, aligned with NC standards. Students demonstrate understanding through quantitative problem-solving, models, data analysis, explanations, and engineering design solutions. This approach supports

progression toward advanced quantitative reasoning, systems modeling, and real-world problem solving, preparing students for college-level physics and STEM pathways.

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Appendix E: Daily and Weekly Schedule

Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina

Weekly Schedule



1) Live Teacher-Led Instruction (Synchronous)¹

Students are required to be logged in with a VALA teacher in real time via the school's virtual learning platform. Attendance is taken through participation, chat response, polling, or academic tasks.

2) Guided Offline / Family-Supported Learning²

Students engage in hands-on, movement-based, or experiential learning activities that may occur away from the screen. In K–5, a Learning Coach or parent supports the activity. Teachers provide clear instructions and collect evidence of learning (photos, reflections, artifacts).

3) Independent Online Learning (Asynchronous)³

Students work independently on adaptive digital platforms, assignments, or projects aligned to daily learning goals. Teachers monitor progress and mastery through platform data and learning management system submissions.

4) Guided Readiness and Instructional Preparation⁴

Students complete brief, teacher-assigned videos, readings, and monitored readiness checks before lessons, typically outside the regular instructional schedule. These activities are designed to introduce key concepts, activate prior knowledge, and prepare students for active participation in live instruction.

^{1,2,3,4} Detailed discussion about these four modalities is provided below.

Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina

Weekly Schedule



Functional Roles of Instructional Modalities in the VALA NC Learning Framework

Modality	Primary Purpose	Timing	Instructional Role
Live Instruction	Teach & interact	During class	Core instruction
Guided Offline	Apply & experience	During/after class	Hands-on learning
Independent Online	Practice & personalize	During/after clas	Skill development
Guided Readiness	Prepare & preview	Before class	Pre-learning

Instructional Time Distribution by Modality and Grade Band⁵

Grade Band	Live Instruction (%)	Guided Offline (%)	Independent Online (%)	Guided Readiness (%)
K-3	60-65	5-10	25-30	5
4-5	50-55	20-25	20-25	5-10
6-8	40-45	30-35	10-15	10-15
9-12	30-40	40-45	5-10	15-20

⁵ More information about instructional time distribution by modality and grade band is provided below.

Sample K-3 Daily Schedule (Monday- Thursday)⁶



Time	Block	Modality	Responsibility
8:30–8:45	Literacy Warm-Up & Retrieval Practice (phonemic awareness, oral language, vocabulary)	Live Teacher-Led (Synchronous)	Student logged in with teacher
8:45–9:30	Core ELA Instruction (phonics, reading, writing)	Live Teacher-Led (Synchronous)	Student logged in with teacher
9:30–10:00	Literacy Small Groups / Centers	Live Small Group + Guided Offline	Teacher leads groups; Learning Coach supports assigned activities
10:00–10:15	Movement & SEL Break	Guided Offline / Family-Supported	Learning Coach facilitates
10:15–11:00	Math Core Instruction	Live Teacher-Led (Synchronous)	Student logged in with teacher
11:00–11:15	Math Practice & Discourse	Independent Online (Asynchronous)	Student
11:15–11:45	Science or Social Studies Inquiry	Guided Offline or Live (Teacher-Designed)	Learning Coach supports
11:45–12:15	Lunch/ Break	Offline	Family
12:15–1:15	WIN (What I Need) – Targeted Support & Enrichment	Live Teacher-Led (Small Group) Some students may be working with the teacher while others are working on independent online (Asynchronous)	Student logged in; groups assigned by data
1:15–1:30	Reflection & Exit Retrieval	Live Teacher-Led (Synchronous)	Student logged in with teacher

⁶ More information about K-12 schedules is provided below.



Time	Block	Modality	Responsibility
1:30–1:45	Break / Recess	Offline	Family
1:45–3:30	STEAM / Project-Based Learning	Guided Offline + Online	Learning Coach supports; teacher monitors
3:30	Afterschool Enrichment Opportunities (Virtual Clubs, Virtual Tutoring Groups)		

Friday Schedule:

VALA NC's Friday schedule for grades K–3 focuses on reinforcement, guided practice, and individualized support. During a structured session, students engage in short, interactive review activities, simple assessments, and hands-on tasks that strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy skills. A rotational model with teacher conferencing and WIN support allows for immediate feedback and targeted reteaching or enrichment. Students conclude with guided reflection and simple goal setting, while teachers use the afternoon to analyze student progress and plan responsive instruction.

Sample Middle School Schedule (Monday-Thursday)



Time	Block	Modality	Responsibility
8:30–8:45	Morning Retrieval & Readiness (spiral review, goal setting)	Live Teacher-Led (Synchronous)	Student logged in with teacher
8:45–9:45	ELA Core Instruction	Live Teacher-Led (Synchronous)	Student logged in with teacher
9:45–10:00	Break / Movement	Offline	Student
10:00–11:00	Math Core Instruction	Live Teacher-Led (Synchronous)	Student logged in with teacher
11:00–11:30	Science or Social Studies (seminar, lab, or discussion)	Live Teacher-Led or Guided Online	Student logged in as scheduled
11:30–12:00	Lunch	Offline	Student
12:00–1:00	WIN (What I Need) – Targeted Support & Enrichment	Live Teacher-Led (Small Group)	Student logged in; groups assigned by data
1:00–1:15	Reflection & Exit Retrieval	Live Teacher-Led (Synchronous)	Student logged in with teacher
1:15–1:30	Break	Offline	Student
1:30–3:30	Project-Based Learning/ STEAM/ Service-Learning Experiences	Guided Online + Offline (Teacher-Designed)	Student works independently; teacher monitors
3:30	Afterschool Enrichment Opportunities (Virtual Clubs, Virtual Tutoring Groups)		

Friday Schedule:

For grades 4–8, Friday integrates assessment, feedback, and skill development to reinforce understanding and build independence. Students participate in spiral review, low-stakes assessments, retrieval practice, and applied learning tasks. A rotational structure with student-teacher conferencing and WIN support enables timely intervention and enrichment. Students engage in reflection and goal setting to monitor progress, while teachers use dedicated time for data analysis, collaboration, and planning targeted instruction.

Sample High School Schedule- Core classes could rotate Mon-Thurs



Time	Block	Modality	Responsibility
8:30–8:45	Daily Planning, Retrieval & Readiness (spiral review, goal setting)	Live Teacher-Led (Synchronous)	Student logged in with advisor or course teacher
8:45–9:45	Live Course Block 1 (Core or Elective)	Live Teacher-Led (Synchronous)	Student logged in with course teacher
9:45–10:00	Break	Offline	Student
10:00–11:00	Live Course Block 2 (Core or Elective)	Live Teacher-Led (Synchronous)	Student logged in with course teacher
11:00–11:30	Independent Coursework / Lab / Seminar Prep	Independent Online (Asynchronous)	Student
11:30–12:00	Lunch	Offline	Student
12:00–1:00	WIN (What I Need) – Tutoring, Intervention, Enrichment	Live Teacher-Led (Small Group or 1:1)	Student logs in as assigned or scheduled
1:15–1:30	Reflection, Exit Retrieval & Advising Check	Live Teacher-Led (Synchronous)	Student logged in with advisor or teacher
1:30–1:45	Break	Offline	Student
1:45–3:30	STEAM / Project-Based Learning / Capstone Work	Guided Online + Offline (Teacher-Designed)	Student works independently; teacher monitors

Friday Schedule:

For grades 9–12, Friday emphasizes assessment, reflection, and college/career readiness. Students engage in cumulative review, performance-based assessments, and real-world application tasks that promote higher-order thinking and independent problem-solving. A rotational model with conferencing and WIN support provides individualized feedback and academic coaching. Students conclude with reflection, goal setting, and preparation for upcoming learning, while teachers engage in data-driven planning, collaboration, and instructional refinement to support student success.

