



## NORTH CAROLINA CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION

# Ascend Leadership Academy: Durham

**Public charter schools opening the fall of 2018**

**Due 5:00 pm EST, September 19, 2016**

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction  
NCDPI/Office of Charter Schools  
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Raleigh NC 27601-2825  
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**CHARTER SCHOOL  
2016 Application Process  
To open a charter school in the 2018-2019 school year**

**APPLICATION DUE DATE/TIME**

**September 19, 2016** A complete **online** application package, in the Office of Charter Schools **by 5:00 pm EST.**

**\*Non-Refundable \$1000 Application fee due to the Office of Charter Schools\***

*Application Fee Payment Details can be found on the Office of Charter Schools Website*

**APPLICATION SPECIFICATIONS**

Applicants can submit applications prior to the deadline September 19, 2016 at 5:00 pm EST. **All applications must be submitted using the online portal** and applicants are to use the following specifications:

1. All required Appendices should be clearly titled, include page numbers (i.e. Appendix A and page numbers as- A1, A2, B1...), and submitted in the appropriate places within the application.
2. **Any** answer given within the application which is not original to the applicant, the applicant must provide a citation to the source of the answer.
3. Review all elements of your application for completeness before submitting.
4. **Any** document attached to the application or within the online system **must be** in PDF format.
5. Late submissions **will not** be accepted. No exceptions.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

I. APPLICATION CONTACT INFORMATION.....4

II. MISSION and PURPOSES.....6

Mission:.....6

Purposes of the Proposed Charter School:.....9

Goals for the Proposed Charter School:.....11

III. EDUCATION PLAN.....15

Instructional Program:.....15

IV. GOVERNANCE and CAPACITY.....32

Governance:.....32

Governance and Organizational Structure of Private Non-Profit Organization:.....32

Proposed Management Organization (Educational Management Organization or Charter Management Organization):.....40

Private School Conversions:.....40

Charter School Replication:.....40

Projected Staff:.....40

Enrollment and Marketing:.....49

Marketing Plan:.....49

Parent and Community Involvement:.....51

Admissions Policy:.....52

Weighted Lottery:.....54

V. OPERATIONS.....56

Transportation Plan:.....56

School Lunch Plan:.....57

Civil Liability and Insurance:.....57

Health and Safety Requirements:.....58

Facility:.....58

VI. FINANCIAL PLAN.....

Budget: Revenue Projections from each LEA 2018-19:.....61

Total Budget: Revenue Projections 2018-19 through 2022-2023:.....62

Personnel Budget: Expenditure Projections 2018-19 through 2022-2023:.....63

Operations Budget: Expenditure Projections 2018-19 through 2022-2023:.....66

Overall Budget:.....67

Budget Narrative:.....67

Financial Compliance:.....71

VII. AGREEMENT PAGE.....

Application Fee:72

Applicant Signature:72

## I. APPLICATION CONTACT INFORMATION

Name of proposed charter school: Ascend Leadership Academy: Durham

Has the organization applied for 501(c)(3) non-profit status: Yes No

Name of non-profit organization under which charter will be organized or operated: *Ascend Leadership Academy*

Provide the name of the person who will serve as the primary contact for this Application. The primary contact will serve as the contact for follow-up, interviews, and notices regarding this Application.

Name of contact person: *Justin Smith*

Title/Relationship to nonprofit: *Board Member*

Mailing address: 315 Rondelay Drive  
Durham NC 27703

Primary telephone: 919-522-5476 Alternative telephone: 919-208-0518

E-Mail address: justinsmith1520@gmail.com

Name of county and local education agency (LEA) in which charter school will reside:

County: DURHAM

LEA: 320-Durham Public Schools

Was this application prepared with the assistance of a third party person or group?

No:

Yes:

Is this application a Conversion from a traditional public school or private school?

No:

Yes:

Is this application being submitted as a replication of a current charter school model?

No:

Yes:

Acceleration

Yes:

No:

What is the name of the nonprofit organization that governs this charter school? *Ascend Leadership Academy*

Is this application for Virtual charter school: Yes: No:

### **Grade Levels Served and Total Student Enrollment:**

Projected School Opening: Year 2018 Month August

Will this school operate on a year round schedule?

No:

Yes:

*Proposed Grade Levels Served and Total Student Enrollment (5 Years)*

<b>Academic School Year</b>	<b>Grade Levels</b>	<b>Total Projected Student Enrollment</b>
First Year	06,07	160
Second Year	06,07,08,09	320
Third Year	06,07,08,09,10	400
Fourth Year	06,07,08,09,10,11	480
Fifth Year	06,07,08,09,10,11,12	560

*The State Board of Education provides funds to charter schools, approves the original members of the boards of directors of the charter schools, has the authority to grant, supervise, and revoke charters, and demands full accountability from charter schools for school governance, operations, finances and student performance.*

*I certify that I have the authority to submit this application, that the initial board members and I were regularly involved in the development of this application, and that no part of this application is plagiarized. All information contained herein is complete and accurate. I realize that any misrepresentation will result in disqualification from the application process or revocation after award. I understand that incomplete applications will not be considered. The person named as the contact person for the application is so authorized to serve as the primary contact for this application on behalf of the non-profit organization. Additionally, the board is aware that if this application is approved by the State Board of Education, the approval is contingent upon successful completion of such planning year.*

justinsmith1520  
*Signature*

Board Member  
*Title*

justinsmith1520  
*Printed Name*

09/13/2016  
*Date*

## II. MISSION and PURPOSES

(No more than three total pages in this section)

### **Mission:**

*State the Mission of the proposed charter school in **thirty-five words or less**. The mission statement defines the organization's purpose and primary objectives, describing why it exists. The mission statement provides the foundation for the entire proposal.*

*The mission statement of the proposed charter school is as follows:*

The mission of Ascend Leadership Academy is to develop successful student leaders by growing their self-efficacy, intellectual understanding, and social competence. ALA will accomplish this by applying innovative teaching methods, incorporating student cultural realities and cultivating student ownership in the learning community.

*Clearly describe the mission of the proposed charter school:*

At ALA we seek to grow our students' self-efficacy through the infusion of proven leadership principles into all aspects of the learning environment. We will expand our students intellectual understanding through the execution of project based learning techniques and a digital media curriculum focused on real-world applications. ALA will advance student social competence by empowering students to use their own unique experiences, and realities as effective resources in their learning.

### **Educational need and Targeted Student Population of the Proposed Charter School:**

- 1. Provide a description of 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. Describe the rationale for selecting the location and student body.*

Ascend Leadership Academy is an institution that infuses leadership principles into the academic curriculum and facilitates student empowerment through its educational program. ALA is unique to any other school in the surrounding Durham area. We will target students specifically in Eastern Durham. This includes the Oak Grove, Bethesda and Brier Creek communities of Durham. The school population will likely reflect the demographics of the 27703 zip code district of Eastern Durham. According to the US Census 2014 American Community Survey this area of Durham is 49.4 % Black/African American, 38.5% White, with the final 12% being comprised of mostly Hispanic Americans. Although there are multiple charter schools in Durham, none have student populations that reflect the diversity of the Durham community. ALA seeks to have a school population reflective of the demographics of this area of Durham.

Currently there is only one school in the Durham area that offers the Leader in Me program to secondary students. ALA will distinguish itself from this school by infusing the Leader in Me principles with core academic courses to encourage students to make connections between their own lives and the

academic curriculum. We will combine the Leader in Me program with project based learning techniques to create our innovative Project Based Leadership (PBL) pedagogy. PBL will give students a unique academic experience that is only available at ALA. Our students will learn relevant leadership skills and connect those skills with their academic knowledge to execute projects that will have a positive impact on their peers, families, and local community. In conjunction with this ALA will offer students specific courses in digital media. Our Digital media curriculum will include topics like animation, graphic design, audio/video production, and web design. The location of the charter is also strategic for the development of partnerships with local technology companies in the Research Triangle Park area. The close proximity to these corporations will allow students to have relevant field experiences with companies who specialize in areas of Digital Media.

Also in the Bethesda/Oak Grove area of Southeast Durham there is only one Charter school that services secondary students. Research Triangle Charter Academy is a K-8 institution that is currently enrolled to capacity and has an extensive waitlist. We will give another option to these families who are currently on the waitlist. Another factor considered when selecting the location was the growth of Eastern Durham and the development of several neighborhoods between Highway 70 and Highway 98 in this area of the city. According to the American Community Survey, the 27703 zip code district has grown by 12% from 2010 to 2014. Most of these housing developments are in the Neal Middle School, Lowes Grove Middle School, and Southern High School district of Durham County Schools. For the 2014-15 school year, Neal achieved an overall Achievement score of 27 (27 Reading, 17 Math, 50 Science) with an "F" as their overall school performance grade. Lowes Grove received an overall Achievement score of 28 (33 Reading 17 Math 39 Science) with an "F" as their overall performance grade. Southern High School achieved an overall performance score of 41 with a "D" as their overall performance grade. We believe our students will obtain a higher rate of achievement through the execution of our proven research based educational program. By establishing ALA in this district we will give parents another viable educational option for their children.

- 2. 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 is grades 9-12).*

The total projected enrollment of Ascend Leadership Academy will be 560 students in grades 6 through 12. ALA will achieve total enrollment in year 5 of operation. This will include an enrollment of 80 students per grade level. In 2018, ALA will open with 160 students in 6th and 7th grade. Based on statistics from the 2015-16 school year this represents 0.90% of Durham County's ADM for grades 6-12. In 2019, ALA will add both 8th and 9th grade for a total of 320 students. This represents 1.82% of Durham County's ADM for grades 6-12. In 2020, ALA will enroll 400 students for a representation of 2.27% of Durham County's ADM for grades 6-12. In 2021, ALA will enroll 480 students for a representation of 2.73% of Durham County's ADM for grades 6-12. In 2022, ALA will achieve its max enrollment of 560 students. At max enrollment, ALA will service 3.18% of Durham County's Average Daily Membership.



From 2010-2015 Durham County's population has grown by 11% according to US Census data. If this population growth continues in Durham County ALA's percentage of Durham County's ADM will be even lower than suggested above.

3. *Explain how the charter school's education plan will compare to or differ from that of the local LEA(s).*

The innovative features of Ascend Leadership Academy's educational program makes ALA unique to any school in the LEA. ALA will employ the leadership principles inspired by Stephen Covey's Leader in Me program. This program is largely based on Covey's world renowned 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. The 7 Habits will provide a common language for all stakeholders and these leadership principles will be integrated into every aspect of the learning environment. Our education plan is also intended to provide educators with a mechanism for developing approaches to teaching that specifically meet the needs of the students in their community. We will implement strategies and procedures consistent with Reality Pedagogy developed by Dr. Christopher Emdin, professor at Columbia University. This pedagogy states that teachers first recognize students as unique individuals and then develop approaches to teaching and learning that work for those individual students. A unique feature of this reality pedagogy is the cogenerative dialogue. Cogenerative dialogues are structured conversations between teachers and students with the goal of understanding students unique learning needs and utilizing that information for improving the classroom. This practice allows teachers and students to bridge any potential cultural divide before addressing the content or subject matter. These dialogues will be an effective tool to motivate student ownership in the classroom which has been proven to increase student achievement. Teachers will be given intense professional development in the structure of these protocols and how to implement them effectively in their classrooms. Teachers will also be experts in how to take the data gathered from these conversations to create meaningful, and relevant lesson plans that maximize student interest and engagement. The integration of the Leader in Me and Reality Pedagogy will separate ALA from other schools in the area as every feature of the education plan is designed to train student leaders who take ownership of their learning community.

Another unique feature of our education plan is the implementation of our innovative Project Based Leadership (PBL) pedagogy. This stimulating new approach to education is unique to Ascend Leadership Academy, and will merge the 8 essentials of Project Based learning with the 7 Habits of Effective people supported by the Leader in Me program. Our teachers will execute projects that include the essential project design elements of PBL including: student choice & voice, a challenging problem or question, sustained inquiry, reflection, public products, critique & revision, key knowledge and understanding and authenticity. These projects will also require students to use the skills developed from the Leader in Me as they will consistently interact with members of the local community in various capacities. The driving questions for these projects will relate to a problem within the surrounding community and students will be challenged to use the skills and knowledge gained from their academic courses to help solve the identified problem. This could include the creation of children's books for a local daycare or the development of websites for local non-



profit organizations. Although there are schools within the LEA that offer Project Based Learning or the Leader in Me program, no school has merged the principles of both to create an innovative approach to education. PBL will give students at ALA a unique academic experience that is currently not offered with the local LEA.

The distinctive features of our education plan are unique to any other school in the area. The implementation of innovative teaching methods, infusion of leadership principles, and development of student ownership in the learning environment will grow our student's self-efficacy, increase their intellectual understanding, and expand their social competence.

4. *In the appendices (Appendix A1), you must provide evidence through a narrative or visual of this educational need through survey data, or times and locations of public meetings discussing this proposed charter school. (Please do not provide more than one sample survey form).*

**Purposes of the Proposed Charter School:** *In one page or less, describe how the proposed charter school will achieve one or more of the six legislated purposes, as specifically addressed in the NC charter school statute GS 115C-218, and the proposed school's operations.*

*The Six Legislative Purposes of a Charter School are:*

1. *Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunities to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.*
2. *Hold schools accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.*
3. *Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system.*
4. *Improving student learning.*
5. *Increasing learning opportunities for all students, with a special emphasis on at-risk or gifted students.*
6. *Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods.*

3. Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system.

5. Increasing learning opportunities for all students, with a special emphasis on at-risk or gifted students.

Ascend Leadership Academy will provide parents and students with expanded choices in educational opportunities and improve learning for all students including at-risk and gifted students by infusing leadership principles from the Leader in Me program, and utilizing cogenerative dialogues to incorporate student perspective into all aspects of the learning environment. As a part of the Leader in Me program students will keep Digital portfolios that document each students personal and academic goals. Students will track their own academic data on this portfolio to keep record of their progress towards these academic goals. Students and their advisers

will monitor them periodically and discuss specific strategies to achieve these goals during the Advisory period. This aspect of the Digital portfolio allows students to identify areas of improvement and set attainable goals to progress in these areas. In conjunction with this ALA will also implement student-led conferences where students share with their parents and teacher adviser the goals documented in their digital portfolio. These conferences will take place at the end of the first and third academic quarters and students will use their digital portfolio as a tool to assess their academic progress throughout the school year. These individualized practices will benefit all students either at-risk, or high achieving.

Through cogenerative dialogues students will play a significant role in creating major elements of their project work including brainstorming ideas for culminating events and final products. This will help the instructor identify ways to specifically meet the needs of their students and integrate elements of the students' cultural realities. This methodology allows students to provide input to the curriculum regardless of their ability and ensures that the instructor considers their perspective when making instructional decisions.

The individual needs of the student are also met through our digital media curriculum. Students will execute projects where they will be encouraged to create products that represent their own interests while learning the skills necessary to be proficient in digital media. The incorporation of The Leader in Me and restorative justice practices will empower students to own actions that occur in their learning community. Research shows that these practices reduce bullying, and other disruptive behaviors in the school. ALA will also integrate a new innovative pedagogy called Project Based Leadership (PBL). PBL is a stimulating new approach to education that is unique to Ascend Leadership Academy. It merges the essentials of Project Based learning with the 7 Habits of Effective people supported by the Leader in Me program. Both of these renowned educational programs have been proven to increase learning opportunities for all students both gifted, or at-risk.