Instructional Modalities of VALA NC's Learning Model



VALA NC's instructional program is designed as a coherent, research-based system that ensures students actively engage, build understanding, apply knowledge, and develop independence in a virtual environment. Rather than relying on a single mode of instruction, **the model integrates four complementary modalities**: 1) live teacher-led instruction, 2) guided offline learning, 3) independent online learning, and 4) guided readiness. Together, these modalities form a complete learning cycle, preparing students for learning, engaging them in meaningful instruction, reinforcing skills through practice and application, and personalizing learning through data-informed support. This balanced approach reflects best practices from cognitive science, active learning research, and effective online education, ensuring that instruction is engaging, rigorous, and accessible for all learners

1) Live Teacher-Led Instruction (Synchronous): Live Teacher-Led Instruction serves as the central interactive component of the instructional model, where students engage in real-time learning experiences with certified teachers. These sessions are intentionally designed to promote active participation rather than passive listening. Students interact through discussion, collaboration, guided questioning, and immediate feedback, ensuring continuous cognitive engagement. Teachers use formative assessment strategies such as checks for understanding, exit tickets, and live feedback to adjust instruction in real time. This modality also fosters strong teacher presence and a sense of classroom community, both of which are critical for success in virtual learning environments. Research demonstrates that active learning significantly improves student performance compared to traditional lecture-based instruction (Freeman et al., 2014), while formative assessment practices enhance achievement (Black and Wiliam, 1998). Additionally, retrieval practice and interactive engagement strengthen long-term retention and deepen understanding (Brown et al., 2014).

2) Guided Offline / Family-Supported Learning: Guided Offline or Family-Supported Learning extends instruction beyond the screen by engaging students in hands-on, experiential, and real-world activities designed by teachers. This modality is particularly important in elementary grades, where families or Learning Coaches support students in completing structured tasks such as experiments, reading, writing, observation, and creative projects. These activities are intentionally designed to connect academic concepts to real-life applications, promoting deeper understanding and engagement. Students demonstrate their learning through artifacts such as photos, journals, reflections, or recorded explanations, allowing teachers to assess both process and understanding. This approach supports diverse learning styles and reduces screen fatigue, while also strengthening the home-school partnership. Research indicates that experiential learning enhances retention and transfer of knowledge (Kolb, 1984), and family involvement is strongly associated with improved academic outcomes (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Furthermore, multisensory and authentic learning experiences increase student motivation and conceptual understanding (Mayer, 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

3) Independent Online Learning (Asynchronous): This modality supports personalized learning by allowing students to progress based on mastery rather than seat time. Adaptive technologies adjust the level of difficulty in response to student performance, ensuring appropriate challenge and support for each learner. Students also develop essential self-regulation skills, including goal setting, time management, and independent problem-solving. Instructional strategies such as spaced practice, interleaving, and immediate feedback are embedded within this modality and are strongly supported by research. Mastery-based learning improves achievement (Bloom, 1984), while spaced and interleaved practice enhance retention (Rohrer and Taylor, 2007; Brown et al., 2014). Additionally, self-regulated learning and adaptive technologies are key predictors of success in online environments (Pane et al., 2015; Zimmerman, 2002).



4) Guided Readiness and Instructional Preparation (Teacher-Directed): Guided readiness supports flipped and team-based learning models by shifting foundational learning outside of class and using synchronous time for discussion, collaboration, and higher-order thinking (Bishop and Verleger, 2013; Lo and Hew, 2017; Michaelsen et al., 2004). It also aligns with schema activation and advance organizer theory, helping students connect new information to existing knowledge (Ausubel, 1960; Mayer, 2009). Additionally, readiness checks incorporate retrieval practice and formative assessment, both of which improve long-term retention and learning (Roediger and Karpicke, 2006; Dunlosky et al., 2013). All activities are teacher-directed, standards-aligned, and monitored for completion and understanding. Expectations are developmentally appropriate, with minimal requirements for younger students and increasing responsibility in upper grades. Because these activities are required and directly connected to instruction, they are considered part of the instructional program rather than optional homework. This modality strengthens the effectiveness of live instruction by ensuring students arrive prepared and ready to engage deeply in learning.

Together, these four modalities create a **comprehensive and balanced instructional system** that supports the full learning cycle: preparation, engagement, practice, and application. Guided Readiness prepares students for learning, Live Instruction builds understanding, Independent Learning strengthens skills, and Guided Offline Learning connects knowledge to real-world contexts. This integrated approach reflects research-based best practices in cognitive science, active learning, and online education, ensuring that VALA NC students experience learning that is active, personalized, meaningful, and effective. By combining these modalities within a cohesive framework, VALA NC provides a high-quality virtual learning environment that prepares students for academic success, college, careers, and lifelong learning.

Instructional Time Distribution by Modality and Grade Band

VALA NC's instructional model is intentionally designed to maximize student engagement and learning while ensuring developmentally appropriate use of screen time, particularly in the early grades. Although a substantial portion of instructional time in grades K–3 (approximately 60–65% live instruction) is teacher-led and delivered synchronously, this does not equate to continuous screen exposure. Instead, live instruction is structured into short, interactive segments (typically 10–15 minutes) that are immediately followed by offline, hands-on activities, including reading physical texts, writing, problem-solving, and family-supported learning tasks. In addition, guided offline learning (5–10%) and independent online learning (25–30%) are carefully balanced to provide both structure and engagement without overreliance on passive screen use. This approach aligns with research demonstrating that young learners benefit most from active, adult-guided learning experiences, frequent modality shifts, and meaningful interaction, rather than prolonged or passive digital exposure (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015; Mayer, 2014; Piasta, 2016).

Across all grade levels, VALA NC prioritizes interactive engagement over passive consumption, ensuring that synchronous sessions incorporate discussion, questioning, collaboration, and real-time feedback. In grades K–3, while teacher-guided instruction remains dominant, learning experiences are intentionally varied, integrating both on-screen and off-screen modalities. Independent online learning (25–30%) is structured, monitored, and mastery-based, while guided readiness activities (~5%) introduce early habits of preparation in developmentally appropriate ways. Even in early grades, offline learning experiences play a meaningful role in reinforcing foundational literacy and numeracy skills, supporting deeper cognitive processing and reducing screen fatigue (Mueller and Oppenheimer, 2014).

In grades 4–5, the model reflects a more balanced distribution, with 50–55% live instruction, 20–25% guided offline learning, and 20–25% independent online learning, along with 5–10% readiness activities. This shift supports

increasing student independence while maintaining strong teacher presence. Expanded offline learning strengthens writing fluency, reading stamina, and conceptual understanding through multimodal engagement, consistent with research on blended and active learning environments (Mayer, 2014).



In middle grades (6–8), the model further shifts toward student autonomy, with 40–45% live instruction, 30–35% guided offline learning, 10–15% independent online learning, and 10–15% guided readiness activities. This structure supports the development of self-regulation, metacognition, and academic responsibility, while maintaining sufficient teacher interaction to sustain engagement and academic progress (Zimmerman, 2002; Fredricks et al., 2004). Increased readiness activities at this stage reflect growing expectations for preparation and accountability.

In high school (9–12), the model emphasizes application, independence, and college/career readiness, with 30–40% live instruction, 40–45% guided offline learning, 5–10% independent online learning, and 15–20% guided readiness activities. Guided offline learning becomes the dominant modality, supporting research, writing, project-based work, and real-world application. This design aligns with research showing that well-structured, guided learning combined with independent application produces stronger outcomes than minimally guided instruction, particularly in complex subjects such as mathematics and science (Kirschner et al., 2006). Increased readiness expectations further support students' transition to postsecondary environments, where self-directed learning is essential (Zimmerman, 2002).

Across all grade levels, synchronous instruction remains a central component of the instructional model, consistent with research demonstrating the effectiveness of real-time interaction in online and blended learning environments (Borup et al., 2020). At the same time, VALA NC intentionally expands guided offline learning and readiness activities across grade levels, ensuring a balanced instructional experience that promotes deeper learning, reduces screen fatigue, and supports long-term retention (Roediger and Karpicke, 2006).

Additionally, daily WIN (“What I Need”) blocks provide targeted intervention and enrichment aligned with Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), ensuring that instruction is responsive to individual student needs and promotes equitable outcomes (Fuchs and Fuchs, 2006). By intentionally designing instruction to alternate between brief, high-impact live sessions and meaningful offline and independent application, VALA NC ensures that students—especially in the early grades—are actively engaged in learning through a balanced, research-based approach that supports cognitive development, attention, and overall well-being.

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A) K–3 SCHEDULE AT VALA NC

1) Instructional Design: Chunked Learning Cycles with Team-Based Learning and Adaptive Assessment

While minor adjustments may be made based on students' grade levels and developmental needs, the daily instructional schedule is intentionally designed around chunked learning cycles (typically 10–15 minutes). In this model, instruction is delivered in short, focused segments that integrate direct instruction, immediate assessment, peer collaboration, and data-driven differentiation. Instruction is also carefully structured around frequent modality shifts, enabling young learners to sustain attention, deepen understanding, and remain cognitively engaged throughout the day (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015). This structure helps prevent cognitive overload—a condition in which the amount or complexity of information exceeds students' working memory capacity—by breaking complex content into manageable units. As a result, students are better able to process, understand, and retain new information, leading to deeper and more effective learning (Sweller, 1988; Mayer, 2014).

Each core instructional block (e.g., ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies, etc.) follows a consistent, research-based sequence:

a) Live Mini-Lecture (Synchronous Instruction): Instruction begins with a brief, focused, teacher-led mini-lesson delivered live, during which key concepts are introduced through explicit instruction and modeling to ensure clarity and cognitive efficiency. The use of such mini-lectures—short, focused instructional segments—is supported by cognitive science, as they help manage cognitive load by presenting content in smaller, digestible units, thereby improving student attention, engagement, and retention (Sweller, 1988; Mayer, 2014). Aligned with the segmenting principle, this approach is particularly effective in online environments, especially when followed by immediate practice or assessment, enabling students to actively process, apply, and retain new knowledge more effectively (Dunlosky et al., 2013).

b) Individual, Non-Graded Adaptive Assessment (Readiness Check): Immediately following the mini-lesson, students complete an individual, low-stakes assessment using adaptive learning platforms (e.g., Khanmigo, IXL, ALEKS, DreamBox, TutorAI). This step serves as both a retrieval practice activity and formative assessment, enabling students to actively recall newly learned content while providing the teacher with immediate insight into each student's level of understanding. Because these platforms adapt to student responses, they can offer personalized questions and real-time feedback, helping students identify misconceptions and adjust their thinking in the moment. This readiness check plays a critical role in making learning visible early in the instructional cycle, allowing for timely instructional adjustments before misconceptions become entrenched. Research shows that low-stakes, frequent retrieval practice significantly improves long-term retention, strengthens memory, and helps uncover learning gaps at

an early stage (Roediger and Karpicke, 2006; Brown et al., 2014).



c) Team-Based Learning (Peer Instruction and Collaboration): Students then transition to breakout rooms within the learning management system, where they work in teams of at least three to complete the same or a similar set of questions. During this collaborative phase, students actively engage in discussion, explanation, and reasoning, allowing them to articulate their thinking, challenge misconceptions, and learn from one another. This process fosters peer instruction and knowledge co-construction, as students deepen their understanding by explaining concepts and evaluating alternative approaches. Structured collaboration also promotes accountability, communication skills, and collective problem-solving, which are essential for long-term academic success. Research on team-based and active learning demonstrates that such approaches significantly enhance conceptual understanding, retention, and student engagement compared to passive learning environments (Michaelson et al., 2004; Freeman et al., 2014).

d) Individual Graded Adaptive Assessment (Mastery Check): Finally, students complete a short, graded individual assessment using adaptive learning tools. This step serves as a mastery check, allowing students to independently demonstrate their understanding after engaging in both individual and collaborative learning. Adaptive platforms provide immediate, targeted feedback, reinforcing correct responses while clearly identifying remaining gaps or misconceptions. Because the assessment is individualized and responsive to student performance, it ensures that evaluation is both accurate and personalized, supporting fair measurement of student learning. The results also generate actionable data for the teacher, informing subsequent instruction and targeted support during the What I Need (WIN) block. Research shows that frequent formative and summative assessments, combined with timely and specific feedback, are strongly associated with improved academic achievement and deeper learning (Black and Wiliam, 1998).

The results of this final assessment are systematically analyzed and used to inform instruction during the WIN block, ensuring that learning is responsive, targeted, and data-driven.

2) Movement and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Breaks

The SEL breaks are intentionally embedded within the daily schedule to support students' cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, and overall well-being. These short, structured intervals include activities such as stretching, guided movement, mindfulness exercises, breathing techniques, and brief social-emotional check-ins. Research shows that integrating physical movement into the school day improves attention, on-task behavior, and academic performance, particularly for young learners who benefit from frequent opportunities to reset and re-engage (Donnelly et al., 2016).

In parallel, SEL-focused activities help students develop essential competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These skills are strongly associated with improved academic outcomes, positive behavior, and long-term success (Durlak et al., 2011). When combined, movement and SEL breaks provide a powerful mechanism for reducing stress, enhancing focus, and maintaining engagement throughout the day, ensuring that students are both emotionally supported and cognitively ready to learn.

3) What I Know (WIN) Block – Targeted Support and Enrichment

The WIN block is a dedicated instructional period in which learning is differentiated based on real-time student data, ensuring that each student receives targeted support or enrichment aligned with their needs. Students are flexibly grouped according to formative assessment results: those needing support receive small-group, targeted instruction focused on addressing misconceptions, reinforcing foundational skills, and closing identified learning gaps through

reteaching, scaffolding, and guided practice. Instruction is continuously adjusted based on evidence of student understanding, allowing for immediate intervention before misunderstandings become persistent (Black and Wiliam, 1998).



Students who demonstrate mastery engage in enrichment and extension activities designed to deepen understanding, promote higher-order thinking, and support the transfer of learning to new contexts.

These opportunities may include applying concepts to complex, real-world problems, advancing to upcoming units within the same course, or exploring appropriately scaffolded above-grade-level content. This flexible, competency-based progression reflects principles of mastery learning and differentiated instruction, where students progress based on demonstrated understanding rather than fixed pacing, leading to improved achievement and more equitable outcomes (Bloom, 1968; Tomlinson, 2014). Overall, the WIN block serves as a critical component of a responsive instructional model that ensures all students are supported, challenged, and progressing toward mastery.

4) Reflection and Exit Retrieval

The reflection and exit retrieval block serves as a structured closure to the instructional day, providing students with an opportunity to consolidate learning, strengthen memory, and develop metacognitive awareness. During this time, students engage in brief, focused activities such as summarizing key concepts, responding to targeted exit questions, explaining their reasoning, or identifying areas of confusion. These practices encourage students to reflect on what they learned, how they learned it, and what they still need to improve, thereby promoting self-regulated learning and deeper understanding.

A central component of this block is retrieval practice, which requires students to actively recall information rather than passively review it. Research consistently shows that retrieval practice significantly enhances long-term retention, transfer of knowledge, and overall academic performance (Roediger and Karpicke, 2006; Dunlosky et al., 2013). When combined with metacognitive reflection, students become more aware of their learning processes, enabling them to monitor their progress and adjust their strategies accordingly (Brown et al., 2014). Additionally, exit retrieval activities provide teachers with real-time formative data, allowing them to quickly identify patterns of misunderstanding and adjust instruction for subsequent lessons or WIN interventions. This immediate feedback loop supports more responsive, data-driven teaching and ensures that students continue progressing toward mastery.

5) STEAM/Project-Based Learning

In the afternoon, students engage in STEAM and project-based learning (PBL), where students apply knowledge in authentic, interdisciplinary contexts connected to concepts introduced earlier in the day. During this block, students participate in hands-on, inquiry-driven activities that require them to actively construct understanding through elaboration strategies, such as explaining concepts in their own words, making connections to prior knowledge, and applying learning to real-world situations. This “learning by doing” approach reinforces and extends foundational skills, strengthens conceptual understanding, and increases student engagement and motivation (Brown et al., 2014; National Research Council, 2000).

These projects are intentionally designed around real-world problems and challenges, integrating science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics into cohesive learning experiences. Students may work individually or collaboratively to investigate questions, design and test solutions, analyze data, and present their findings. Through this process, they develop critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills, while also building ownership of their learning. Project-based learning complements the structured morning instruction by enabling students to transfer and apply knowledge in meaningful contexts, engage in sustained inquiry, and demonstrate learning through authentic assessments. Research shows that inquiry-driven, student-centered approaches

significantly enhance conceptual understanding, problem-solving skills, and overall engagement (Krajcik and Blumenfeld, 2006; Freeman et al., 2014), while supporting college, career, and real-world readiness.