#### 4. Improve Student Learning

A research study funded by the Wallace Foundation has revealed the positive outcomes of shared leadership on student learning and staff morale. The research shows that high-performing schools award greater decision-making influence to the teacher teams, parents, and in particular, students, than do low-performing schools. The study notes specifically that at higher performing schools the sharing of leadership with students is particularly present. At Ascend Leadership Academy we will design student leadership opportunities in many facets of the learning environment as this is a vital component of the Leader in Me program. This includes tapping into the student interests, motivations, and realities by giving students a voice when certain instructional decisions are made with the use of cogenerative dialogues. We believe that students have an expertise about their own learning and it is their responsibility to help co-construct various aspects of the classroom environment with the teacher. We will build a communal atmosphere where students are empowered to own their educational experience through a digital media curriculum, Paideia Seminars, Restorative justice practices, and cogenerative dialogues. This in turn will increase student engagement and ownership exponentially leading to improved achievement of

all students.

6. Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods.

Traditional teaching models are usually teacher-focused rather than focused on the unique learning needs of the students. At ALA we will train teachers on how to incorporate the student perspective into their everyday classroom activities. We have developed a structured protocol (Appendix O-2) for teachers to implement in their classrooms that foster conversations between teachers and students to co-create plans of action to improve the learning experience in the classroom. This brand of pedagogy welcomes student self-expression, values the unique talents of our students, and encourages student critiques of the classroom/school.

The Leader in Me program and the Reality pedagogy also require a paradigm shift as educators are required to view students as partners with the adults who are charged with delivering the standard course of study to them. When this paradigm shift is applied, teachers and students are allowed to experience teaching and learning from the others perspective. When this happens effective, relevant, and engaging instructional strategies are developed based on the teacher's content expertise, student realities about the subject matter, and an agreement that both parties are responsible for each students achievement.

The student perspective will be embedded in our curriculum through Project Based Leadership (PBL), digital media courses, Paideia seminars, restorative justice and service learning projects.

### **Goals for the Proposed Charter School:**

- 1. 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.*

Ascend Leadership Academy has set specific performance goals to encourage continuous school improvement. The lead administrator will be responsible for periodically reporting progress toward the measurable goals to the Board of Directors. We have identified specific areas of assessment and included a goal for each.

#### Overall Academic Performance

Goal: Students at Ascend Leadership Academy will exceed overall proficiency scores of students from the Local Education Agency (LEA) and within the State of North Carolina.

As Measured by:

1. Benchmark Assessment Data
2. NC EOG/EOC Growth Assessment data
3. NC EOG/EOC Tests and the NC Accountability Model
4. ACT and College readiness data

#### Student Leadership

Goal: Students at Ascend Leadership Academy will display leadership and character growth as measured by 100% participation in school leadership programs.

As Measured by:

1. 100% Mastery of the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Measured by completion of student reflections on student digital portfolio
2. 100% Completion of 50 service hours within the learning community annually
3. 100% participation in Leadership Exhibition Day events
4. 100% participation in Presentation of Learning (POL) events

#### Student Conduct

Goal: Ascend Leadership Academy will maintain a safe learning environment where students are held accountable for their actions on a daily basis.

As measured by:

1. 5% decrease in behavior management referrals by teachers annually
2. Student Justice Council success rates in regards to the number of repeat offenses
3. Decrease suspension rates by 10% in accordance with school discipline reports

#### Digital Media

Goal: Graduating students at Ascend Leadership Academy will master 90% of the identified skills in digital media that include programming, animation, audio/video production, and graphic design.

As Measured by:

1. 100% student attendance at the Leadership Exhibition Day events
2. Proficient evaluations on comprehensive digital media project rubrics
3. Proficient evaluations on each students project work shared in their Digital Portfolio
4. 100% participation in 12th grade digital media service learning project

#### Board of Directors Involvement

Goal: The Board of Directors at Ascend Leadership Academy will attain a 90% board member attendance rate at monthly board meetings and significant school programs annually.

As Measured by:

1. Monthly Board Meeting minutes and attendance
2. Participation in Board trainings and orientations
3. Attendance at significant school programs including Leadership Exhibition Day, Presentations of Learning events.
4. Participation in yearly board retreat for training and goal setting

#### Financial Sustainability

Goal: Ascend Leadership Academy will operate within a budget and maintain a 5% yearly surplus to build a reserve fund.

As Measured by:

1. Monthly and Annual budget reports
2. Financial audit reports
3. Budget Surplus amounts

#### Parent Engagement

Goal: Ascend Leadership Academy will achieve a 95% school participation rate and 85% satisfaction rate among parents of our students.

As Measured by:

1. Attendance records at Student led conferences
2. Annual Parent satisfaction survey data
3. Attendance at Leadership Exhibition Day and Presentation of Learning events
4. Completion of 10 volunteer hours annually by each student's family

Staff Satisfaction and Retention

Goal: Ascend Leadership Academy will attain a satisfaction rating of 90% or higher among teaching staff and sustain a teacher retention rate of 80%.

As measured by:

1. Teacher Working Conditions Survey data
2. Annual Teacher Retention data

*2. How will the governing board know that the proposed public charter school is working toward attaining their mission statement?*

The Board of Directors at Ascend Leadership Academy will consistently assess the school's advancement towards achieving its mission. The Lead administrator will send monthly reports to the Board before every board meeting. At every board meeting a discussion surrounding the school's mission will be the first action item and relevant objective data will be shared to support the discussion. ALA will also consistently assess identified program metrics at monthly board meetings to identify progression towards the school's mission. We have identified the following program metrics for ALA:

Student Achievement

At each board meeting, data relating to student academic achievement will be shared. This will include benchmark assessment data, student performance on EOG testing, and other pertinent academic performance data (lexile scores, math competency, etc.). Board members and the lead administrator will actively compare student performance with the LEA and state averages with the goal of consistently outperforming both entities. Teachers and students will also be invited regularly to board meetings to share projects, articulate unique features of the learning environment and celebrate academic success. During this time student work will be shared and board members will have the opportunity see specific artifacts representative of the educational program. Board members will also be active participants in significant school events including Presentations of Learning and Leadership Exhibition Days.

Student Leadership and Character Development

At each board meeting students from each grade level will participate by sharing reflections from their digital leadership portfolio. Each board meeting will focus on one of the 7 habits and students will be asked to reflect on how each habit is displayed within the school community. The students will provide specific examples and articulate how they apply the leadership principles to their own lives. Through this activity board members will be able ascertain how the leadership program is being applied within the school. This will also be a strategic element of the Leader in Me program by giving students a distinct voice in the decision making process.

### Fiscal Responsibility

At each board meeting the Board of Directors will discuss the budget and receive reports outlining year to date financial statements and end of year projections. They will determine the school's progress at achieving its goal of a balanced budget and minimal 5% surplus. The Board will also discuss long term financial goals and make appropriate budgetary decisions that will help the school achieve these goals. Each year the board will update and adopt a 5-year budget projection and a detailed yearly operation budget. Any changes to the operating budget will require board approval.

### School Culture and Climate

At least one staff member will be a non-voting member of the Board of Directors. In the founding years of the school, this individual will be the school's lead administrator. At every meeting this board member will have the opportunity to share any information in regards to the school's culture and climate. All information shared during this aspect of the board meeting will be related to the achievement of the overall mission of the school. Also at any time staff members will have the opportunity to attend board meetings and share any celebrations, concerns, or other information that may be relevant to the board during the open session.

Board members will also review student retention and enrollment growth to determine the academic program's effectiveness. The Board will execute changes where necessary and continually assess the program metrics to determine the efficacy of the school's education program. The Board of Directors will continually participate in a continuous improvement process to ensure advancement toward the school's mission.



### III. EDUCATION PLAN

(No more than ten total pages in this section)

**NOTE:** *All sections of the Education Plan should align with all other sections of this application. The State Board of Education shall give priority consideration to the applicants who demonstrate potential for significant, meaningful innovation in education. Provide precise and clear explanations. Lack of response to any question or proper documentation will deem the application incomplete.*

#### **Instructional Program:**

Provide a detailed description of the overall instructional program of the proposed charter school, including major instructional methods, assessment strategies, and explain how this instructional program and model meet the needs of the targeted student population.

Ascend Leadership Academy is an institution that infuses leadership principles into the academic curriculum and facilitates student empowerment through its educational program. Each foundation of our Instructional program is designed to cultivate student ownership of the learning community, grow student self-efficacy, stimulate intellectual understanding and expand our students' social competence.

ALA will execute an innovative pedagogy called Project Based Leadership (PBL). PBL merges the essentials of project based learning with the 7 Habits of Highly effective people of the Leader in Me program. From this merger we have developed unique learning objectives for our students to achieve. (Appendix O-1) These objectives require students to be active stakeholders in their learning and develop specific leadership skills that will benefit them as citizens in the 21st century. Teachers at ALA will complete a project planning form that will require them to consider the PBL learning objectives, the standard course of study, and the data collected from the cogenerative dialogue process.

Teachers at ALA will be trained thoroughly in how to execute specific tuning protocols in their classrooms called cogenerative dialogues. These protocols will guide students through small group discussions with the objective of allowing students to share with their instructor what they know, what they want to know, and how the subject relates to their own realities. Students will follow a protocol (Appendix O-2) with the goal of identifying specific ways that the instructor can integrate elements of the students own realities into the classroom environment. Teachers will then take the collected data and combine their content expertise to create effective lesson plans and projects that are culturally relevant to the student and also accountable to the standard course of study.

Students at ALA will participate in an advisory period on a daily basis that will teach them leadership principles consistent with the Leader in Me program. This advisory period will follow a curriculum that teaches students how the 7 Habits apply to their everyday lives. The objective of the advisory program is to teach the 7 habits, build citizenship and continually foster the collaborative learning environment desired.

ALA will immerse students in a comprehensive Digital Media Curriculum that exposes students to the latest digital software and equipment that will



prepare them for the 21st Century. The curriculum will train students in graphic design, audio/video production, web design, coding, animation, and game design. These courses will supplement their core academic courses and students will follow a prescribed digital media curriculum throughout their time at ALA.

ALA will use the NC Accountability Model to assess student proficiency in reading, math, and science. To prepare students for state testing, students will participate in Benchmark assessments three times a year. This will assess student progress and provide data for teachers to inform lesson planning. Students will also maintain a digital portfolio that will contain final products from project work and a leadership portfolio. These digital portfolios will also track each student's progress towards their annual academic goals. ALA will execute Presentations of Learning (POL) annually where students will be required to defend their learning in particular projects or classes. Finally, teachers will use best practices to incorporate formative assessments in their classrooms on a daily basis. This would include project rubrics, exit slips, strategic questioning techniques, and student self-assessments.

Meeting the specific needs of our targeted student population is the primary objective of our instructional model. All of the major instructional foundations of our instructional model integrate the student perspective and allow them to share data about their specific learning needs.

### **Curriculum and Instructional Design:**

*Describe the basic learning environment (e.g., classroom-based, independent study), including class size and structure for each grade span (i.e. elementary, middle, high) the school would ultimately serve.*

At Ascend Leadership Academy students will follow a very prescribed daily schedule to accomplish the mission of the school. Students will be in classes with no more than 20 students. For each middle school grade level we will have a total of 4 teachers to service the 80 students. The teacher team will include a Language Arts/Social Studies Teacher, Math Teacher, Science Teacher, and Digital Media/Technology Teacher. Rather than having traditional elective courses students will attend content specific digital media classes that will be scheduled opposite of their traditional core classes. Digital Media teachers will utilize assigned collaborative time with core teachers to establish ways to fully immerse students in the digital media aspect of the curriculum while supporting their reading, writing, and math instruction. Each teacher will also teach a 9 week enrichment course based on a teacher passion. Students will rotate through each course quarterly and topics could include music, art, dance or drama.

Once we add High School grades to our educational model the organizational structure will change slightly. To service the students in grades 9 -12, ALA will employ 5 teachers per grade level. This includes an English, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Digital Media Teacher. The English and Social Studies teacher will collaborate to instruct the Paideia English/Social Studies courses for grades 9 - 12 and co-teach their assigned sections. Teachers will also offer an elective in their discipline to add variety to our high school students' course options.

Students at ALA will participate in Paideia Seminars as a major aspect of their Social Studies and English/Language Arts Instruction. The Paideia program is an interdisciplinary program that encourages students to think across subject area boundaries. The course is designed to develop students' critical and analytical skills by having them analyze literature and develop arguments based on the text and express these points of view through their written and oral responses. Students will continually participate in seminars where they will have to reference the assigned text to answer open ended questions that can involve multiple points of view. Paideia teachers will utilize resources like newsela.com to incorporate current events and the appropriate reading level of their students. The Paideia program will fuse the two curriculums and ensure that students are effectively taught the standard course of study.

Students at ALA will also participate in an advisory period on a daily basis that will teach them leadership principles consistent with the Leader in Me program. This advisory period will differ from the traditional homeroom as students will follow a curriculum that will discuss specific issues/topics relevant to students and learn how the 7 Habits can be applied to them. The curriculum will be mapped out quarterly by teachers through a collaborative process. Students will co-create specific activities on the assigned topics through the cogenerative dialogue process to ensure that the lesson plans meet their specific needs. The curriculum map will include topics like time management, study skills, self-advocacy, managing stress/emotions, and other issues relating to appropriate peer interaction. The objective of the advisory program is to teach the 7 habits, build citizenship and continually foster the collaborative learning environment desired.

Provide a synopsis of the planned curriculum, including:

1. *One sample curriculum outline (in graph form) in the Appendices (Appendix B) for one core subject (specific to the school's purpose) for each grade span (i.e. elementary, middle, high) the school would ultimately serve.*
2. *If you are proposing a high school, as Appendix B2, provide a visual disseminating what courses (core content and electives) will be offered at the charter high school to ensure students meet the proposed charter school's graduation requirements. Please ensure the projected staff and budget aligns with the course offerings.*
3. *Identify how this curriculum aligns with the proposed charter school's mission, targeted student population, and North Carolina Accountability Model.*

Ascend Leadership Academy's curriculum plan is directly aligned with the schools mission. First, ALA will grow student self-efficacy through the infusion of leadership principles consistent with the Leader in Me program. The goal of the Leader in Me program is to include the 7 Habits in every feature of the learning environment including the academic curriculum. This program promotes students being proactive in the learning community and encourages educators to find ways to magnify the strengths and abilities of all students. We will expand students intellectual understanding through the execution of our innovative Project Based Leadership (PBL) pedagogy and comprehensive Digital Media curriculum. ALA's digital media curriculum will immerse students in the latest digital software and technology to provide them with skills necessary for success in our emerging digital world. This Digital media curriculum will give students real-world applicable skills

that will prepare them for the 21st century. Students will participate in Project Based Leadership (PBL) in both their core and digital media courses that will be designed to have deep connections to the world outside of the classroom. One of the major foundations of PBL is the inclusion of student choice throughout the learning process. When executed effectively PBL encourages students to be accountable to their own learning which fosters increased student engagement and achievement. Finally, our curriculum plan focuses on growing our students social competence through the use of cogenerative dialogues within the classroom. Teachers will include cogenerative dialogues in their classroom periodically to allow students to co-construct certain areas of the classroom and provide input for aspects of their project work. The intent of these dialogues is for students to share their own expertise about learning and ensure their cultural realities are considered when instructional decisions are made. All of the leadership foundations included in our curriculum plan are designed to foster student empowerment and ownership in the learning community.