6) Character Development Through VALA NC's CRISP–RISE Core Virtues

Character development is intentionally embedded throughout the daily schedule through the CRISP–RISE Core Virtues (curiosity, responsibility, integrity, service, perseverance, respect, innovation, self-discipline, empathy), with each month focusing on one virtue to ensure sustained attention and meaningful application. Rather than being taught in isolation, character development is integrated across instructional blocks, an approach shown to be more effective in promoting social-emotional and ethical growth (Durlak et al., 2011). For example, literacy and morning warm-ups incorporate read-alouds and reflective discussions tied to the monthly virtue, while small-group and team-based learning provide opportunities for students to practice collaboration, responsibility, and respect through structured peer interactions (Johnson and Johnson, 2009).

7) The After-school Enrichment Opportunities

The after-school enrichment opportunities (virtual clubs and virtual tutoring groups) take place after 3:30 PM, Monday through Thursday. VALA NC offers a structured, engaging afterschool program for grades K–3 designed to promote social connection, creativity, and skill development while reinforcing the school's instructional model. Clubs are intentionally short (30–45 minutes), interactive, and non-lecture-based, meeting 2–3 days per week, with students selecting 1–2 clubs based on their interests. Research shows that well-designed out-of-school-time programs improve student engagement, social skills, and academic outcomes, particularly when they emphasize active participation and student choice (Durlak et al., 2010; Vandell et al., 2015). Offerings include Social & Community Clubs (e.g., Story Time, Show & Tell, Friendship Club), Creative & Arts-Based Clubs (Art, Music, Drama, Craft/Maker), STEM & Maker Clubs (LEGO, Coding, Science Exploration, Robotics basics), Academic Enrichment Clubs (Math Games, Reading/Book Club, Homework Help, Vocabulary), Skill-Building Clubs (Public Speaking, Leadership, Digital Citizenship, basic Entrepreneurship), and Interest-Based Clubs (Animal Club, Space Club, Drawing, Minecraft). These experiences emphasize collaboration, hands-on learning, and student voice, which are critical for fostering engagement and a sense of belonging in virtual environments (Freeman et al., 2014).

A signature feature is the Monthly CRISP–RISE Club Series, where each month focuses on one core character trait (e.g., Curiosity, Responsibility, Empathy, Innovation), reinforced through themed clubs such as “Why Things Work,” “My Daily Habits,” “Kindness Club,” and “Inventor Club.” This integrated approach ensures that character development is intentional, consistent, and embedded in authentic experiences, rather than taught in isolation—an approach shown to be more effective in promoting social-emotional growth (Durlak et al., 2011). Overall, VALA NC's afterschool program extends learning beyond academics by fostering confidence, creativity, collaboration, and character, contributing to a well-rounded and enriching virtual school experience that supports both academic success and whole-child development.

8) Students' Friday Schedule: Assessment, Reflection, and Planning

VALA NC's Friday schedule is designed as a three-hour cycle of assessment, feedback, reflection, and preparation, reinforcing weekly learning while informing next steps. Students engage in spiral review, low-stakes assessments, retrieval practice, and performance-based tasks, allowing them to revisit key concepts, demonstrate understanding, and apply learning in meaningful contexts. Low-stakes assessments, including released state and national test items, help students build familiarity with assessment formats while reducing anxiety and increasing confidence. In parallel, frequent retrieval practice (“testing as learning”) strengthens long-term retention, improves transfer of knowledge, and helps identify learning gaps (Roediger and Karpicke, 2006; Dunlosky et al., 2013). Performance tasks further

promote deeper understanding by requiring students to apply concepts to authentic and interdisciplinary problems (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005).



A central feature of the Friday schedule is a rotational structure that integrates student–teacher conferencing and embedded WIN (What I Need) support. While students engage in independent or small-group tasks—such as adaptive practice, enrichment activities, or targeted review—teachers conduct brief, focused conferences with individuals or small groups. During these conferences, teachers review assessment data, provide personalized feedback, address misconceptions, and offer immediate intervention or enrichment as needed. This embedded approach ensures that targeted support and extension occur in real time, rather than in a separate block, aligning with research emphasizing the impact of timely feedback and formative assessment on student achievement (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Hattie, 2009).

The session concludes with reflection, goal setting, and generation activities, where students evaluate their progress, identify strengths and areas for growth, and set goals for the upcoming week. Students may also preview upcoming concepts by attempting to explain ideas or solve problems before formal instruction, activating prior knowledge and promoting deeper learning. These practices foster metacognitive awareness and self-regulated learning, which are strongly associated with improved academic outcomes (Zimmerman, 2002; Brown et al., 2014).

9) Friday Teacher Planning and Data-Driven Instructional Design

Following the student session, teachers use Friday (12:00 PM –3:30 PM) as a dedicated professional work block focused on data analysis, instructional planning, and targeted intervention design. During this time, teachers systematically review results from weekly assessments, adaptive learning platforms, and observational data to identify patterns of student understanding, misconceptions, and learning gaps. This process enables teachers to make evidence-based instructional decisions, including adjusting pacing, refining instructional strategies, and forming flexible student groups for the upcoming week.

Teachers also collaborate in data-informed professional learning communities (PLCs) to analyze trends across classrooms, share effective practices, and co-design lessons and interventions. Research shows that structured teacher collaboration and data use significantly improve instructional quality and student outcomes, particularly when educators engage in ongoing cycles of inquiry and reflection (DuFour et al., 2006; Hattie, 2009). In addition, this planning time is used to design targeted WIN block interventions, enrichment opportunities, and differentiated instructional materials aligned with student needs.

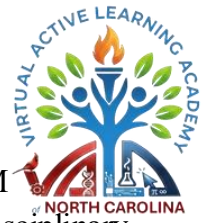
Importantly, dedicating protected time for planning and reflection enhances teachers’ ability to deliver high-quality, responsive instruction and reduces cognitive overload for both teachers and students. Studies on effective teaching emphasize that formative assessment, timely feedback, and intentional instructional planning are among the most impactful factors influencing student achievement (Black and Wiliam, 1998). By embedding this structured planning block into the weekly schedule, VALA NC ensures that instruction remains data-driven, personalized, and continuously improving, ultimately supporting stronger student learning outcomes.

10) Conclusion

Overall, this schedule operationalizes a coherent, research-based, and data-driven instructional model that integrates multiple high-impact learning principles into a unified weekly structure. Instruction is delivered through chunked learning cycles with frequent modality shifts, effectively managing cognitive load and sustaining student attention. Each cycle intentionally combines explicit instruction, adaptive formative assessment, team-based peer learning, and mastery checks, ensuring that learning is active, collaborative, and continuously monitored. The model is further strengthened through retrieval practice, immediate feedback, and structured reflection, all of which are strongly

associated with improved retention, transfer, and deeper understanding.

The schedule also embeds differentiated instruction through WIN blocks, enabling targeted intervention and enrichment based on real-time data, while incorporating movement and social-emotional learning (SEL) supports to enhance focus, engagement, and well-being. Afternoon STEAM and project-based learning experiences extend and apply foundational knowledge in authentic, interdisciplinary contexts, promoting critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and real-world problem solving. Character development is intentionally integrated throughout the day, and after-school enrichment opportunities further support student engagement and whole-child development.



Importantly, the weekly design includes a dedicated Friday cycle of assessment, feedback, reflection, and planning. Students engage in low-stakes assessments, retrieval practice, performance tasks, and goal setting, along with brief student-teacher conferences with embedded WIN support, ensuring timely feedback and targeted intervention. Following this, teachers participate in a structured planning block for data analysis, collaboration, and instructional design, enabling instruction for the upcoming week to be responsive, differentiated, and data-driven.

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B) 4-5 & MIDDLE SCHOOL SCHEDULE AT VALA NC

Building upon the K–3 instructional schedule, the middle school schedule maintains the same core design principles (chunked learning cycles, active learning, and data-driven differentiation) while adjusting for developmental readiness, increased academic rigor, and longer attention spans. Instructional blocks are extended (e.g., 45–60 minutes), allowing for deeper content exploration, sustained academic discourse, and more complex problem-solving. Within these longer blocks, chunking is preserved through internal instructional sequences (mini-lesson → practice → collaboration → assessment), ensuring continued cognitive load management while supporting higher-order thinking. Recent research in secondary education confirms that cognitively structured learning strategies and evidence-based techniques (e.g., retrieval practice, spacing, and chunking) are strongly associated with improved academic achievement and durable learning outcomes (Ruiz-Martín et al., 2024).

Collaborative learning evolves into more structured team-based learning and academic discourse, where students engage in explanation, argumentation, and analysis, particularly in seminar-style science and social studies and

extended ELA and math blocks. Emerging research highlights that combining collaboration with metacognitive awareness enhances group problem-solving, communication, and conceptual understanding (Duruaku et al., 2024; Järvelä et al., 2024). Similarly, reflection practices become more sophisticated, incorporating written responses, self-assessment, and goal tracking aligned with learning objectives. Evidence shows that metacognition plays a distinct and critical role in developing students' critical thinking abilities beyond working memory capacity, particularly in middle school learners (Meneses et al., 2024).



Movement and SEL breaks, while less frequent than in K–3 grades, remain strategically placed to support focus, emotional regulation, and sustained engagement during longer instructional periods. The WIN block continues to provide targeted support and enrichment, but includes increased student independence, integrating small-group instruction, adaptive learning, and goal-oriented intervention aligned with course progression. Research on adaptive and self-regulated learning environments suggests that data-driven scaffolding and personalized support improve learning behaviors and help close performance gaps among diverse learners (Munshi et al., 2022).

Afternoon learning expands into more rigorous project-based and service-learning experiences, where students engage in extended inquiry, research, design, and presentation. These experiences emphasize real-world application, collaboration, and civic engagement, further reinforcing both academic and character development. Recent studies in middle school learning environments indicate that interactive, inquiry-based, and technology-supported learning approaches significantly enhance engagement, motivation, and higher-order thinking skills (Pan et al., 2024). Afterschool opportunities also reflect this progression, offering more advanced, interest-driven options such as leadership, debate, coding, and career exploration.

Finally, Friday structures remain aligned with the K–3 model but incorporate greater student responsibility and complexity, including extended performance tasks, deeper reflection, and more student-led conferencing and goal setting. Collectively, these adjustments ensure that the instructional model remains developmentally appropriate while preserving the integrity of VALA NC's core design principles and aligning with current research on metacognition, collaboration, and evidence-based secondary learning practices.

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C) HIGH SCHOOL SCHEDULE AT VALA NC



Building upon the middle school schedule, the high school model maintains the same foundational principles (structured instructional blocks, active learning, and data-driven differentiation) while advancing toward greater academic depth, flexibility, and student autonomy. Instruction continues within extended course blocks; however, learning becomes more discipline-specific and pathway-oriented, with students enrolling in a range of core, elective, advanced, and dual-enrollment courses aligned with college and career goals. Within these blocks, internal chunking (mini-lesson → application → collaboration → assessment) remains essential, but with increased emphasis on analysis, synthesis, and independent problem-solving. Research indicates that secondary students benefit from structured yet flexible instructional models that combine cognitive science principles with opportunities for deeper inquiry and application (Weinstein et al., 2018; Agarwal and Bain, 2021).

Collaborative learning evolves from structured group work in middle school to more advanced disciplinary discourse and peer critique, where students engage in argumentation, evidence-based reasoning, and collaborative problem-solving across subject areas. These practices are particularly emphasized in seminar-style courses and advanced coursework, supporting college-level expectations. Studies show that interactive and discussion-based learning environments significantly enhance critical thinking and conceptual understanding in secondary education (Chi and Wylie, 2014; Järvelä et al., 2024).

The WIN block expands beyond middle school intervention and enrichment to support personalized academic pathways, including credit recovery, acceleration, dual-enrollment support, and college readiness (e.g., writing, SAT/ACT preparation). Students engage with greater independence, utilizing adaptive platforms, targeted tutoring, and self-directed learning plans. Research on personalized and competency-based learning demonstrates that flexible pacing and targeted support improve student outcomes, particularly at the secondary level (Pane et al., 2017).

Independent learning expectations increase significantly. The schedule incorporates structured time for independent coursework, lab work, seminar preparation, and external learning experiences, requiring students to manage time, set goals, and take ownership of their progress. Reflection practices also become more advanced, incorporating portfolio development, progress monitoring, and academic advising, which are critical components of self-regulated learning and long-term academic success (Zimmerman, 2002; Dent and Koenka, 2016).

A major shift from middle school is the integration of real-world, career-connected learning experiences. Afternoon instructional blocks expand to include capstone projects, internships (virtual or in-person), research opportunities, and partnerships with higher education and industry. These experiences allow students to apply academic knowledge in authentic contexts while developing professional and transferable skills. Research shows that work-based learning and authentic application significantly enhance student engagement, career readiness, and postsecondary success (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; OECD, 2020).

Additionally, the high school model places a stronger emphasis on college, career, and life readiness, integrating skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy across all instructional components. Advisory and reflection structures are leveraged to support goal setting, graduation planning, and postsecondary pathway development, ensuring that students are prepared for life beyond high school.

Finally, while the Friday structure remains aligned with the middle school model, it reflects greater student ownership and accountability, including extended performance tasks, portfolio-based reflection, and individualized conferencing focused on academic progress and future planning. Teachers continue to engage in data-driven instructional planning and professional collaboration, ensuring that instruction remains responsive and aligned with both academic standards and student goals. Collectively, these enhancements ensure that the VALA NC instructional

model evolves appropriately from middle school to high school while maintaining its foundation in evidence-based, student-centered learning.



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Appendix D: Academic Calendar



Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina

2028 -2029 School Calendar

August '28						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

September '28						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

October '28						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

November '28						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

December '28						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

January '29						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

February '29						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28			

March '29						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

April '29						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

May '29						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

June '29						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

July '29						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					



First Day of School



Teacher Workday (no school for students)



School Closed/Holidays



Last Day of School

Teacher Workdays = 18 days

Total School Days = 175 days

School Hours 8:30-3:30 PM

Total Instructional Hours Per Year = 1,050 Hours

Total Instructional Hours Per Day = 6 Hours

1 hr removed for lunch and movement breaks

<u>Position</u>	<u>Year 0</u>	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>	
Principal/School Leader			1	1	1	1
Assistant Principal			0	1	1	1
Director of Operations/Finance Officer			1	1	1	1
Clerical/Data Manager			1	1.5	2	2
Help Desk Technicians			2	4	4	4
Instructional Technology Facilitator			1	1	1	1.5
Library Media Specialist			1	1	1	1
Regional Testing Staff (Part Time)			10	10	10	15
Core Classroom Teachers			15	23	30	36
Elective Teachers			2	5	6	7
Exceptional Children			2	3	4	4
Foreign Language			1	2	2	3
ESL Teacher			1	1	1	1
Project Based Learning			1	2	2	3
Student Success Coordinator			0	0	1	2
Counselor			1	2	2	3
Instructional Support			0	0	1	2
Related Services (Third Party Contracts for Speech, OT and PT) are noted as one person in the budget.						
Total			40	58.5	70	87.5

Year 5

1

2

1

2

4

2

1

15

40

7

5

4

2

4

2

4

3

99

Enrollment Projections Year 1 through Year 5

In the following tables, please list for each year and grade level, the numbers of students that the school reasonably expects. Please indicate any plans to increase the grade levels offered by the school over time and be sure these figures match the table.

If applying as 'Statewide Virtual', select 1000-Statewide Avg as LEA 1 only. If applying as 'Regional Virtual', select a maximum of three LEAs. The numbers in the following tables are projections, or estimates, and do not bind the State to fund the school at any part.