By considering the student perspective in the major elements our curriculum plan, our targeted population will benefit immensely. Ascend's targeted population will consist of a diverse group of students from various cultural and socio-economic backgrounds in eastern Durham and western Wake County. Our curriculum plan is designed to consider the student perspective to facilitate a student-teacher partnership in the classroom. Students will be invested in the learning community as a relevant stakeholder whose individual needs and perspective will have a compelling influence when instructional decisions are made. In conjunction with this, teachers will receive professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy, and training in AIG, ELL, and other identified student groups based on the needs of our student population.

All classroom lessons, activities, and projects will be aligned closely with the NC Accountability model. Our curriculum plan will be in accordance with the NC Essential and Common Core standards to ensure student achievement on state mandated EOG/EOC tests. We will also implement the Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) program based on teacher observations, classroom performance metrics and benchmark assessment data. This program will provide supplementary and intensive instruction on top of the students' core differentiated instruction. Teachers will meet with administration and in professional learning teams to discuss student progress on benchmark assessment data. In these meetings they will collaborate to establish appropriate plans of action based on this data and other performance assessments.

- 4. 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.*

Ascend Leadership Academy is an institution that infuses leadership principles into the academic curriculum and facilitates student empowerment through its educational program. To create this collaborative environment teachers will be expected to master very specific techniques and classroom strategies to achieve the school's mission.

The first strategy teachers would need to master is the infusion of the 7 habits of Highly Effective people into all aspects of the learning community. Teachers will receive on-going training in the Leader in Me program beginning with a two-week course in the summer prior to the schools opening. Through the first three years of existence teachers at ALA will receive extensive training from the Covey Foundation including Coaching community days, 7 Habits certification and professional development on how to incorporate the 7 Habits with the academic curriculum. Teachers will also participate in book studies on 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, The Leader in Me, and The 6 Most Important Decisions You'll ever make. All of which are a part of the Franklin Covey Foundation. Teachers will also effectively utilize the various resources made available by the Leader in Me program. All teachers will attend Leader in Me seminars and some will visit other Leader in Me schools to become experts on its implementation.

Cogenerative dialogues are structured small group discussions where students are allowed to share with their instructor what they know, what they want to know, and how the subject matter relates to their own realities. Teachers will be experts in taking the data from these conversations and fusing it with the NC Essential and Common Core standards to create relevant lesson plans and projects that meet the students' needs. The Leadership team of ALA has created an innovative tuning protocol (Appendix O-2) for teachers and students to follow to ensure the success and continuity of the cogenerative process. Administration of ALA will consistently review the process with teachers to maximize its efficiency.

Teachers will also be expected to master the execution of Project Based Leadership projects. Teachers will be effective at incorporating the 8 essentials necessary to implement effective project based learning projects with the leadership principles of the Leader in Me program. These essentials of PBL include Student Voice/Choice, challenging problem/driving question, sustained inquiry, critique/revision, authenticity, public product, reflection, and key knowledge/Success skills. Teachers will be adept at creating projects that involve all of these elements of traditional project based learning and use the cogenerative dialogue process to give students the opportunity to provide input on possible driving questions, public presentations, and culminating events for their various projects. Teachers will also be able to link these projects with the local community to give students the opportunities positively impact the local community through their project work.

By implementing these instructional practices our targeted student population will benefit as they will be able to contribute their unique perspective to the learning environment. Students will be full stakeholders in the community and be encouraged through these specific instructional strategies to take ownership of their learning. Research suggests that by allowing students to have a significant stake in the learning community it will improve their engagement and achievement. Students will also experience real world applications of their curriculum through their PBL instruction. Student achievement will increase as students will realize the relevance of their instruction and make consistent connections with the curriculum and the world outside of the classroom.

5. *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.*

ALA will apply the NC Accountability model as the foundation of our assessment model. In conjunction with the NC mandated testing we will apply strategic forms of formative assessment throughout the school year including Benchmark testing. We will administer these assessments three times a year to measure student proficiency throughout the school year. Quarterly each student will receive performance based report cards that indicate student proficiency in the standard course of study, Leadership principles, and Project Based Leadership learning objectives. Included with our PBL projects will be detailed rubrics that measure student performance based on the standard course of study and the PBL learning objectives. With their project work students will also be required to participate in Presentations of Learning (POL) at the end of the school year. This process will require students to defend their learning and make connections between their final products, the standard course of study, and the PBL learning objectives. Students will also participate in the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) periodically throughout the school year to measure their overall lexile level in relation to their grade level. This data along with EOG/EOC testing proficiency, classroom performance (achieving a proficiency rating), participation in Presentations of Learning (POL), and the assessment of each student's project work in their digital portfolio will determine promotion from grade level to grade level. Also the implementation of our Multi-Tiered system of support (MTSS) will provide appropriate interventions for students who are targeted as being "at risk". This will ensure that any student who falls behind will be provided with the necessary interventions to make up any proficiency gaps before transitioning to the next grade level.

Our High School students will follow the Future Ready Core Course Requirements for graduation. They will be required to have a concentration in Career and Technical Education (CTE) by earning 4 credits in Digital Media. Each student will be enrolled in a different Digital Media class from grades 9 - 12. In their 12th grade year students will be required to take a CTE Advanced Studies course and complete a yearlong service project where they utilize their digital media expertise to make a positive impact on their community. The project will consist of a research paper, an elaborate documented process, a final product, and a final public presentation of learning. This culminating project, our Digital Media curriculum, and PBL pedagogy is designed to prepare students for their post-secondary education and future careers by providing opportunities for students to apply their newly acquired skills in real-world scenarios. ALA will also offer Spanish as a Foreign Language elective for any student who elects to take it. This in conjunction with the core academic requirements will give any student at ALA the required credits to qualify for the four-year college or university of their choice after high school.

*6. If you are proposing a high school, describe how the proposed charter school will meet the Future-Ready Core requirements. Provide details on how the students will earn credit hours and how grade-point averages will be calculated?*

Ascend Leadership Academy will adhere to the Future-Ready Core course requirements to ensure our students are prepared for the globally competitive workforce and post-secondary education. Once our high school students complete the Future-Ready core requirements they will possess the



skills necessary to succeed in college and their desired careers. Students at ALA will follow a very prescribed curriculum through the various grade levels. Each grade level will have a Social Studies, English, Math, and Science teachers to deliver instruction for the core subject areas. Each High School core teacher will also teach an elective course in their discipline to provide elective course options for our students. High School students will also have an elective concentration in Digital Media. Students will be required to achieve 4 credits in Digital Media to meet graduation requirements. ALA has identified specific digital media courses to meet these requirements and each grade level Digital Media teacher will specialize in a course and deliver instruction to students.

To earn credit hours high school students must receive a 60 or high on the 10-point grading scale for their final grade in each course. The final grade will be a combination of the 4 quarter grades, the midterm, and final exam. Teachers will tie all project rubrics to PBL learning objectives and the standard course of study. They will determine student proficiency and each student's proficiency level will be translated to a number grade. Project grades will be used to determine quarter grades along with other categories of student assessment. All grades and course completion information will be entered into Powerschool, the preferred student information system. Advisory teachers will also guide students in completing their graduation checklist and consistently discuss the Future Ready core requirements with students and their parents.

Grade point averages will be calculated on a 4.0 scale. We will use the following scale to convert student final course grades to GPAs:

Percent Grade	4.0 scale
100 - 97 (A+)	4.0
96 - 93 (A)	4.0
92 - 90 (A-)	3.7
89 - 87 (B+)	3.3
86 - 83 (B)	3.0
82 - 80 (B-)	2.7
79 - 77 (C+)	2.3
76 - 73 (C)	2.0
72 - 70 (C-)	1.7
69 - 67 (D+)	1.3
66 - 63 (D)	1.0
62 - 60 (D-)	0.7
Below 60 (F)	0.0

Students who take honors/AP courses will receive additional weight. Students will receive .5 weight for Honors classes and 1.0 for AP courses. ALA will use weighted GPAs to determine class rank. ALA will utilize Powerschool to create transcripts for its students.

- 7. Provide a school academic calendar in Appendix C (minimum of 185 instructional days or 1,025 hours).*
- 8. Describe in a brief narrative below on how the calendar coincides with the tenets of the proposed mission and education plan.*

Ascend's school calendar will be a traditional model that will attempt to coincide as closely as possible with the local LEAs school calendar. We will exceed the required 1025 instructional hours while providing the opportunity for our families to participate in a minimum week long student vacation at the end of each quarter. This would include a two-week vacation at the conclusion of the 2nd quarter for winter break and a week long fall and spring break at the end of the 1st and 3rd quarters respectively. These breaks will also occur directly after significant events related to the curriculum such as project exhibition nights, Presentations of learning (POLs), mid-year exams/assessments and/or project culminating events. We will try to closely align our calendar with the local LEAs to be mindful of our families with siblings at surrounding elementary and high schools. By closely aligning the calendar, families will have an easier time coordinating child care, transportation, and address other difficulties for parents with children on different school schedules.

### **Special Programs and "At-Risk" Students**

1. *Describe the methods and clear systems of prevention and intervention teachers will utilize to provide assistance to students that are not performing at expected levels: ensuring continued progress and academic student growth.*

ALA will quickly identify students who are "at risk" by implementing a series of formative assessments to measure student comprehension. "At risk" students are defined as any student who is or in danger of falling below grade level expectations in regards to their performance in the various aspects of the curriculum. We will take objective data from benchmark assessments and other formative assessments and combine them with our teacher evaluations of student performance to determine which students are "at risk". Once identified "at risk" students will be provided with interventions based on their level of need. We will apply a multi-tiered framework of interventions that will follow the North Carolina adopted model of Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). The concept of MTSS is to promote school improvement through engaging, research-based academic and behavioral practices. It employs a systems approach using data-driven problem-solving to maximize growth for all students. Our systematic approach will include a 20-30 minute period every school day designated for strategic interventions to address the needs of our "at risk" students. Our MTSS program will move through the following tiers:

#### Tier 1: Core Differentiated Instruction

In this tier students receive differentiated instruction in their regular core and digital media classes. Teachers will use data to assess each student's ability and adapt their instruction to meet their individual needs. The objective of this tier is to provide interventions at the classroom level to ensure that all students receive this level of support. This level of intervention should meet the needs of 80% of our students. If students are not successful at this level more intensive intervention is required in tier 2.

#### Tier 2: Supplemental Instruction

In this tier students receive instruction that is supplemental to their regular core instruction. Once students are identified they will



participate in the strategic interventions during the 20-30 minute MTSS period. Each grade level will collaborate to determine what skills, concepts, or curriculum objectives need to be remediated and develop a plan for the students based on their ability. The objective of this tier is to provide interventions on top of the differentiated core instruction that specifically meets the needs of identified students based on formative data analysis. Approximately 15% of students will consistently benefit from this level of intervention. If students are still not successful after receiving this additional level of interventions they will move to tier 3.

### Tier 3: Intensive Interventions

Students who participate in Tier 3 will benefit from small group intensive instruction in conjunction with the interventions of tiers 1 and 2. Students will receive small group instruction from a curriculum specialist with the objective of targeting and closing any gaps in proficiency. This instruction will not replace students regular core instruction but will be in addition to it. This tier should service about 5% of our student population. Students who are not successful under this level of intervention will be considered for eligibility to receive exceptional children services.

In addition to the MTSS program, ALA will provide other intervention strategies to support students who are considered "at risk". With our level of technology and access to digital resources we will employ online educational resources to address student needs. We will also include personalized student success plans that apply research based interventions to address the specific needs of each student. Grade level teams will develop these plans and communicate their importance to all of the necessary stakeholders. Meetings will take place periodically to assess student progress. This team will determine if more intensive interventions are necessary or if the applied interventions are appropriate.

## 2. *Explain how the instructional plan and curriculum will meet the needs of English Language*

*Learner (ELL) students, including the following:*

- a) *Methods for identifying ELL students.*
- b) *Specific instructional programs, practices, and strategies the school will employ to ensure academic success and equitable access to the core academic program for ELL students.*
- c) *Plans for monitoring and evaluating the progress and success of ELL students, including exiting students from ELL services.*

ALA will provide many opportunities for all students regardless of their background or ability. This includes students who are English Language learners (ELL). We will provide opportunities and interventions for ELL learners with the objective of improving their overall language skills and supporting them in the classroom.

Students will be identified as an ELL student through our initial enrollment documentation. Questions on the enrollment packet will help us determine the primary language spoken in each home and if the student is foreign born. If a student is identified under either of these criteria they will take the WIDA ACCESS-Placement test to determine if he/she is limited English proficient. Once assessment results are determined and the student qualifies as limited English proficient (LEP) parents/legal guardians will be notified to obtain consent for ESL services. The assessment data will be

used to provide feedback to Ascend's administration for the student's initial placement and the development of the student's individual service plan. The individual service plan will be developed with the input of a variety of stakeholders. Parents, teachers, administrators, and students will collaboratively determine necessary objectives and goals for the student based on the placement test data and the North Carolina English Language Proficiency Standards. ESL students will be assessed and have their individual service plans updated annually.

ESL students will be provided supplementary services to ensure their growth as English Language learners and to support their core instruction. Through their individual service plans students could be provided with the following:

- "Pull Out" ESL classes where students receive specific instruction in the English Language
- Differentiated instruction in core classes based on their limited English proficiency
- Supplemental text, modified assignments, and additional resources including ESL textbooks, and English to foreign language dictionaries.
- Additional before/after school one on one tutoring
- Online or Digital Resources to support their knowledge of the English language including Rosetta Stone, Google Translate, and English Central

As stated previously students will be tested annually to determine their English proficiency. Once students are determined to be proficient they will be exited from the program. Each student in the ESL program will have a portfolio that documents all of their assessment data, individual service plans, and specific interventions and accommodations provided for that student. Ultimately, it is Ascend's goal to meet the needs of all of our students. Specifically for our LEP students we understand that the students native languages, cultures, and histories are valued and are an integral part in developing the student's second language, sense of pride, and self-esteem.

3. *Explain how the school will identify and meet the needs of intellectually gifted students, including the following:*
  - a) *Specific instructional programs, practices, strategies, and opportunities the school will employ or provide to enhance their abilities.*
  - b) *Plans for monitoring and evaluating the progress and success of intellectually gifted students.*

ALA will provide an academic program where all students are motivated to achieve their ultimate potential. This includes students who are identified as Academic and Intellectually Gifted. We will identify these students by using a variety of formative assessment data collected by our teachers and administrators. This includes benchmark assessment data, classroom performance, and proven Cognitive Abilities tests. Once the screening process is completed and students identified, ALA will create Individualized plans for each student based on their giftedness. These plans will provide specific strategies that allow the student to participate in enrichment activities that accelerate the student's learning. These include but are not limited to Science Olympiad, Math Superstars, Geography Bee, Spelling Bee, National Junior Honor Society, and the use of other digital academic resources that provide content based on the students ability level. In

their core classes identified students will be grouped homogeneously in their Language Arts and Math classes. These ability groupings will allow teachers to teach each class based on their level and meet their individual needs. In the the higher level classes teachers will be able to accelerate AIG students by providing activities, readings, and assignments that push them to maximize their ability.