LEA #1: 920-Wake

What percentage of students from

LEA #2: 600-Char.-Mecklenburg

What percentage of students from

LEA #3: 260-Cumberland

What percentage of students from

Grade	Year 1			Year 2			
	LEA #1 920	LEA #2 600	LEA #3 260	LEA #1 920	LEA #2 600	LEA #3 260	LEA #1 920
Kindergarten	30	20	10	60			60
Grade 1	30	20	10	60			60
Grade 2	30	20	10	60			60
Grade 3	25	15	10	75			75
Grade 4	25	15	10	75			75
Grade 5	25	15	10	75			75
Grade 6				75			75
Grade 7				25			75
Grade 8							50
Grade 9							25
Grade 10							
Grade 11							
Grade 12							
LEA Totals:	165	105	60	505	0	0	630

For the first two years the State will fund the school up to the maximum projected enrollment for each of those years as shown. In subsequent years, the school may increase its enrollment only as permitted by NCGS 115C-218.7(b).



ects to enroll. In addition,
ose in the enrollment summary

imum of three LEAs.
icular level.

the LEA selected above will qualify for EC funding?	15%

the LEA selected above will qualify for EC funding?	15%

the LEA selected above will qualify for EC funding?	15%

Year 3			Year 4			Year 5	
LEA #2	LEA #3	LEA #1	LEA #2	LEA #3	LEA #1	LEA #2	LEA #3
600	260	920	600	260	920	600	260
		60			60		
		60			60		
		60			60		
		75			75		
		75			75		
		75			75		
		75			75		
		75			75		
		75			75		
		75			75		
		50			75		
		25			75		
					50		
0	0	780	0	0	905	0	0

et forth and approved in the projected enrollment tables. However, in

Budget: Revenue Projections from each LEA Year 1

State Funds: Charter schools receive an equivalent amount per student as the local education agency (LEA) receives per student receives from the State.

In year 1: Base state allotments are determined by the LEA in which the student resides.

In year 2 and Beyond: Base State allotments are determined by the LEA in which the school is located.

Local Funds: Charter schools receive a per pupil share of the local current expense of the LEA in which the student resides.

State EC Funds: Charter schools receive a per pupil share of state funds per student with disabilities (school-aged 5 through 21). Funds are limited to 12.75% of the local education agency's average daily membership (ADM).

Federal EC Funds: Charter schools must qualify and apply for the individual federal grants based on their population of students.

REFER TO RESOURCE GUIDE FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND SOURCE DOCUMENTS

LEA #1:	920-Wake		
Revenue	Approximate Per Pupil Funding	Projected LEA ADM	Approximate funding for Year 1
State Funds	\$6,592.81	165	\$1,087,813.65
Local Funds	\$4,152.00	165	\$685,080.00
State EC Funds	\$5,593.34	21	\$117,669.89
Federal EC Funds	\$1,514.35	21	\$31,858.14
Total:			\$1,922,421.68

LEA #2:	600-Char.-Mecklenburg		
Revenue	Approximate Per Pupil Funding	Projected LEA ADM	Approximate funding for Year 1
State Funds	\$6,553.74	105	\$688,142.70
Local Funds	\$3,974.00	105	\$417,270.00
State EC Funds	\$5,309.31	13	\$71,078.39
Federal EC Funds	\$1,514.35	13	\$20,273.36
Total:			\$1,196,764.45

LEA #3:	260-Cumberland		
Revenue	Approximate Per Pupil Funding	Projected LEA ADM	Approximate funding for Year 1
State Funds	\$7,046.51	60	\$422,790.60
Local Funds	\$2,079.00	60	\$124,740.00
State EC Funds	\$5,309.31	8	\$40,616.22
Federal EC Funds	\$1,514.35	8	\$11,584.78

	Total:	\$599,731.60

Total Budget: Revenue Projections Year 1 through Year 5

All per pupil amounts are from the most current information and would be approximations for Year 1.

Federal funding is based upon the number of students enrolled who qualify. The applicant should use caution when relying on year one to meet budgetary goals.

These revenue projection figures do NOT guarantee the charter school would receive this amount of funding in Year 1.

For local funding amounts, applicants may need to contact their local offices or LEA.

Income: Revenue Projections	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
State ADM Funds	\$ 2,198,747	\$ 3,329,369	\$ 4,153,470	\$ 5,142,392
Local Per Pupil Funds	\$ 1,227,090	\$ 2,096,760	\$ 2,615,760	\$ 3,238,560
State EC Funds	\$ 229,364	\$ 360,141	\$ 449,285	\$ 556,258
Federal EC Funds	-	\$ 63,716	\$ 121,640	\$ 150,602
Other Funds*				
Working Capital*				
TOTAL REVENUE:	\$ 3,655,201	\$ 5,849,987	\$ 7,340,155	\$ 9,087,812

*All budgets should balance indicating strong budgetary skills. Any negative fund balances will, more than likely, generate questions from those evaluating the application. If the applicant is depending on other funding sources or working capital to balance the operating budget, they must provide documentation such as signed statements from donors, foundations, bank documents, etc., on the commitment of those sources. If the figures are loans, the repayment needs to be explained in the narrative and found within the budget projections.

Assurances are needed to confirm the commitment of these additional sources of revenue. Please include these as Appendix B.

on federal funding in

Year 5	
\$	5,966,493
\$	3,757,560
\$	645,402
\$	174,737
\$	10,544,192

Additional questions by
rating budget, please
these funds. If these

ix M.

Personnel Budget: Expenditure Projections

Budget Expenditure Projections	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4			Year 5		
	Number of Staff	Average Salary	Total Salary	Number of Staff	Average Salary	Total Salary	Number of Staff	Average Salary	Total Salary	Number of Staff	Average Salary	Total Salary	Number of Staff	Average Salary	Total Salary
Administrative & Support Personnel															
Lead Administrator	1	\$ 95,000	\$ 95,000	1	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	1	\$ 102,500	\$ 102,500	1	\$ 106,000	\$ 106,000	1	\$ 110,000	\$ 110,000
Assistant Administrator			\$ -	1	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000	1	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000	1	\$ 85,000	\$ 85,000	2	\$ 88,000	\$ 176,000
Finance Officer	1	\$ 55,000	\$ 55,000	1	\$ 60,000	\$ 60,000	1	\$ 62,500	\$ 62,500	1	\$ 65,000	\$ 65,000	1	\$ 67,500	\$ 67,500
Clerical	1	\$ 45,000	\$ 45,000	1.5	\$ 47,000	\$ 70,500	2	\$ 49,000	\$ 98,000	2	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000	2	\$ 52,500	\$ 105,000
Food Service Staff	0		\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -
Custodians	0		\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -
Transportation Staff	0		\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -
Instructional Technology Facilitator (Remote Charter Applicants)	1	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000	1	\$ 77,500	\$ 77,500	1	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000	1.5	\$ 82,500	\$ 123,750	2	\$ 85,000	\$ 170,000
Help Desk Technicians (Remote Charter Applicants)	2	\$ 40,000	\$ 80,000	4	\$ 45,000	\$ 180,000	4	\$ 45,000	\$ 180,000	4	\$ 45,000	\$ 180,000	4	\$ 50,000	\$ 200,000
Library Media Specialists (Remote Charter Applicants)	1	\$ 65,000	\$ 65,000	1	\$ 67,000	\$ 67,000	1	\$ 70,000	\$ 70,000	1	\$ 72,000	\$ 72,000	1	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000
Protctors/Regional Testing Staff (Part Time)	10	\$ 2,000	\$ 20,000	10	\$ 2,500	\$ 25,000	10	\$ 2,500	\$ 25,000	15	\$ 2,500	\$ 37,500	15	\$ 3,000	\$ 45,000
*** Edit text as needed. ***			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -
Total Admin and Support:	17		\$ 435,000	20.5		\$ 655,000	21		\$ 698,000	26.5		\$ 769,250	28		\$ 948,500
Instructional Personnel															
Core Content Teacher(s)	15	\$ 65,000	\$ 975,000	23	\$ 67,500	\$ 1,552,500	30	\$ 68,000	\$ 2,040,000	36	\$ 70,000	\$ 2,520,000	40	\$ 72,000	\$ 2,880,000
Electives/Specialty Teacher(s)	2	\$ 65,000	\$ 130,000	5	\$ 65,000	\$ 325,000	6	\$ 67,500	\$ 405,000	7	\$ 68,000	\$ 476,000	7	\$ 70,000	\$ 490,000
Exceptional Children Teacher(s)	2	\$ 65,000	\$ 130,000	3	\$ 70,000	\$ 210,000	4	\$ 72,500	\$ 290,000	4	\$ 72,500	\$ 290,000	5	\$ 75,000	\$ 375,000
Instructional Support			\$ -	0	\$ 70,000	\$ -	1	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000	2	\$ 75,000	\$ 150,000	3	\$ 77,500	\$ 232,500
Teacher Assistants			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -
Student Success Coordinator	0	\$ -	\$ -	0	\$ 70,000	\$ -	1	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000	2	\$ 75,000	\$ 150,000	2	\$ 75,000	\$ 150,000
Foreign Language Teacher/ML/ESL Teachers	2	\$ 65,000	\$ 130,000	3	\$ 67,500	\$ 202,500	3	\$ 70,000	\$ 210,000	4	\$ 72,500	\$ 290,000	6	\$ 75,000	\$ 450,000
Project Based Learning Teacher	1	\$ 65,000	\$ 65,000	2	\$ 67,500	\$ 135,000	2	\$ 70,000	\$ 140,000	3	\$ 72,500	\$ 217,500	4	\$ 75,000	\$ 300,000
Counselor/Student Support	1	\$ 70,000	\$ 70,000	2	\$ 75,000	\$ 150,000	2	\$ 77,000	\$ 154,000	3	\$ 80,000	\$ 240,000	4	\$ 82,000	\$ 328,000
Related Services	1	\$ 35,000	\$ 35,000	1	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	1	\$ 65,000	\$ 65,000	1	\$ 65,000	\$ 65,000	1	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000
Total Instructional Personnel:	24		\$ 1,535,000	39		\$ 2,625,000	50		\$ 3,454,000	62		\$ 4,398,500	72		\$ 5,280,500
Total Admin, Support and Instructional Personnel:	41		\$ 1,970,000	59.5		\$ 3,280,000	71		\$ 4,152,000	88.5		\$ 5,167,750.00	100		\$ 6,229,000