Our Project Based Leadership and digital media curriculum will also benefit our AIG students. While participating in these relevant projects students will have the ability to determine their level of depth based on the detailed rubrics provided. Each rubric will explicitly state what is required of the student to receive an assessment of distinguished, accomplished, proficient or developing. Each level will be differentiated by the depth of knowledge shown by the student and their proficiency at making the necessary connections between the project and the objectives within the standard course of study. Also all project based leadership projects provide an element of student choice and voice. This will allow AIG students to make decisions about their own learning based on their interests and motivations.

Incoming students will be identified as AIG through the use of records from their previous schools. Annually any student who is deemed a candidate for AIG status will have the opportunity to be evaluated. Teachers and administrators will closely monitor our AIG students progress through their individual development plan. We also monitor their performance on formative and summative assessments. We will use this assessment data to ensure their continued academic growth.

### **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 educators pursuant to law.** Public schools are required to provide a full continuum of services to meet the unique needs of ALL students with disabilities.*

### **Identification and Records**

1. *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.*
2. *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.*
3. *Provide a plan detailing how the records of students with disabilities and 504 Accommodation plans will be properly managed.*
  - a) *Requesting Records from previous schools*
  - b) *Record Confidentiality (on site)*
  - c) *Record Compliance (on site)*

Ascend Leadership Academy will be in complete compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, the federal Child Find mandate, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. We will ensure that

all students receive a free and appropriate education.

We will employ certified Exceptional Children (EC) teachers based on the number of Special Education students in our program. The primary responsibility of these employees will be to serve our EC students and ensure that the school stays in compliance with the Individual Education Program (IEP) of each EC student. EC teachers will also monitor each student's progress toward their individualized IEP goals.

1. The first step in the process will be to identify students who qualify for the Special Education program. During the enrollment process administration will review the records of our incoming students from their previous schools to determine if previous IEPs or 504 plans exist. Once identified we will contact the student's parents and previous school to obtain more documentation in regards to the IEP or 504. The EC teachers and administration will then review the records and coordinate a plan to make sure it is applied in the school setting appropriately. These teachers will use the Comprehensive Exceptional Children Accountability System to update, revise, and track each individual students IEP. This program is used widely in school districts across North Carolina. Administration will designate a member of the faculty as the 504 coordinator. This employees job will be to update and maintain 504 plans for all students with existing plans.

2. For students who have not been previously identified to receive Special Education services, ALA will have a distinct plan to locate and evaluate these students. At the lowest level teachers will use classroom observations, formative assessment data, and other evaluations to identify students who are suspected of having a disability. Teachers, administration, and parents will join together to create an individualized student success plan that will provide interventions at the classroom level with the goal of addressing any deficiencies the student may have. After approximately 4 weeks these interventions will be assessed. If the team determines that the interventions put in place were successful then the plan will continue and the students success will continue to be monitored. If the initial interventions are not successful the team will move to more intensive research based interventions under the Student Assistance Program (SAP). If these more intensive interventions do not contribute to improved student achievement it may be determined that the student will need to be evaluated for Special Education services. ALA will utilize the services of a licensed Psychologist to administer the various evaluations that identify learning disabilities. Based on the written evaluation of the Psychologist, the IEP team will determine ifthe student qualifies for Special Education services. If it is determined that the student qualifies, an IEP will be written and implemented immediately. If it is determined that the student does not qualify for Special Education services he/she may or may not be referred for 504 services.

3. Ensuring compliance and confidentiality of all IEP and 504 documentation will be a priority at Ascend Leadership Academy. First, EC personnel and administration will be a part of every IEP meeting. After the IEP is established these staff members will be responsible for making sure that all pertinent staff members are informed and abide by specifications outlined in the IEP. All school personnel will receive training in compliance and how to ensure that all IEP and 504 records remain confidential. IEP and 504

documentation will be kept in a separate filing location with access granted only to EC teachers, administration, the counselor, and teachers of the EC students.

### Exceptional Children's Education Programming

1. *Describe the educational programs, strategies, and additional supports the school will provide to ensure a full continuum of services for students with disabilities.*
2. *Describe the methods and support systems that will be in place to ensure students with disabilities receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).*
3. *Describe how implementation of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will be monitored and reported to the student, parents and relevant staff.*
4. *Describe the proposed plan for providing related services.*

ALA will provide a variety of resources, supports, and strategies to ensure all students, including those with disabilities, are provided with the support necessary for their success. Students with disabilities will be provided with specific accommodations, and modifications depending on the severity of their disability. To fulfill these requirements we will provide the necessary classroom spaces to execute "pull out" and self-contained instruction. We will serve most students in the general education setting using an inclusion model. This model allows students with disabilities to participate in classes with their non-disabled peers. In these classes an Exceptional Children's teacher co-teaches the curriculum with the regular education teacher to provide support for all students. These methods will be utilized to guarantee that students with disabilities are provided with a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment. Professional development will be provided to teachers and other staff as necessary to help meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Ascend's overall instructional plan will support the needs of Students with disabilities as well. We will provide a variety of interventions for all students including core differentiated instruction, small group instruction, leveled Language Arts and math classes based on ability, and a comprehensive system of support (MTSS) that provides intentional time for remediation. We will also use digital resources for supplementary instruction. Students who need additional support will have access to digital resources like IXL, Mathletics and Reading Eggs.

Exceptional Children's teachers will serve as case managers for each student's individual IEP. They will be responsible for communicating the goals of the IEP to the necessary stakeholders and ensure that all accommodations and modifications are applied. Teachers will be responsible for collecting formative assessment data and other information involving the student's academic progress. School administration will be responsible for providing the necessary resources and facilities to guarantee both regular education and Special Education teachers can fulfill their responsibilities. Parents will receive quarterly progress reports that will outline student progress towards their IEP goals. EC staff will deliver these reports in conjunction with their quarterly report cards.

ALA will also hire highly qualified Special Education staff and personnel to ensure compliance with state and federal requirements. These individuals will collaborate with regular education teachers to provide appropriate support in their classes. They will also execute "pull out" and small group



instruction as necessary. We will also contract with appropriate certified and licensed professionals to provide services required by our students' IEPs. This would include but not be limited to speech, occupational, and physical therapy. These professionals will be responsible for providing evaluations, and participating on IEP teams to develop appropriate accommodations and goals for student development.

## **Student Performance Standards**

1. *Describe the student performance standards for the school as a whole.*
2. *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 this data will be used to drive instruction and improve the curriculum over time for the benefit of students.*
3. *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 communicated to parents and students.*
4. *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. Be sure to include plans for the "At-Risk" population.*

1. Ascend Leadership Academy will have high standards and expectations for all students and use a variety of measures to assess their performance. Our first measure of student performance will be the NC Accountability model and NC EOG/EOC testing. We expect that our Middle School students will show proficiency rates in Math, Science, and Reading that exceed the state and LEAs average. Through the implementation of the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) we will expect that a significant amount of our students will have lexile levels that are at or above grade level. Through Benchmark assessments we will measure core subject area proficiency and expect that our students are on grade level. We expect that our High School students will perform above district and state averages on the English II, Math I, and Biology EOCs. We also track our High School students ACT performance and other college readiness metrics in relation to state and district averages. Any student who is not on grade level in any category will receive targeted interventions through our MTSS program. Teachers will work with administration to analyze this assessment data to improve instruction, and remediate subject area concepts where necessary. We will also evaluate students based on their proficiency in the learning objectives associated with the Common Core/NC Essential Standards, Leader in Me Principles and PBL. Students and parents will receive detailed reports quarterly identifying where each student meets, exceeds or falls below grade level expectations.

2. In addition to these assessments, ALA will have other performance based standards based on our unique curriculum. Including:

-100% participation in Presentations of Learning (POL) and Leadership Exhibition Day annually. At these events students will defend their learning by presenting their PBL projects projects to a public audience.

-100% participation in the creation and maintaining of each students Digital Portfolio. This online portfolio will house each student's Digital Media

project work, Leadership portfolio, and annual academic goals.

-Completion of 50 Learning Community Service Hours annually. This will consist of students volunteering within the school in various capacities to improve the culture and climate.

3. ALA will use various data points to determine student grade level promotion. These data points include grade level proficiency on state mandated EOG/EOCs, classroom performance (attaining a teacher evaluation of "proficient" in the various objectives of the standard course of study, Leadership principles, and PBL learning objectives), teacher observation and student growth. Participation in the end of year Presentation of Learning and the assessment of each students digital portfolio will also be considered when making promotion decisions. If a student with special needs does not meet the necessary criteria the building Principal reserves the right to consider other forms of data to determine promotion. These other forms of data could include the student's completion of PBL projects and the digital portfolio. The Principal will also have the authority to assign alternative assignments to allow these students to recover credit in each individual course.

4. Our 12th grade students will need to meet certain criteria to graduate from High School. 12th grade students' Digital media course will be an independent study course where they will complete an individual yearlong community service project. In completing this project students will use the skills amassed during their time at ALA to identify an area where they can add value to their community. This means that students will find a need or cause within their local community and use their Digital Media expertise and leadership skills to contribute to the need/cause they identified. The 12th grade Digital Media Teacher will guide the students through the school year and assure students are meeting deadlines, mastering certain technological skills, and achieving the learning objectives of the PBL pedagogy. The final project will consist of a research paper, a final product, a public presentation, and a portfolio (aspect of each student's digital portfolio) that documents each student's learning throughout the project. This project will have an elaborate rubric and students will have to exhibit their project and defend their learning at the final Presentation of Learning (POL) of their Senior year. This culminating project will be required in order for students to meet their graduation requirements. Our students will also follow the Future Ready Core Course Requirements. As a part of these requirements we will require students to achieve 4 credits in Digital Media courses for graduation.

All graduation requirements will be listed explicitly in the parent-student handbook. Students will regularly review them in their advisory period. Parents, students, and advisers will discuss them together during student led conferences as students advance through their high school careers. At the beginning of each school year ALA will host a Senior Information night for students and parents. At this meeting school administration will outline graduation requirements and specifics about the Senior culminating project.

At risk students will be required to meet the minimum requirements outlined previously. These students will have the ability to complete alternative assignments to recover credit as deemed necessary by the school Principal



and other pertinent school employees. We will utilize our MTSS program to intervene for any student who falls behind or is at risk of not meeting graduation requirements. Through the MTSS program we will utilize strategic individualized interventions to provide support for at-risk students.

**Student Conduct:**

*Provide a brief narrative that disseminates how student conduct will be governed at the proposed charter school and how this plan **aligns** with the overall mission and proposed Education Plan of the charter school.*

*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 regards 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.*

The number one priority of administration at ALA will be the safety and security of all students. ALA will implement policies and a code of conduct that promotes behaviors that are conducive for an effective learning environment. ALA's mission requires a school culture where students are accountable to all stakeholders for their behavior. This will be supported through the implementation of Restorative Justice practices and a Student Justice Council. Restorative justice emphasizes student accountability for their actions through the facilitation of small group sessions where offenders and the offended are given the opportunity to talk, air grievances, and ask questions. These small group sessions will follow a specific protocol and the team will provide a recommendation to administration of how the offending student should make amends to reintegrate into the learning community. These sessions will be known as the Student Justice Council and will consist of students, teachers, and administrators. Restorative justice practices have been proven to strengthen campus communities, prevent bullying, and reduce the amount of student to student conflicts.

There will be some student infractions that will bypass the restorative justice process and require administration to suspend or expel students. The preliminary list of these infractions include:

Physical Aggression/Fighting

Possession of Drugs, Drug Paraphernalia, tobacco, or alcohol.

Possession of Weapons, Firearms, or other dangerous objects.

Skipping school or leaving campus without permission.

Bullying, cyberbullying, harassment or any other repeated intimidating behavior.

ALA will provide appropriate interventions to discipline students with disabilities. First, the student's EC teacher and the IEP team will develop behavior goals that address problem behaviors that relate to the student's disability. A Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) will be created to provide specific plans of interventions that are designed to curb negative

behaviors. These plans will track data about the the student's behavior and provide teachers with a system to maintain high expectations while also meeting the needs of our students with disabilities. If a student with a disability receives a suspension that exceeds 10 days or is suspended more than 10 days throughout the school year a Manifestation Determination hearing will be required. The purpose of this hearing is to make sure students with disabilities do not receive discriminatory disciplinary actions for behaviors that result from their disabilities. ALA will abide by all Federal and State laws when disciplining students with disabilities.

ALA will provide due process rights for all students who are suspended or expelled. For short term suspensions (less than 10 days) students and parents will have the opportunity to appeal to school administration and express their discontent in writing. Administration will be required to communicate with students and their parents the policy or the aspect of the code of conduct that was violated and share any information gathered from the investigation. For students receiving a long term suspension (more than 10 days) ALA will provide the suspended party with information regarding the policy violated, information gathered from the investigation, and the formal write up immediately after the decision is made. If the parent requests an appeal, a three person impartial panel will be created to hear information about the case. The suspended party will be allowed to bring their own witnesses and provide the panel with information from their own investigation. The panel can decide one of the following: overturn the decision, uphold the decision, or amend the original decision. The final step in the appeal process would be a hearing with the Board of Directors. After hearing specifics about the case the Board would have the same 3 options as the previous panel.

**IV. GOVERNANCE and CAPACITY**

(No more than ten total pages in this section)

**NOTE:** Please answer all sections completely. Do not use "same as LEA" or "whatever the law states". Lack of proper documentation could deem the application incomplete.

**Governance:**

**Private Nonprofit Corporation:**

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

*Name of Private Nonprofit:* Ascend Leadership Academy

*Mailing Address:* 1 Stoneglen Court, Durham, NC 27712

*City/State/Zip:* Durham NC 27712

*Street Address:* 1 Stoneglen Court

*Phone:* 919-522-5476

*Fax:*

*Name of registered agent and address:*

Donald Draughon  
1 Stoneglen Court  
Durham, NC 27712

**FEDERAL TAX ID:**

**Tax-Exempt Status 501 (c)(3)**

The private nonprofit listed as the responsible organization for the proposed charter school has received 501 (c)(3) status:

Yes (copy of letter from federal government attached: Appendix D)

X No

**NOTE:** If the non-profit organization has yet to obtain the 501(c)(3) status, the tax-exempt status must be obtained from the Internal Revenue Service within twenty-four (24) months of the date the Charter Application is given final approval.

**Governance and Organizational Structure of Private Non-Profit Organization:**

The private nonprofit corporation 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.

Please complete the table provided depicting the initial members of the nonprofit organization.

Board	Board	County/State	Current	Past or Present	Has any disciplinary
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Member Name	Title	of Residence	Occupation	Professional Licenses(s) Held	action been taken against any of these professional licenses?
Steven Gatlin	Secretary	DURHAM	Social Studies Teacher	NC Teacher License	N
Laurell Malone	Vice Chairman	DURHAM	Coordinator of Professional Development, NCCU	NC Superintendent, Principal, Teacher	N
Justin Smith		DURHAM	School Administrator	NC Principal License, NBCT Soc. Stud. Teacher	N
Donald Draughon	Board Chairman	DURHAM	Investment Banker, CEO Fuel USA		N
Ebony Arrington	Treasurer	WAKE	Production Operations, Cell Bank Lead Pfizer inc.		N

**Please provide the following in this location of the APPLICATION:**

1. *A description of 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.*

Ascend Leadership Academy will be governed by a Board of Directors who will have a number of responsibilities and duties in regards to the operation of the school. The Board's primary goal will be to ensure that the mission of the school is continually upheld and provide clear measurable objectives for the schools administration. This includes working with the schools faculty to evaluate ALA's educational program to determine how effectively it is working towards achieving the established mission of the school. The Board will also provide the lead administrator with annual measurable goals that relate to the various aspects of the educational plan and assist with the creation of action steps to attain these goals.

Significant responsibilities of the Board of Directors are maintaining the schools financial budget, facility procurement, hiring of key personnel, evaluating the lead administrator, monitoring programs/services and maintaining a safe and secure learning environment. The Board will also ensure that the school is in compliance with all local, state, and federal laws.

When creating policies and procedures the Board will also continually consider the schools mission. This will involve collaboration with school administration on matters involving academic performance, personnel changes, facility additions, financial allocations, and the growth/sustainability of the charter school. The Board will consistently review the various programs

of the school to determine if they are aligned with the schools educational philosophy and mission statement.

The Board will maintain a budget that is both pragmatic and fiscally responsible. Board members will review the budget monthly and determine financial allocations as necessary. The Board will regulate the budget to maintain a minimum 5% surplus that ensures the schools financial independence for the future.

The Board of Directors will recruit, hire and supervise the lead administrator for ALA. The Board will publicize the vacancy and utilize national educational recruiting sites to identify high-quality candidates. The Board will also use other forms of recruitment specific to charter schools including charter school conferences, job fairs, and the school website. After identifying at least 3 qualified candidates the Board will conduct interviews and determine the lead administrator based on their administrative experience, integrity, and commitment to student achievement. The Board will give priority to candidates with leadership experience specifically in charter schools. They will also seek candidates who have the propensity for maintaining the original mission of the school and sustaining the educational programs already established.

The Board of Directors has already identified the lead administrator for ALA. This individual has been heavily involved in the development of the charter application. The prospective school leader has relevant teaching and administrative experience at a local reputable charter school. This individual has experience executing a schools mission, maintaining a budget, and implementing innovative practices that contribute to student achievement. The lead administrator will be directly supervised by the Board of Directors and will be subjected to a performance review annually. The lead administrator will report to the Board at the monthly meetings to track progression towards annual goals and the implementation of the schools unique education program.

2. *Describe the size, current and desired composition, powers, and duties of the governing board. Identify key skills, areas of expertise, and constituencies that will be represented on the governing board. Explain how this governance structure and composition will help ensure that a) the school will be an educational and operational success; b) the board will evaluate the success of the school and school leader; and c) there will be active and effective representation of key stakeholders, including parents.*

The Board of Directors of ALA consists of 5 highly qualified individuals who have varied abilities and backgrounds. The founding Board Members intentionally have diverse areas of expertise to add value to the decision making process and provide the opportunity for different points of view to be considered when decisions are made. These areas of expertise include teaching, administration, finance, higher education, community development/activism, and Operations/Management. All members of the Board are active members in the Durham community. They are committed to the mission of the school and improving the landscape of public school education.

The Board of ALA will require specific roles to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the decision making process. The duties of each board member include attending monthly board meetings, actively participating in

the decision making process, and voting on matters that are of the best interest of the school rather than their own personal interest. Other defined roles include Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary. The Chairman will be the principal officer of the organization and will preside over all meetings. He/she will also set the agenda for each meeting and appoint all sub-committees. The Vice Chairman will execute the duties in lieu of the Chairman's absence and perform other duties identified by the Board chairman. The Treasurer will oversee the financial accounts of the school and help prepare financial documents for board meetings. The Secretary will record meeting minutes and communicate board decisions with school stakeholders.

The governance structure of the Board will affirm that the power of the Board will be democratic and that no one person will dictate policy. Every decision will require a majority vote and be preceded by extensive dialogue. After the initial 3 years, newly elected board members will serve a staggered 3 year term. This is designed to provide other community stakeholders the opportunity to serve as board members and diversify board participation. The Board will also provide one seat for a member of the ALA faculty. For the founding Board this individual will be the administrator identified to lead the school. After the initial three years, the faculty and staff will vote to determine which faculty member will represent them. The individual who represents the ALA faculty will be a non-voting Board member but will have the opportunity to participate fully in the decision making process. This includes the ability to participate in closed session discussions in accordance with GS 143.318.11.

The Board will annually evaluate the performance of the schools lead administrator. If the lead administrator is a member of the Board of Directors, as he will be during the initial three years, he/she will excuse themselves from participation in the evaluation. The lead administrator will be evaluated based on the measurable goals pre-determined by the Board. These goals will be directly aligned with the mission of the school and be specific, measurable, attainable and timely. The Board will determine if the school and administration met expectations, exceeded expectations, or did not meet expectations at the annual performance review.

As ALA grows we will look to involve all stakeholders in the decision making process. This includes parents. After the initial 3 year terms we will actively recruit parents of students to participate on the Board. With the addition of parents to the Board, ALA will be intentional about having a balance of community members and parents to ensure diversity. We will provide board orientation for all newly elected board members and require them to participate in professional development aligned with the mission of school. We will also post monthly board meeting minutes on the school website and all board meetings will have an "open to the public" session where comments and questions from the public will be accepted.

- 3. 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?*

The Board members of Ascend Leadership Academy were selected based on their diverse backgrounds and commitment to education in the Durham, NC area. Three of the founding board members have experience working directly with



the charter school system at Voyager Academy in Durham. Since many members of the Board of Directors have experience with Charter schools in North Carolina we have determined that a leadership academy for grades 6-12 that empowers students to own their learning was necessary in the Oak Grove, Bethesda area of Durham. Each board member also has diverse areas of expertise that would address the unique challenges of opening and sustaining a charter school. Ultimately, the Board of Directors for ALA is bonded by the belief that the charter school can provide an innovative and effective learning experience for students in their local community.

In the event of a vacancy on the Board of Directors, the Board chairman will notify the public of the vacancy via the school's website. The Board will take applications from potential candidates from the local community and after a period of two to four weeks the Board will meet to determine a viable replacement. The selected individual will serve out the remaining term of the previous board member and will be eligible for a full term when the shortened term has been completed. This will all be in accordance with the bylaws of Ascend Leadership Academy. If it is necessary for a board member to be replaced provisions will be made so that the replacement candidate receives the necessary professional development and training to adequately serve.

*4. Outline below the strategic board calendar detailing how often the board will meet according to the bylaws established.*

The ALA Board of Directors will meet no fewer than 10 times annually. This will consist of monthly meetings in accordance with the bylaws of Ascend Leadership Academy. The Board will schedule additional meetings as necessary and notify the public of the dates of these meetings when they occur.

*5. 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.*

In order to secure the mission and educational philosophy of the school all Board members will participate in strategic professional development activities. The intention of this training is to immerse board members in the strategies and methods that will be executed within the school. Prior to the submission of this application, board Members have attended an orientation that informed them of the Board of Directors' bylaws, financial allocations and projected budget, the schools education plan, charter application, and articles of incorporation. Board members also attended training sessions offered by the North Carolina Department of Public Instructions office of Charter Schools. During this time the board chairman will work with other board members to develop a Board of Directors manual that outlines the bylaws and procedures Board members will follow. From August 2017 to August of 2018 board members will receive training on other topics pertinent to the opening and operation of the school. These would include training on state curriculum standards, school operations, charter school law, and specific elements within the education plan that define the schools culture and climate.

Before the beginning of the school year, board members will also receive training in the major elements of the educational plan. This will include participation in the seminars relating to the Leader in Me program. Each



board member will be expected to read and have a thorough knowledge of both *The Leader in Me* and *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* texts. Since the *Leader in Me* program is the foundation of our Leadership program each Board member will be expected to exemplify the "7 habits" in their interaction with all stakeholders within the learning community. Board members will also be expected to participate in Leadership Exhibition Days where students display their project work and present their learning. This will require training on how to execute project/presentation rubrics and identify certain elements of the standard course of study.

On going training will exist for topics that pertain to the success of the education plan for Ascend Leadership Academy. The expectation is that board members consistently participate in developing a positive school culture which would include active participation in school activities. Where necessary board members may receive training to support this participation.

- 6. 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 Ascend Leadership Academy will uphold the highest standards of ethics and morality. These standards will be aligned with the Code of Ethics for NC Educators created by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Board members will also abide by all local, state, and federal law. Any action that is deemed unethical can be subject to review by a subcommittee determined by the board chairman or vice chairman. Based on their findings this subcommittee can recommend the removal of the involved board member. If a board member is removed they will have the opportunity to appeal the decision within a two week time frame. This appeal will be resolved by a third party arbitrator pre-selected by the board.

All board members will have an expectation of disclosing any potential conflict of interest as it pertains to any aspect of Ascend Leadership Academy. As a part of their orientation, board members will sign a conflict of interest statement that will require them to disclose any actual or perceived conflicts of interest. These potential conflicts of interest could include a financial beneficial relationship with vendors or consultants, acceptance of gifts or favors, business affiliates receiving financial benefits from ALA, and the sharing of confidential information regarding students or staff. If an actual conflict of interest exists, the involved board member will be able to provide insight about the topic at hand but will recuse themselves from any vote. The vote will then take place among the remaining board members.

If consistent conflict of interest occurs the involved board member will be excused from the decision making process and may be asked to relieve themselves of their duties as an active board member. Current Board members have been strategically selected to avoid any actual or perceived conflict of interest and have no financial interest in the school.

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

When making decisions, the board of ALA will always consider first what is in the best interest of students. This philosophy will be supported by the inclusion of a variety of perspectives from different stakeholders including

students where appropriate. When developing policy board members will be sure to gather an abundance of information including relevant data, policy precedents, and local, state, and federal guidelines. Board members will then discuss the policy for an appropriate amount of time in an open forum. Key staff and other relevant stakeholders will have the opportunity to participate in this open forum. If necessary board members will then move to closed session to discuss allowed topics consistent with GS 143.318.11. At this time they will also share their individual opinions and work collaboratively towards a collective solution. The goal of this process is to find solutions or policies that achieve full agreement among the board members. When this is not possible policy decisions will be made by a majority vote. Once the vote has been taken and a decision made the policy will take place in accordance with the timeline outlined by the board. Even in dissent board members will be expected to support all policy decisions made by the Board of Directors to relay a unified front.

8. *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.*

To support the mission of the school, ALA will form specific advisory bodies and councils. One of these advisory boards will be the School Advisory Council. This council will be comprised of parents, students, and teachers. Their role will be to advise the lead administrator on ways to improve the academic program and other aspects of the school community. This council will analyze data to identify areas of improvement and develop strategies to fill any voids. The council will advise the lead administrator on specific areas of improvement and provide ideas for strategic planning.

To execute its restorative justice philosophy, Ascend's administration will establish a Student Justice Council. Teachers and administration will have the ability to refer a student to the Student Justice Council when a student displays behaviors that conflict with the code of conduct. After a student is referred to the Council they will be mandated to attend a small group mediation session where 1 teacher, 1 administrator, and 3 students will be required for a quorum. Once this protocol is completed the council will be allowed to give a recommendation to school administration about how the offending student should make amends in order to reintegrate into the learning community. Most students will be referred to the Student Justice Council for minor infractions including plagiarism, minor property damage, conflicts between students, and minor classroom disruptions. Students will also be required to meet with the council after committing major infractions that warrant suspension. Suspended students will be required to meet with the council to determine what is necessary for them to reenter the learning community after the suspension is completed. The Student Justice Council will also meet with administration monthly to discuss the school culture and climate and provide ideas for achieving the school's mission. The objective of this council is to empower students to own every aspect of the learning community and give students the opportunity to hold one another accountable for their behavior.

ALA will also establish a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). This organization will provide support for teachers and further contribute to a positive school culture and climate. To achieve this objective the PTA will provide specific services including lunch coverage, coordination of parent

volunteer opportunities, organization of fundraising activities, and execution of school related community events. The PTA will also give parents a forum to express their opinions and provide input in the decision making process. This organization would ultimately give a voice to parents and help contribute to a positive learning environment.

9. *Discuss the school's grievance process for parents and staff members.*

Ascend Leadership Academy encourages parents and staff members to communicate any grievances with the appropriate school leader. Ideally parents would contact the involved staff members and set up a conference to discuss the grievance. If the situation can not be resolved by the parties directly involved it should follow the procedures below:

Step 1: The parent or staff member shall communicate their grievance with the lead administrator in writing within five days of the incident. This could include an email or formal letter where the individual bringing the grievance describes the nature of the injustice. The lead administrator will return communication with the person filing the grievance within 48 hours. This communication will include information about how the situation has been resolved or to set up a conference with the individual bringing the grievance. If the grievance involves the lead administrator the written grievance shall be directed to the Board chairman.

Step 2: If the situation is not resolved through communication with the lead administrator a conference will be scheduled with the person filing the grievance, the individual accused of wrongdoing, and administration. The administrator will serve as a mediator and allow both parties to share their perspective. At the end of the conference the lead administrator will provide both parties with a decision based on the information gathered. If either party disagrees with the lead administrators decision they will have the opportunity to appeal directly to the Board of Directors.

Step 3: The party requesting an appeal will make a written appeal to the Board of Directors describing the nature of the grievance. The lead administrator will provide objective data that was discovered during their investigation. The Board of Directors will schedule a hearing 14 days from receiving the written appeal request. The appeal hearing will require at least 3 board members and all parties involved will have the opportunity to state their case. After hearing the various testimonies, the panel members will discuss the matter in a closed session and come to a decision. Within 30 days of the hearing, the board members will communicate their decision with the party filing the appeal.

The decision of the Board will be final and will be the final step for all grievances.

Governance and Organizational Structure of Private Non-Profit Organization (continued)

Include in the Appendices:

1. A well-defined organizational chart showing the relationship of the Board of Directors to the parents and staff of the proposed charter school. This chart should also include lines of authority to and from any outside entity that will play a role in managing or supporting the charter school (such as educational service providers, advisory bodies or parent/teacher councils). (Appendix E)

2. A one-page resume from each founding board member and responses to the questions found on the Charter School Board Member Form (Appendix F).
3. 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 (Appendix G).
4. A copy of the articles of incorporation from the NC Department of the Secretary of State. (Appendix H)

**Proposed Management Organization (Educational Management Organization or Charter Management Organization)**

*If the proposed school does not intend to contract with an education service provider, mark "Not Applicable" and follow the direction #3 in the Application Specifications.*

**X Not Applicable**

**Private School Conversions:** *complete ONLY if the proposed charter is a private school conversion. Otherwise, mark "Not Applicable" and follow the direction #3 in the Application Specifications.*

**X Not Applicable**

**Charter School Replication:** *complete ONLY if the proposed charter is a replication of an existing charter school. Otherwise, mark "Not Applicable" and follow the direction #3 in the Application Specifications. Understand that the replication means that a new charter school will be governed separately from the charter school the application is modeled after.*

**X Not Applicable**

**Projected Staff:**

Outline below, a list of positions anticipated for the charter school; (e.g., principal or director; finance officer, administrative support staff; teachers (part-time and full-time); paraprofessionals/teaching assistants, clerical, and maintenance.). Be mindful that your predicted administration and staff match the projected enrollment noted in Section I, course offerings and align with the proposed budget.