Benefits	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4			Year 5			
	Number of Staff	Cost Per	Total	Number of Staff	Cost Per	Total	Number of Staff	Cost Per	Total	Number of Staff	Cost Per	Total	Number of Staff	Cost Per	Total	
Administrative & Support Benefits																
Health Insurance	7	\$ 10,500	\$ 73,500	10	\$ 11,000	\$ 110,000	11	\$ 12,000	\$ 132,000	11	\$ 12,500	\$ 137,500	13	\$ 13,000	\$ 169,000	
Retirement Plan--NC State			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -	
Retirement Plan--Other	7	\$ 3,000	\$ 21,000	10	\$ 3,000	\$ 30,000	11	\$ 3,000	\$ 33,000	11	\$ 3,000	\$ 33,000	13	\$ 3,200	\$ 41,600	
Life Insurance	0		\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -	
Disability	7	\$ 3,000	\$ 21,000	10	\$ 3,000	\$ 30,000	11	\$ 3,200	\$ 35,200	11	\$ 3,300	\$ 36,300	13	\$ 3,400	\$ 44,200	
Medicare	7	\$ 2,000	\$ 14,000	10	\$ 2,000	\$ 20,000	11	\$ 2,000	\$ 22,000	11	\$ 2,200	\$ 24,200	13	\$ 2,300	\$ 29,900	
Social Security	7	\$ 2,800	\$ 19,600	10	\$ 2,050	\$ 20,500	11	\$ 2,075	\$ 22,825	11	\$ 2,100	\$ 23,100	13	\$ 2,150	\$ 27,950	
PT Disability	10	\$ 500	\$ 5,000	10	\$ 500	\$ 5,000	10	\$ 500	\$ 5,000	15	\$ 500	\$ 7,500	15	\$ 500	\$ 7,500	
PT Medicare	10	\$ 200	\$ 2,000	10	\$ 200	\$ 2,000	10	\$ 200	\$ 2,000	15	\$ 200	\$ 3,000	15	\$ 200	\$ 3,000	
PT Social Security	10	\$ 100	\$ 1,000	10	\$ 100	\$ 1,000	10	\$ 100	\$ 1,000	15	\$ 100	\$ 1,500	15	\$ 100	\$ 1,500	
*** Edit text as needed. ***			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -	
*** Edit text as needed. ***			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -	
Total Admin and Support Benefits:			\$ 157,100				\$ 218,500				\$ 253,025				\$ 266,100	\$ 324,650
Instructional Personnel Benefits																
Health Insurance	23	\$ 10,500	\$ 241,500	38	\$ 11,000	\$ 418,000	49	\$ 12,000	\$ 588,000	61	\$ 12,500	\$ 762,500	71	\$ 13,000	\$ 923,000	
Retirement Plan--NC State			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -	0		\$ -	
Retirement Plan--Other	23	\$ 3,000	\$ 69,000	38	\$ 3,000	\$ 114,000	49	\$ 3,000	\$ 147,000	61	\$ 3,000	\$ 183,000	71	\$ 3,000	\$ 213,000	
Social Security	23	\$ 2,800	\$ 64,400	38	\$ 2,800	\$ 106,400	49	\$ 2,800	\$ 137,200	61	\$ 2,800	\$ 170,800	71	\$ 2,800	\$ 198,800	
Disability	23	\$ 3,000	\$ 69,000	38	\$ 3,000	\$ 114,000	49	\$ 3,000	\$ 147,000	61	\$ 3,000	\$ 183,000	71	\$ 3,000	\$ 213,000	
Medicare	23	\$ 2,000	\$ 46,000	38	\$ 2,000	\$ 76,000	49	\$ 2,000	\$ 98,000	61	\$ 2,000	\$ 122,000	71	\$ 2,000	\$ 142,000	
Life Insurance			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -		\$ 2,150	\$ -	
*** Edit text as needed. ***			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -	
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*** Edit text as needed. ***			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -			\$ -	
Total Instructional Personnel Benefits:			\$ 489,900				\$ 828,400				\$ 1,117,200				\$ 1,421,300	\$ 1,689,800
Total Personnel Benefits:			\$ 647,000				\$ 1,046,900				\$ 1,370,225				\$ 1,687,400	\$ 2,014,450
Total Admin & Support Personnel (Salary & Benefits):																
	17		\$ 592,100	20.5		\$ 873,500	21		\$ 951,025	26.5		\$ 1,035,350.00	28		\$ 1,273,150	
Total Instructional Personnel (Salary & Benefits):																
	24		\$ 2,024,900	39		\$ 3,453,400	50		\$ 4,571,200	62		\$ 5,819,800	72		\$ 6,970,300	
TOTAL PERSONNEL:																
	41		\$ 2,617,000	59.5		\$ 4,326,900	71		\$ 5,522,225	88.5		\$ 6,855,150	100		\$ 8,243,450	

*The personnel list below may be amended to meet the staffing of individual charter schools: This list should align with the projected staff located in the Operations Plan.

Operations Budget: Expenditure Projections

The following list of expenditure items is presented as an example. Applicants should modify to meet their needs.

OPERATIONS BUDGET: Administrative and Support		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Office				
Office Supplies	\$	5,000.00	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 9,000.00
Paper	\$	5,000.00	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 9,000.00
Computers & Software	\$	55,000.00	\$ 55,000.00	\$ 75,000.00
Communications & Telephone	\$	10,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
Copier leases	\$	7,500.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
Shipping Devices/Materials	\$	20,000.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 35,000.00
*** Insert rows and edit text as needed. ***				
Management Company				
Contract Fees				
Other				
*** Insert rows and edit text as needed. ***				
Professional Contract				
Legal Counsel	\$	12,500.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00
Student Accounting	\$	16,500.00	\$ 25,250.00	\$ 31,500.00
Financial	\$	41,250.00	\$ 63,125.00	\$ 78,750.00
Technology Support	\$	30,000.00	\$ 35,000.00	\$ 45,000.00
Copiers	\$	10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
Auditor	\$	-	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 17,500.00
Facilities				
Facility Lease/Mortgage	\$	50,000.00	\$ 55,000.00	\$ 60,000.00
Maintenance	\$	5,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
Custodial Supplies	\$	2,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00
Custodial Contract	\$	10,000.00	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 15,000.00
Insurance (pg19)	\$	21,928.00	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 30,000.00
Testing Rental Spaces	\$	25,000.00	\$ 35,000.00	\$ 50,000.00
Regional Hub Learning Spaces	\$	5,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 25,000.00
Utilities				
Electric	\$	6,000.00	\$ 6,500.00	\$ 7,000.00
Gas	\$	500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
Water/Sewer	\$	4,000.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 6,000.00
Trash	\$	5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,500.00
Other				

*** Insert rows and edit text as needed. ***			
Transportation			
Buses	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Gas	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 10,000.00
Oil/Tires & Maintenance	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 2,000.00
Other	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00
Contracted Transportation	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
Other			
Marketing	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00
Child nutrition	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Travel	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
Other			
*** Insert rows and edit text as needed. ***			
Total Administrative & Support Operations:	\$ 448,178.00	\$ 584,375.00	\$ 694,750.00

OPERATIONS BUDGET: Instructional		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Classroom Technology				
Classroom/Student Devices	\$	175,000.00	\$ 250,000.00	\$ 325,000.00
Software (LMS, SIS, etc.)	\$	15,000.00	\$ 27,500.00	\$ 40,000.00
Wifi Access (Remote Charter Applicants)	\$	21,000.00	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 30,000.00
Enhanced Technology Tools/Research	\$	30,000.00	\$ 35,000.00	\$ 35,000.00
Instructional Contract				
Staff Development	\$	30,000.00	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 50,000.00
Other				
Books and Supplies				
Instructional Materials	\$	35,000.00	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 100,000.00
Curriculum/Texts	\$	125,000.00	\$ 275,000.00	\$ 320,000.00
Copy Paper	\$	6,000.00	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
Testing Supplies	\$	5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
Other				
*** Insert rows and edit text as needed. ***				
Total Instructional Operations:	\$	442,000.00	\$ 745,500.00	\$ 920,000.00
TOTAL OPERATIONS:	\$	890,178.00	\$ 1,329,875.00	\$ 1,614,750.00

**Applicants may amend this table and the position titles to fit their Education and Operations Plans.*

Year 4	Year 5
\$ 11,500.00	\$ 15,000.00
\$ 12,000.00	\$ 15,000.00
\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00
\$ 25,000.00	\$ 30,000.00
\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
\$ 45,000.00	\$ 50,000.00
\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00
\$ 39,000.00	\$ 45,250.00
\$ 91,250.00	\$ 99,500.00
\$ 50,000.00	\$ 55,000.00
\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
\$ 17,500.00	\$ 17,500.00
\$ 65,000.00	\$ 70,000.00
\$ 12,000.00	\$ 12,000.00
\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
\$ 15,000.00	\$ 17,500.00
\$ 32,000.00	\$ 35,000.00
\$ 50,000.00	\$ 55,000.00
\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00
\$ 7,500.00	\$ 8,000.00
\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
\$ 6,000.00	\$ 6,000.00
\$ 5,500.00	\$ 6,000.00

\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
\$ 10,000.00	\$ 15,000.00
\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00
\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00
\$ 7,500.00	\$ 10,000.00
\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
\$ 744,250.00	\$ 804,250.00

Year 4		Year 5	
\$	325,000.00	\$	350,000.00
\$	45,000.00	\$	65,000.00
\$	30,000.00	\$	35,000.00
\$	40,000.00	\$	40,000.00
\$	50,000.00	\$	60,000.00
\$	150,000.00	\$	200,000.00
\$	440,000.00	\$	500,000.00
\$	10,000.00	\$	12,500.00
\$	15,000.00	\$	20,000.00
\$	1,105,000.00	\$	1,282,500.00
\$	1,849,250.00	\$	2,086,750.00

Overall Budget

SUMMARY	Logic	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Total Personnel	J	\$ 2,617,000.00	\$ 4,326,900.00	\$ 5,522,225.00	\$ 6,855,150.00	\$ 8,243,450.00
Total Operations	M	\$ 890,178.00	\$ 1,329,875.00	\$ 1,614,750.00	\$ 1,849,250.00	\$ 2,086,750.00
Total Expenditures	N = J + M	\$ 3,507,178.00	\$ 5,656,775.00	\$ 7,136,975.00	\$ 8,704,400.00	\$ 10,330,200.00
Total Revenue	Z	\$ 3,655,201.45	\$ 5,849,986.51	\$ 7,340,155.50	\$ 9,087,811.57	\$ 10,544,191.63
Surplus / (Deficit)	= Z - N	\$ 148,023.45	\$ 193,211.51	\$ 203,180.50	\$ 383,411.57	\$ 213,991.63



Appendix L: Insurance Quotes

INSURANCE PEOPLE

Below are the **estimated annual premiums**: **Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina (VALANC)**

Property Premium Estimate **\$1,500**

Contents	\$100,000
Deductible	\$2,500
Form	Special
Equipment Breakdown	Included

General Liability Premium Estimate **\$2,600**

Rating Basis:	Students	330
	Faculty	26

Limits:

Per Occurrence Limit	\$1,000,000
Annual Aggregate	\$3,000,000
Sexual Abuse & Molestation	\$1,000,000 per occurrence \$3,000,000 aggregate
Employee Benefits	\$1,000,000 per occurrence \$3,000,000 aggregate

School District & Educators Legal Liability (D&O/ E&O)

Premium Estimate **\$4,277**

	\$1,000,000 per occurrence \$2,000,000 aggregate
Additional Defense	\$100,000/\$50,000/\$100,000

Named insured includes the insured Organization (School Entity), it's school board, School Committee, Board of Trustees, Board of Governors or similar governing body, elected or appointed members of the Board of Education, Board of Trustees, School Directors, School Committee, Board of Governors or similar governing board, Employees, Student Teachers, School Volunteers, and students while serving in a supervised internship program sponsored by the "educational institution".

Wrongful Act to include any actual or alleged act, error, omission, misstatement, misleading statement, neglect, or breach of duty by or on behalf of the Insured Organization, including educational malpractice or failure to educate, negligent instruction, failure to supervise, inadequate or negligent academic guidance of counseling, improper or inappropriate academic placement or discipline.

INSURANCE PEOPLE

Fidelity Bond Estimate	\$332
Limit	\$250,000
Auto Premium Estimate	\$300
Hired & Non-owned Auto Liability	
Limit of Liability	\$1,000,000
Head of Class Endorsement	\$82
Workers Compensation Premium Estimate	\$10,450
Statutory State - NC	
Employers Liability	\$500/ \$500/ \$500
Payroll Estimate	\$1,770,000
Umbrella Premium Estimate	\$2,387
Limit of Liability	\$1,000,000
TOTAL ESTIMATED PREMIUM	\$21,928
 Student Accident Coverage	 \$7.00/ student

These premiums are subject to change based on Underwriter review and approval of completed applications.

Disclaimer: The abbreviated outlines of coverages used throughout this proposal are not intended to express legal opinion as to the nature of coverage. They are only visuals to a basic understanding of coverages. The policy terms, conditions, and exclusions will prevail. Please read the policy forms for specific details of coverage

03/16/2026



Signature Page

The foregoing application is submitted on behalf of the **BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF VIRTUAL ACTIVE LEARNING ACADEMY**. The undersigned has read the application and hereby declares that the information contained in it is true and accurate to the best of his/her information and belief. The undersigned further represents that the applicant has read the Charter School Law and agrees to be governed by it, other applicable laws, and SBE regulations. Additionally, we understand the final approval of the charter is contingent upon successful completion of a mandatory planning year. Per SBE policy "Planning Year for New and Preliminary Charter Schools – CHTR 013, all new nonprofit boards receiving a charter must participate in a year-long planning program prior to the charter school's opening for students. The planning year provides an applicant time to prepare for the implementation of the school's curricular, financial, marketing, and facility plans. During this planning year, regular meetings are held with the Board of Directors and consultants from the Office of Charter Schools to provide information on the following topics: school opening plans, staff development, finance, governance, board training, marketing, policies and procedures, securing a school site, and hiring a school administrator. Final approval of the charter will be contingent upon successfully completing all of the planning program requirements.

Print/Type Name: **Cevdet Akbay**

Board Position: Board President

Signature: *C Akbay*

Date: April 17 2026

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 17 day of April, 2026.

Notary Public: *Edward T. Cruz* Official Seal:

My commission expires: March 23, 2030.