During the first year of operation, Ascend Leadership Academy will anticipate employing the following full-time positions based on an enrollment of 160 students. We will meet our maximum enrollment of 560 students at the beginning of year five.

Year 1 2018-19 (160 students)

Full Time Staff

1 Principal/Lead Administrator

6 Core Teachers (2 Math, 2 Language Arts/Social Studies, 2 Science)

2 Digital Media Teachers

1 Exceptional Children Teacher

1 Administrative Assistant

Contracted Services

Finance Officer

Bus Drivers

Custodial Staff

Substitutes

Year 2 2019-20 (320 students)

Full Time Staff

1 Principal/Lead Administrator  
1 Assistant Principal/Curriculum Director  
13 Core Teachers  
5 Elective Teachers (Includes Digital Media)  
1 Exceptional Children Teachers  
1 Administrative Assistant

Contracted Services

Finance Officer  
Bus Drivers  
Custodial Staff  
Substitutes

Year 3 2020-21 (400 students)

Full Time Staff

1 Principal/Lead Administrator  
1 Assistant Principal/Curriculum Director  
1 Counselor/Instructional Support  
17 Core Teachers  
7 Electives Teachers (Includes Digital Media)  
2 Exceptional Children Teachers  
1 Administrative Assistant

Contracted Services

Finance Officer  
Bus Drivers  
Custodial Staff  
Substitutes

Year 4 2021-22 (480 students)

Full Time Staff

1 Principal/Lead Administrator  
1 Assistant Principal/Curriculum Director  
1 Counselor/Instructional Support  
21 Core Teachers  
8 Elective Teachers (Includes Digital Media)  
2 Exceptional Children Teachers  
1 Administrative Assistant

Contracted Services

Finance Officer  
Bus Drivers  
Custodial Staff  
Substitutes

Year 5 2022-23 (560 students)

Full Time Staff

1 Principal/Lead Administrator  
1 Assistant Principal/Curriculum Director  
1 Counselor  
25 Core Teachers  
9 Elective Teachers (Includes Digital Media)  
3 Exceptional Children Teachers

## 1 Administrative Assistant

Contracted Services

Finance Officer

Bus Drivers

Custodial Staff

Substitutes

### **Staffing Plans, Hiring, and Management**

Include the following information for the proposed charter school:

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

Ascend Leadership Academy will recruit and retain highly qualified teacher candidates to execute the mission of the school. It is imperative that ALA employ dedicated individuals in teaching positions to guarantee the desired culture and climate of the school is achieved. We will do the following to ensure we recruit highly qualified applicants.

1. Create detailed and vibrant job descriptions that outlines teacher responsibilities and duties.
2. Post job opportunities on the school website, teachers to teachers website, social media, and within local universities.
3. Participate in teacher job fairs
4. Employ personal networks and connections to identify individuals with specific skills sets aligned with ALA's educational mission.

The Lead Administrator will be responsible for the hiring process and will employ grade level team members to make the hiring process collaborative once the faculty has been established. In order to retain these highly qualified candidates ALA will use specific strategies including the following;

1. Empower teachers to make decisions about their curriculum and give them a voice in the decision making process.
2. Utilize teacher talents in order to foster their Leadership abilities.
3. Create a culture and climate that requires collaboration and teamwork.
4. Provide professional development opportunities that allow teachers to grow as educators
5. Provide ongoing feedback on teacher performance

2. *Provide a description of the relationship that will exist between the charter school employees and the nonprofit board.*

Ascend Leadership Academy's Board of Directors will be responsible for setting policy that is consistent with the mission of the school. The Lead Administrator will report directly to the Board and be responsible for enforcing board policies. School employees will report directly to the Lead Administrator. The Lead Administrator will be responsible for the recruitment and hiring of all employees at the school. The administrator will also be responsible for evaluating, and terminating all teaching and support personnel. All employees will be "at will" and will be terminated or retained annually based on the summative assessment by school administration.



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

Ascend Leadership Academy will use non-discriminatory procedures when hiring all employees. School leadership will follow the Equal Opportunities Law to prohibit all discrimination of applicants and employees. The Board will defer all hiring decisions to the Lead Administrator who will execute the following procedures in the hiring process:

1. Reduce the pool of applicants to a select group of highly qualified candidates.
2. The interview team will be assembled to include school administration and teacher representatives from the vacant positions grade level.
3. The selected applicants will participate in an interview.
4. The Lead Administrator will select the candidate to fill the vacant position based on the counsel from the interview team
5. ALA will conduct three reference checks on the selected candidate.
6. ALA will conduct criminal history background checks in accordance with state law on all potential employees.
7. The selected teacher candidate will sign a 1-year "at will" contract.

All employees at Ascend Leadership Academy will sign one year "at will" contracts. At any time an employee can be terminated immediately for committing acts that violate federal or state law. Teachers can also be terminated for "poor performance" as deemed necessary by school administration. Along with this the school leadership will actively support any teacher whose performance is not proficient. This will include written action plans with strategic interventions and measurable goals for teacher improvement. Every effort will be made to assist teachers who are not performing adequately to improve their job performance before termination is determined.

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

Ascend Leadership Academy will provide competitive salary ranges for all full and part time employees with the goal of retaining highly qualified employees. All teaching personnel will receive compensation based on the NC Department of Instruction salary scale plus supplement pay. This supplement will be competitive with the local school systems and will be ultimately set by ALAs Board of Directors based on the availability of funds. Full time staff will have the opportunity to participate in the NC Retirement system and the State Health plan. Paid Time Off (PTO) will be offered to all full time employees at a rate of 1 PTO day per month. All staff members will be 10 month employees excluding school administration who will be 12 month employees. Once the School Advisory Council is created in the second year of the schools existence one of the initial tasks will be to determine an incentive program for performance based teacher bonuses. The incentive program the council creates will be equitable and fiscally responsible.

*6. Provide the procedures for employee grievance and/or termination.*

ALA encourages all staff members to communicate any grievances with their school leader. Administration will have an open door policy to allow teachers to share their grievances. If a staff member has a grievance that cannot be resolved informally they will follow the following procedures:

Step 1: The staff member shall communicate their grievance with the lead

administrator in writing within five days of the incident. The lead administrator will return communication with the person filing the grievance within 48 hours. This communication will include information about how the situation has been resolved or to set up a conference with the individual bringing the grievance. If the grievance involves the lead administrator the written grievance shall be directed to the Board chairman.

Step 2: If the situation is not resolved through communication with the lead administrator a conference will be scheduled with the person filing the grievance, the individual accused of wrongdoing, and administration. The administrator will serve as a mediator and allow both parties to share their perspective. At the end of the conference the lead administrator will provide both parties with a decision based on the information gathered. If either party disagrees with the lead administrator's decision they will have the opportunity to appeal directly to the Board of Directors.

Step 3: The party requesting an appeal will make a written recommendation to the Board describing the nature of the grievance. The lead administrator will provide objective data that was discovered during their investigation. The Board will schedule a hearing 14 days from receiving the written appeal request. At the appeal hearing all parties involved will have the opportunity to state their case. After hearing the testimonies, the panel will discuss the matter in private and come to a decision. Within 30 days of the hearing, the panel will communicate their decision with the party filing the appeal.

*7. Identify any positions that will have dual responsibilities (within or without the organization) and the funding source for each position.*

Each core and digital media Middle School teacher will teach a specific 9 week enrichment course as a part of the six period school day. This course will be based on a passion of each individual teacher. Students will rotate through the various enrichment courses quarterly. Enrichment courses could include a variety of subjects including music, art, drama, dance etc. These courses are intended to fill the void of traditional elective courses for Middle School students.

Each high school core and digital media teacher will be asked to teach an elective course in their subject area. This will provide our high school students with more variety in their course selections.

In year two, ALA will hire a Physical Education teacher to instruct the Health/PE classes. This individual will also serve as athletic director. He/She will coordinate sporting activities for students and schedule athletic events when competitive sports are added to the educational program.

*8. Describe the plans to have qualified staffing adequate for the anticipated special needs population, means for providing qualified staffing for ELL and gifted students.*

Ascend Leadership Academy will employ a staff to adequately meet the needs of our EC, ELL, and gifted students. We will seek out certified instructors in AIG and ELL instruction. We will also encourage certified personnel to obtain add on licensure for both AIG and ELL where applicable. Professional development will be provided for both AIG and ELL depending on our student demographic. We will employ one certified Exceptional Children's teacher in our first year of operation. We will increase to two EC teachers in year

two. If our EC population demands more EC staff we will employ additional EC teachers to meet the needs of our students.

9. *Provide a narrative detailing the roles and responsibilities, qualifications and appropriate licenses that each position must have to be hired by the non-profit organization and effectively perform the job function(s).*

The Lead Administrator/Principal shall have a Masters degree in School Administration or a Doctoral degree in an educational field. They shall have a Principal certification from the NC Department of Public instruction, with three years or more experience as a school administrator. They should also have relevant teaching experience and effective communication skills. The roles and responsibilities of the Lead Administrator include:

- \*Exemplify the 7 Habits and the leadership principles of the Leader in Me program
- \*Recruiting, Hiring, and Evaluating all teaching and support personnel.
- \*Oversee the schools curriculum and educational program
- \*Maintain a safe and secure learning environment
- \*Communicate the mission and vision of the school to all stakeholders
- \*Manage the day to day operations of the school
- \*Monitor the schools finances and maintain a balanced budget
- \*Provide strategic planning to ensure advancement towards the schools mission

The Assistant Principal/Curriculum Director shall have a Masters degree in School Administration, Curriculum and Instruction, or another field of education. The AP's responsibilities include:

- \*Support the Lead Administrator in the execution of all of his/her responsibilities and the day to day operations of the school.
- \*Oversee the educational program and provide support for teachers in their daily instruction.
- \*Oversee the Student Justice Council and facilitate student hearings.
- \*Manage the maintenance of the facilities, handle disciplinary matters, and evaluate teacher performance.

Core/Elective teachers shall have a Bachelors degree from a four year institution and be certified by NCDPI in their content area for grades 6-12. Prior teaching experience is preferred but not required. Core teacher roles and responsibilities include:

- \*Exemplify the 7 Habits and the leadership principles of the Leader in Me program
- \*Create a positive learning environment for students
- \*Execute lesson plans that are consistent with the mission of the school and aligned with NC Standard Course of Study.
- \*Participate in their Professional Learning Community and all professional development activities.
- \*Evaluate student performance equitably.
- \*Communicate effectively with all stakeholders including parents, students, and administration.

Digital Media teachers shall have a Bachelors degree from a 4 year institution. These individuals should have relevant job experience with a thorough knowledge of technology including programming, animation, audio/video production, and graphic design. These teachers may or may not

possess a teacher certification. Digital Media teacher roles and responsibilities include:

- \*Exemplify the 7 Habits and the leadership principles of the Leader in Me program
- \*Create a positive learning environment for students
- \*Execute lesson plans that are consistent with the mission of the school and prepare students for the emerging digital world.
- \*Participate in their Professional Learning Community and all professional development activities.
- \*Evaluate student performance equitably.
- \*Communicate effectively with all stakeholders including parents, students, and administration.

Exceptional Children's teachers shall have a Bachelors degree from a 4 year institution and be certified by NCDPI in Special Education. They will:

- \*Be responsible for ensuring that students with IEPs receive their services.
- \*Ensure that ALA is in compliance with all federal and state regulations regarding students with disabilities.
- \*Provide support for Regular Education teachers in the classroom where appropriate.

The Administrative Assistant shall possess a High School diploma and organizational skills conducive for managing the front office. Their responsibilities include:

- \*Be proficient in the software programs within Microsoft Office Suite.
- \*Answering the phone
- \*Assisting with signing students in and out
- \*Working with parents and visitors
- \*Performing clerical tasks as deemed necessary by school administration

### **Staff Evaluation and Professional Development**

1. *Identify the positions responsible for maintaining teacher licensure requirements and professional development.*

The Lead Administrator will be responsible for maintaining teacher licensure and providing professional development. All teachers will be required to maintain their teaching license and keep their professional development records.

2. *Provide a detailed plan noting how the school will mentor, retain, and evaluate staff in a format that matches the school's mission, educational program, and meet the teacher certification and licensure requirements for teachers as prescribed by state law and No Child Left Behind. Be sure this overview matches with the projected staff and funding of the proposed budget section.*

Teachers will be evaluated in accordance with the North Carolina Professional Teacher Standards. School Administration will formally observe teachers using the North Carolina Educator Effectiveness system (NCEES). All teachers will complete a self-assessment to rate his or her own performance based on the rubric provided by the NC State Board of Education at the beginning of the school year. Teachers will use this self-assessment to create a Professional Development plan (PDP) to identify areas of personal growth. Teachers will participate in one of three observation cycles annually. These cycles include Abbreviated, Comprehensive, and Standard evaluation cycles. Teachers not in their renewal year and who have more than 3 years experience will be on the Abbreviated cycle. These teachers will receive two formal observations and be assessed based on two of the five NC Professional Teacher standards. Those participating in the

Standard observation cycle will be teachers with more than 3 years experience who are on the renewal year for their teaching certification. These teachers will be formally evaluated three times based on all five of the NC Professional Teacher standards. Teachers on the Comprehensive cycle will receive four formal observations. Three from school administration and one peer observation. Teachers on the Comprehensive cycle will include initially licensed teachers with 0 - 3 years of experience. All formal observations will involve post-conferences where teachers and administrators collaboratively work together to identify teacher strengths and areas of improvement. At the end of each school year administration will meet with every teacher and have summary evaluation conferences. At these meetings the school administrator and individual teacher will discuss the teacher's overall evaluation and progress toward their PDP goals.

Initially licensed teachers will participate in a Beginning Teachers program that will provide the necessary support for novice teachers. This includes the comprehensive evaluation cycle, monthly beginning teacher meetings and participation in the teacher mentor program. In the mentor program an experienced teacher is matched with a beginning teacher and they meet regularly to discuss school policies, classroom management, effective instruction and other best practices. The mentor teachers will receive mentor training to support the beginning teachers in all aspects of the profession. Once they are certified as "mentor teachers" they will provide on the job observations and coaching. By providing this opportunity for beginning teachers we believe that initially licensed teachers will gain confidence and competence due to the support of an experienced teacher. We believe this will lead to more effective teaching practices and higher retention rates among our beginning teachers.

Novice teachers will also have the opportunity to participate in Professional Learning teams (PLT) three times a week. During these required meetings, beginning teachers will have the ability to collaborate with veteran teachers and participate in tuning protocols designed to address dilemmas the teachers are facing. These meetings will provide additional mentorship for beginning teachers from colleagues on their grade level or in their subject area.

- 3. Describe the core components of professional development plan and how these components will support 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.*

In order to guarantee that teachers receive an appropriate amount of time for collaboration, ALA will require teachers to meet in Professional Learning teams (PLT) 30 minutes prior to the beginning of the school day 3 days a week. This time will be a mandatory part of the eight hour work day. Each of these times will have a specific purpose. Day 1 will require teachers to meet with their grade level teams. During this time teachers will collaborate to plan Advisory activities, coordinate grade level projects, and discuss student academic and behavioral data. On Day 2 teachers will meet with colleagues within their subject area departments. At these meetings teachers will discuss vertical alignment and develop common language, strategies, and other best practices relevant to their subject area. Day 3 will allow more flexibility as full faculty professional development is possible or teachers can organically schedule or plan with



their colleagues to address their own identified areas for professional growth. To ensure efficiency during PLT meetings, teachers will execute specific tuning protocols with their colleagues to generate ideas for projects, discover best practices, and to collaboratively solve dilemmas that arise in their classrooms. These protocols guide teachers in their discussion by providing a specific amount of time to share their dilemma, ask clarifying and probing questions, give warm/cool feedback, and reflect on the entire process. At ALA we believe that teachers are professionals and experts in their field. We will encourage and provide opportunities for them to participate in off site professional development and then return to campus to share with their colleagues their new area of expertise. These sessions can be scheduled during the PLT meetings or after school. ALA will outsource PD as necessary. This will include visiting other Leader in Me schools and participating in seminars offered by the Covey Foundation.

- 4. Provide a schedule and explanation of professional development that will take place prior to 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 Ascend Leadership Academy, the Lead Administrator, board members, and select teachers will be immersed in the Leader in Me program by attending a variety of Leader in Me sponsored events. These events are designed to help educators develop programs where they empower students to model 21st century leadership skills and achieve their full potential. In the Spring of 2017 the Lead Administrator, and select board members will attend the Leader in Me Symposium at one of its regional locations. This symposium allows educators to learn best practice from Leader in Me experts and gives them the opportunity to tour a local school to see how the program is being applied locally. These individuals will also meet with their local Leader in Me representative to gain more insight about the Leader in Me program and to assess resources relevant to the implementation of the program at our school. The Lead Administrator will also attend the Leader in Me Principals Academy during the planning year of this proposed charter school. At this seminar, school administrators are given practical tools and skills they can take back to their schools to apply effective leadership that will help them take their school to the next level. Finally in the Summer of 2018, all newly hired faculty and staff will participate in a two week orientation conducted by the Covey Foundation. The two week training will include 7 Habits certification, a Launching Leadership course, and professional development on creating a leadership culture. These courses are designed to help faculty identify the leadership culture they will create and gives them a common language that helps them promote that culture within the school. The Covey Foundation has provided ALA with documentation that outlines a timeline and the process for professional development in regards to the Leader in Me. It is been added to the application as Appendix O-9.

After the initial Leader in Me training, teachers will be required to attend a week long orientation prior to the beginning of the 2018-19 school year. During this orientation teachers will become proficient in the use of the various systems and technologies required to complete their responsibilities. These include Powerschool, Google Docs, the NC Educator Effectiveness System (NCEE) and Canvas. Teachers will also receive extensive training on the unique elements of the instructional plan. This will include



training on how to execute tuning protocols in their PLTs, implementation of the cogenerative dialogue in the classroom, application of the Paideia seminar in the Humanities class, the Project Based Leadership (PBL) pedagogy, and the inclusion of Restorative justice practices as a part of classroom management. The Lead Administrator will be responsible for coordinating these trainings and will rely on "teacher experts" to facilitate these trainings. Where necessary these trainings will be outsourced to other educational organizations or institutions. During the summer prior to the 2018-19 school year teachers will have the opportunity collaborate and plan on their own within the school building. School administration will open the building for optional teacher workdays to facilitate this collaboration. Teachers will also have access to online resources for professional development including edivate. Throughout the school year teachers will receive continual strategic professional development aligned with the school's mission.

5. *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.*

Considering the two-week orientation and the five days prior to the beginning of the school year teachers at ALA will receive approximately 170 hours of professional development throughout the school year. This will include the 30 minute morning PLT meetings 3 times a week. As outlined in the school calendar, we will also have quarterly teacher work days scheduled specifically for professional development. The daily bell schedule and staffing structure will also lend itself to allow ample opportunities for teacher collaboration and professional development.

## **Enrollment and Marketing:**

Reaching the full capacity for enrollment will be critical to obtain 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 GS 115C.218.45(a-i) carefully.

### **Marketing Plan**

*Marketing to potential students and parents is vital to the survival of a charter school. 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: (G.S.115C-218.45(e)).*

Ascend Leadership Academy will market to families in Durham county and the surrounding areas. We will specifically target the Oak Grove, Bethesda, and Brier Creek areas of Durham. Although we will target these specific areas of Durham we will be inclusive and non-discriminatory to ensure a diverse population that reflects the demographic composition of the district in which the school is located. We will implement the following strategies to attract students who want to be empowered and develop leadership skills for the 21st century:

\*Develop a digital presence by creating a website that describes the mission of the school and other pertinent information. The website will also give families the opportunity to join a mailing list to receive information about

the school as it continues through the charter application process. ([www.ascendleadershipacademy.org](http://www.ascendleadershipacademy.org))

\*Develop a Facebook campaign to create interest via social media. This page will provide relevant information about the school and target individuals in the Durham area with middle school aged children. Interested applicants will be able to "like" the page and share it with their own network of friends. The page will also give families the opportunity to join a mailing list to receive information about the school as it continues through the charter application process.

\*Utilize the Nextdoor Social Media application to communicate with families in the targeted communities. Currently residents in the Ravenstone, Brightleaf, Brightwood Trails, and Grove Park communities in southeast Durham communicate using Nextdoor. ALA will use this form of communication to speak with residents in all of these communities and set up a community meeting where residents can meet the Board of Directors, and the identified Principal. At this meeting interested families will take a survey that will identify the educational need for the charter school within their community.

\*Utilize the extensive personal networks of the Board of Directors to create a word of mouth campaign within the Durham community. We will create a one-page handout that states the mission of the school, foundations of the educational program, and other distinct features that set ALA apart from other schools. Our Board of Directors will distribute this handout to their broad networks to gain interests in the school through a grassroots approach.

\*Attend local community meetings and churches to inform the local community about our mission and vision of the school. This will contribute to our grassroots campaign and bolster our credibility within the Durham community.

Throughout the application process we will continue to monitor the online and social media campaign to assess its effectiveness. As we continue through the application process we will add the following to our marketing plan:

\*Create signage and print media such as brochures and flyers to distribute throughout the community.

Advertise in newspapers other forms of media including the Durham Herald Sun and the Raleigh News and Observer.

\*Create a promotional video that describes the mission and vision of the school to be distributed via social media.

\*Hold frequent "open house" meetings to discuss the progress of the school's foundation and to orient the school community with schools purpose and goals.

\*Distribute t-shirts and other branded items to develop name recognition and familiarity.

In all of ALA's marketing strategies our goal will be to communicate our

schools mission and commitment to educational excellence. We will attempt many grassroots marketing efforts to ingrain ourselves in the community we intend to serve.

### **Parent and Community Involvement**

1. *Describe how you will communicate with and engage parents and community members from the time that the school is approved through opening.*
2. *Describe how you will engage parents in the life of the public charter school. Explain the plan for building engaging partnerships between the family and school that strengthen support for student learning.*

At Ascend Leadership Academy we believe that parents and the local community are allies in the educational process. We will proactively build partnerships with these allies to enhance our effectiveness and the overall academic achievement of our students. After receiving approval for our charter we will continue to communicate to stakeholders all pertinent information that relates to the school. This will include the utilization of an effective website that outlines the school calendar, policies, events, board members, and other relevant updates. We will also continue to employ our social media platforms to advertise and inform our local community. Through our Facebook, Nextdoor, and Twitter accounts we will encourage interested families to share their email addresses so we can add them to our listserv. By building this database of contacts we will have the ability to have steady stream of communication with prospective applicants. We will also continue to participate in community meetings, attend church events, hold open houses, and send out periodic newsletters. This will provide opportunities to forge partnerships with prominent community organizations that will be mutually beneficial for these organizations and the students of ALA.

Prior to the first day of school, ALA administration will hold an orientation to allow our families to tour the school, meet the faculty, and ask questions. We will also reinforce our educational philosophy and reiterate the expectations for the culture of the school. During this orientation ALA will outline parent expectations in regards to their involvement in the school. This orientation will address specific parent volunteer opportunities and strategic ways that parents can support our educational philosophy at home. It will also include parent expectations including completing 10 volunteer hours annually, consistent communication with teachers, and participation in surveys and assessments to give the school relevant feedback. The final objective of this orientation will be to announce the measurable goals set by administration and the Board of Directors.

To engage parents in the life of the charter school several tasks will be required of them. First, every parent will participate in student-led conferences twice a year with their child and advisory teacher. These conferences will take place at the conclusion of the first and third academic quarters. At the first conference students will share with their parents their digital portfolio and the goals they have set for the school year. They will also discuss their self-identified strengths and weaknesses and the action steps they have chosen to achieve their goals for that school year. At the second conference students will evaluate their progress towards their annual goals and reflect upon their achievement throughout the school

year. They will also discuss any adjustments that are necessary to achieve their goals before the end of the school year. The role of the parent and teacher during the conference will be to listen, ask questions, and provide guidance where necessary. Parents will also be invited to many events for student project culminations. At these events students will publicly present the products created through their various projects and articulate their learning. Annually ALA will also host a Leadership Exhibition Day. This event is an aspect of the Leader in Me program and gives students another opportunity to share their unique talents and become comfortable presenting in front of adults. Through this event students are also able to develop their leadership skills and celebrate their achievements. This annual event will be open to parents and the local community. It will give these stakeholders the opportunity to engage in partnerships with ALA and strengthen their support for student learning.

### **Admissions Policy**

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 withdraws and transfers.*

In order to apply for admission to ALA, a student must only be a resident of the state of North Carolina. ALA will not discriminate based on race, color, creed, national origin, ethnicity, or religion. ALA will also not deny any student based on previous academic performance or special needs. To obtain admission to ALA, potential students must go through the application process. The application period will begin on January 1st, 2018 and run through February 28th, 2018. Applicants will visit the school website to complete the application online. If necessary, hard copies of the application will be made available to those without internet access. Completed applications must contain the following:

- \*Proof of residence in North Carolina
- \*The grade level the student will enter in
- \*Information about any siblings who attend the school
- \*Relevant demographic data concerning the student

If an application is filled out incorrectly or incompletely it will be disqualified from consideration. All applications must be received by February 28th at 11:59 PM. Once received each applicant's information will be entered into ALA's database.

If there are fewer applicants than slots available all applicants will be admitted. If there are more applicants than spots available we will conduct a public lottery in accordance with NC charter school law. Features of the

public lottery include:

\*Applications entered by the assigned deadline will be entered into a random public lottery. This lottery will be held publicly and be advertised to the local community.

\*Siblings of current ALA students and children of full time ALA employees are admitted before the lottery to any open spots for the grade in which the student is applying. In order to be considered for the sibling lottery, the identified sibling must attend ALA for one full school year. These students must also share the same permanent address.

\*Applicants who apply after the February 28th deadline will be placed at the end of the waitlist based on the time and date of their application submission.

\*Students who are twins, triplets, etc. must each complete an application. However, only one application will be entered into the lottery for those students. If that application is accepted in the lottery, the siblings will also be admitted.

\*Students not accepted by the lottery will remain on the waitlist until the end of the following school year. If not accepted throughout the school year the student will follow the same application procedures again to apply for the next school year.

Once accepted, ALA students will retain their position from year to year unless they voluntarily withdraw. Annually, families will be asked to complete a commitment form that guarantees their child's spot for the upcoming school year.

After the initial acceptance, families will be required to review the ALA student-parent handbook and sign an agreement stating that they will abide by the policies and procedures of the school. They will also be notified of the New Student orientation and be asked to schedule a date for their attendance.

Proposed admissions timeline for the 2018-19 school year:

January 1, 2018 - February 28, 2018 - Applications available to the Public  
February 28, 2018 - Applications due to ALA  
March 10, 2018 - Public lottery held  
March 12, 2018 - Acceptance letters mailed to accepted lottery students  
April 12, 2018 - Deadline for the return of Completed Acceptance letter and documentation  
July - August 2018 - New Student/Family orientation dates

Any student who withdraws from ALA must complete the required withdrawal paperwork. As a part of this documentation we will include an exit survey to ascertain the student's reason for leaving. Once all withdrawal documentation is received the student's records will be released to their new school. If the family would like to return to ALA they must go through the required application process.

## **Weighted Lottery**

*Does your school plan to use a weighted lottery?*

Yes:

No: **X**

*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.*
- 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.*

*If the applicant is requesting to use a weighted, or otherwise limited, lottery, 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.*
- 2. A thorough description of the processes and procedures the applicant intends to use to effectuate the lottery.*
- 3. The underlying research, pedagogical, educational, psychometric and legal, that supports the request and the procedures the applicant is requesting.*



**PROJECTED ENROLLMENT 2018-19 through 2022-2023**

IDENTIFY LEA FROM WHICH STUDENTS WILL PROBABLY COME

LEA #1 Durham Public Schools  
 LEA #2  
 LEA #3

In the following tables, please list for each year and grade level, the numbers of students that the school reasonably expects to enroll. In addition, please indicate any plans to increase the grade levels offered by the school over time and be sure these figures match those on the initial cover page.

	2018-2019			2019-2020			2020-2021			2021-2022			2022-2023		
	LEA 320	LEA 000	LEA 000	LEA 320	LEA 000	LEA 000	LEA 320	LEA 000	LEA 000	LEA 320	LEA 000	LEA 000	LEA 320	LEA 000	LEA 000
Grade 06	80	0	0	80	0	0	80	0	0	80	0	0	80	0	0
Grade 07	80	0	0	80	0	0	80	0	0	80	0	0	80	0	0
Grade 08	0	0	0	80	0	0	80	0	0	80	0	0	80	0	0
Grade 09	0	0	0	80	0	0	80	0	0	80	0	0	80	0	0
Grade 10	0	0	0	0	0	0	80	0	0	80	0	0	80	0	0
Grade 11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	80	0	0	80	0	0
Grade 12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	80	0	0
	160			320			400			480			560		

## V. OPERATIONS

### Transportation Plan:

*Describe in detail the transportation plan that will ensure that no child is denied access to the school due to lack of transportation. The details of this plan should align with the Mission, identified need for the charter school, targeted student population, and the budget proposal.*

Ascend Leadership Academy will provide transportation options for all students and parents. Our targeted population resides in the Oak Grove, Bethesda, and Brier Creek areas of Durham. Since the school facility will be central to these communities we anticipate that most of our students will be transported by their own families and utilize ALA's efficient car line system. Although we will target this area of Durham, we foresee that students from different areas of Durham will elect to attend ALA. To ensure transportation is not a barrier for our students we will lease buses that will service students in the different geographic areas of Durham County. We will select specific drop zones where parents will be able to meet bus drivers to transfer their children to the care of our bus drivers for transport to the school. This will allow families who do not live in the immediate vicinity of the school the option of not having to drive the entire distance to the facility. Instead they will meet the bus in public locations closer to their own residence. Each geographic area will have 2-3 public drop zones and drivers will keep strict schedules to ensure promptness and efficiency. Public drop zones will be at universally known landmarks like popular shopping centers, churches and community centers. School administration will select the location of the drop zones based on its proximity to a majority of students who have need for the transportation service. Administration will guarantee that these locations are practical for a large concentration of students. Administration will also continually evaluate the safety of the drop zone locations and set distinct procedures to ensure the safety of all students. The practice of providing drop zones will alleviate transportation dilemmas for our families and also be an efficient use of the schools transportation resources.

School administration will coordinate a carpool system for students who reside in the communities in close proximity to the school. ALA will employ an online system where parents will be able to communicate with one another to organize rides for their children with other families who live near them. The system will be accessible through the school website and families will have the flexibility to coordinate transportation throughout the school year.

As ALA grows we will expand our transportation resources as the budget allows. We will evaluate the transportation budget annually and determine whether additional funding is necessary to obtain additional resources. We will also look to add an Before/After school program for families who need extended care services. Upon charter approval we will apply for grants to help fund this after school program which could include but not be limited to the 21st Century Community Learning center program. ALA's goal is to provide no cost transportation options to all students to guarantee that no student is denied access to the school based on a lack of transportation.

**School Lunch Plan:**

*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.*

Ascend Leadership Academy will ensure that every child is provided with a meal on a daily basis. Students will have the opportunity to bring their own lunch or pre-order their lunch from ALA's selected vendors. ALA will set up an online ordering system where families can select food options from local restaurants. The vendors will then deliver the meals to the assigned students on the date it was selected. All meal options will meet the nutritional guidelines of the National School Lunch program. The online system will manage all payments and food orders to help with the efficient distribution of meals.

The board of ALA has identified Preferred Meals as a potential vendor for our school lunch program. Preferred meals offers nutritious meals and provides a worry-free food service program for school administrators. They also provide the necessary equipment and staff members to meet the needs of each school. Preferred meals guarantees that all of their meals meet the federal standards of the National School Lunch program.

ALA will comply with the guidelines of the National School Lunch Program in regards to its free and reduced lunch population. Students will fill out free and reduced lunch applications at the beginning of the year to determine if they qualify for the program. ALA will contract with local vendors to provide lunch at no charge or at a reduced cost for qualifying students. Students who forget their lunch will be provided with lunch from a surplus supply of meals. We have allocated funds in our budget to cover the costs of the surplus meals and profits from the vendor program will offset a portion of these costs.

**Civil Liability and Insurance (GS 115C-218.20):**

The Charter School shall obtain and maintain insurance at a minimum in the following amounts:

1. Errors and omissions: one million dollars (\$1,000,000) per claim;
2. General liability: one million dollars (\$1,000,000) per occurrence;
3. Boiler and machinery: the replacement cost of the building;
4. Real and personal property: the appraised value of the building and contents;
5. Fidelity bonds: no less than two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) to cover employee dishonesty;
6. Automobile liability: one million dollars (\$1,000,000) per occurrence; and
7. Workers' compensation: as specified by Chapter 97 of the General Statutes.

Area of proposed coverage	Proposed amount of coverage	Cost (Quote)
Comprehensive General Liability	\$1,000,000	\$1,290.00
Officers and Directors/Errors and Omissions	\$1,000,000	\$3,057.00

Property Insurance		\$4,160,000	\$4,240.00
Motor Vehicle Liability		\$1,000,000	\$2,300.00
Bonding Minimum/Maximum Amount	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$332.00
Other		\$1,000,000	\$5,899.00
Total Cost			\$17,118.00

\*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.

### **Health and Safety Requirements:**

All public charter schools are required to follow the regulations regarding health and safety as stated in § 115C218.75.

We, the Board members at (Charter School Name) 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.

justinsmith1520

08/24/2016

(Board Chair Signature)

(Date)

### **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.*

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.

Ascend Leadership Academy has a relationship with an established real estate developer who has worked with several charter schools in North Carolina. This company designed and constructed the Elementary, Middle and High School buildings at Voyager Academy Charter School in Durham. They also have a relationship with the newly approved Discovery Charter School in Northern Durham. ALA has established a similar relationship with this real estate developer and will execute a similar plan for attaining a building as the schools listed above. Upon charter approval the developer and ALA's board of directors will negotiate a land purchase and begin construction on a new facility. In the third year of operation, ALA will occupy the new facility.

During the first two years of operation, ALA will utilize mobile classroom units on the site of the land purchase. ALA has secured quotes from Williams-Scotsman (Appendix O-7) for the projected costs of these mobile classrooms. ALA has budgeted appropriately for this cost and it is outlined in our proposed budget.

ALA's board will ensure that the new facility is in compliance with all

58

If you have questions regarding the application process, please contact the Office of Charter Schools via email at [deanna.townsend-smith@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:deanna.townsend-smith@dpi.nc.gov).

local building codes and regulations. The Board will also collaborate with the local city/county Inspections department to implement all necessary inspections to meet building and land use regulations. The facility will satisfy all safety and fire standards to guarantee the health, safety, and welfare of all occupants. The proposed site layout will occupy an estimated 20 acres of land. The site developer will construct an approximate 45,000 sq. foot facility allowing for an estimated 80 square feet per child. The facility will be designed to support the collaborative nature outlined in the mission of the school. This includes connecting classrooms for class collaborations and flexible furniture options for small group activities. The building will also contain the necessary number of classrooms, computer labs and storage room for the successful operation of the school.

The site layout will also consider space for building expansion. This expansion could include a multi-media studio, athletic fields, and an auditorium. The Board of Directors and site developer will mutually agree upon the facility layout throughout the development process. Once construction is completed, the Board of ALA will guarantee that the building meets all land use, and building specifications. ALA will secure the educational certificate of occupancy before any school activities take place within the facility.

*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.*

ALA is estimating \$11 per sq. ft. in the first year with the mobile units. In the 2nd year, we anticipate a cost of \$14 per square foot. At \$14 per sq. ft., the lease payment would be \$650,000 with a 45,000 square foot facility.

**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.*

In our first two years of operation ALA will utilize mobile classroom units as construction on the permanent facility takes place. If unforeseen circumstances arise and we are not able to inhabit the permanent facility at the beginning of year 3 we will add additional mobile classroom units to accommodate our increased student enrollment. The school will not have any financial obligation until construction is completed on the permanent facility and an educational certificate of occupancy is obtained.

If the mobile classrooms are not in place in time for ALA's opening, the Board will identify a temporary location that is available for lease. This space must have an appropriate amount of square footage to accommodate our initial student enrollment. This includes enough space for an administrative office and 10 classrooms for our 160 6th and 7th grade students. The site developer hired for construction of the permanent facility will work with ALA's Board of Directors to upfit the space to meet the needs of the school. We do not anticipate that any of the school's academic programs will be affected by this contingency plan and should continue as planned during the first year of operation. Other non-academic programs like recess and athletics may be affected due to a lack of land acreage. ALA's administration may also have to be creative when executing

large public events without access to a gym or auditorium if the contingency plan is put into place.



## VI. FINANCIAL PLAN

In the following sections present a detailed description of assumptions and revenue estimates, including but not limited to the basis for revenue projections, staffing levels, and costs. The narrative should specifically address the degree to which the school budget will rely on variable income.

### **Budget: Revenue Projections from each LEA 2018-19**

**SHOW  
CALCULATIONS  
FOR FIGURING  
STATE  
AND LOCAL  
DOLLARS  
FOR THE  
PROPOSED  
CHARTER  
SCHOOL**

*Refer to the  
Resource Manual  
Finance Section  
for guidance on  
estimated funding  
amounts*

**State Funds:** Charter schools receive an equivalent amount per student as the local education agency (LEA) receives per student receives from the State. Funding is based on the 1<sup>st</sup> month average daily membership.

- 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.

**Federal 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 #1320 - Durham Public Schools

Revenue	2016-2017 Per Pupil Funding	Projected LEA ADM	Approximate funding for 2018-2019
State Funds	\$5,095.09	160	\$815,214.40
Local Funds	\$3,132.52	160	\$501,203.20
Federal EC Funds	\$3,579.70	16	\$57,275.20
<b>Totals</b>			\$1,373,692.80

**Total Budget: Revenue Projections 2018-19 through 2022-2023**

<b>INCOME: REVENUE PROJECTIONS</b>	<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>2019-2020</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>
<b>-State ADM Funds</b>	\$815,214	\$1,630,429	\$2,038,036	\$2,445,643	\$2,853,250
<b>-Local Per Pupil Funds</b>	\$501,203	\$1,002,406	\$1,253,008	\$1,503,610	\$1,754,211
<b>-Exceptional Children Federal Funds</b>	\$57,275	\$114,550	\$143,188	\$171,826	\$200,463
<b>-Other Funds*</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>-Working Capital*</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Z - TOTAL REVENUE</b>	\$1,373,693	\$2,747,385	\$3,434,232	\$4,121,079	\$4,807,924

**\*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.**

**Assurances are needed to confirm the commitment of these additional sources of revenue. Please include these as Appendix J.**

**Personnel Budget: Expenditure Projections 2018-19 through 2022-2023**

*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.*

BUDGET EXPENDITURE PROJECTIONS Personnel	2018-2019			2019-2020			2020-2021			2021-2022			2022-2023		
	Num Staff	Avg Salary	Total salary	FTE	Avg Salary	Total salary	FTE	Avg Salary	Total salary	FTE	Avg Salary	Total salary	FTE	Avg Salary	Total salary
Administrative & Support Personnel:															
Lead Administrator	1	\$85,000	\$85,000	1	\$85,000	\$85,000	1	\$85,000	\$85,000	1	\$85,000	\$85,000	1	\$85,000	\$85,000
Assistant Administrator	0	\$0	\$0	1	\$45,000	\$45,000	1	\$45,000	\$45,000	1	\$45,000	\$45,000	1	\$45,000	\$45,000
Finance Officer	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0
Clerical	1	\$35,000	\$35,000	1	\$35,000	\$35,000	1	\$35,000	\$35,000	1	\$35,000	\$35,000	1	\$35,000	\$35,000
Food Service Staff	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0
Custodians	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0
Transportation Staff	1	\$16,740	\$16,740	1	\$16,740	\$16,740	1	\$16,740	\$16,740	1	\$16,740	\$16,740	1	\$16,740	\$16,740
A - Total Admin and Support:	3		\$136,740	4		\$181,740	4		\$181,740	4		\$181,740	4		\$181,740
Instructional Personnel:															
Core Content Teacher(s)	6	\$40,000	\$240,000	13	\$46,000	\$598,000	17	\$46,000	\$782,000	21	\$46,000	\$966,000	25	\$46,000	\$1,150,000
Electives/Specialty Teacher(s)	2	\$40,000	\$80,000	5	\$46,000	\$230,000	7	\$51,000	\$357,000	8	\$51,000	\$408,000	9	\$51,000	\$459,000
Exceptional Children Teacher(s)	1	\$40,000	\$40,000	1	\$41,000	\$41,000	2	\$41,000	\$82,000	2	\$41,000	\$82,000	3	\$41,000	\$123,000
Instructional Support	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	1	\$48,000	\$48,000	1	\$48,000	\$48,000	1	\$48,000	\$48,000
Teacher Assistants	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0
B - Total Instructional Personnel:	9		\$360,000	19		\$869,000	27		\$1,269,000	32		\$1,504,000	38		\$1,780,000

A+B = C - Total Admin, Support and Instructional Personnel:	12		\$496,740	23		\$1,050,740	31		\$1,450,740	36		\$1,685,740	42		\$1,961,740
Administrative & Support Benefits															
Health Insurance	3	\$5,377	\$16,131	4	\$5,377	\$21,508	4	\$5,377	\$21,508	4	\$5,377	\$21,508	4	\$5,377	\$21,508
Retirement Plan--NC State	3	\$6,084	\$18,252	4	\$4,563	\$18,252	4	\$4,563	\$18,252	4	\$4,563	\$18,252	4	\$4,563	\$18,252
Retirement Plan--Other	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0
Life Insurance	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0
Disability	3	\$547	\$1,641	4	\$545	\$2,180	4	\$545	\$2,180	4	\$545	\$2,180	4	\$545	\$2,180
Medicare	3	\$661	\$1,983	4	\$659	\$2,636	4	\$659	\$2,636	4	\$659	\$2,636	4	\$659	\$2,636
Social Security	3	\$2,826	\$8,478	4	\$2,817	\$11,268	4	\$2,817	\$11,268	4	\$2,817	\$11,268	4	\$2,817	\$11,268
D - Total Admin and Support Benefits:	15		\$46,485	20		\$55,844	20		\$55,844	20		\$55,844	20		\$55,844
Instructional Personnel Benefits:															
Health Insurance	9	\$5,377	\$48,393	19	\$5,377	\$102,163	27	\$5,377	\$145,179	32	\$5,377	\$172,064	38	\$5,377	\$204,326
Retirement Plan--NC State	9	\$6,084	\$54,756	19	\$6,957	\$132,183	27	\$7,149	\$193,023	32	\$7,149	\$228,768	38	\$7,125	\$270,750
Retirement Plan--Other	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0
Social Security	9	\$2,480	\$22,320	19	\$2,836	\$53,884	27	\$2,914	\$78,678	32	\$2,914	\$93,248	38	\$2,904	\$110,352
Disability	9	\$480	\$4,320	19	\$549	\$10,431	27	\$564	\$15,228	32	\$564	\$18,048	38	\$562	\$21,356
Medicare	9	\$580	\$5,220	19	\$663	\$12,597	27	\$682	\$18,414	32	\$682	\$21,824	38	\$679	\$25,802
Life Insurance	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0
E - Total Instructional Personnel Benefits:	45		\$135,009	95		\$311,258	135		\$450,522	160		\$533,952	190		\$632,586
D+E = F - Total Personnel Benefits	60		\$181,494	115		\$367,102	155		\$506,366	180		\$589,796	210		\$688,430
A+D = G - Total Admin and Support Personnel (Salary & Benefits)	18		\$183,225	24		\$237,584	24		\$237,584	24		\$237,584	24		\$237,584
B+E = H - Total	54		\$495,009	114		\$1,180,258	162		\$1,719,522	192		\$2,037,952	228		\$2,412,586

Ascend Leadership Academy: Durham

Instructional Personnel (Salary & Benefits)														
G+H = J - TOTAL PERSONNEL	72		\$678,234	138		\$1,417,842	186		\$1,957,106	216		\$2,275,536	252	\$2,650,170

**Operations Budget: Expenditure Projections 2018-19 through 2022-2023**

<b>BUDGET OPERATIONS EXPENDITURE PROJECTIONS</b>		<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>2019-2020</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>
	Disability	\$547	\$545	\$545	\$545	\$2,180
	Disability	\$480	\$549	\$564	\$564	\$21,356
	Health Insurance	\$5,377	\$5,377	\$5,377	\$5,377	\$21,508
	Health Insurance	\$5,377	\$5,377	\$5,377	\$5,377	\$204,326
	Life Insurance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Medicare	\$661	\$659	\$659	\$659	\$2,636
	Medicare	\$580	\$663	\$682	\$682	\$25,802
	Retirement Plan--NC State	\$6,084	\$4,563	\$4,563	\$4,563	\$18,252
	Retirement Plan--NC State	\$6,084	\$6,957	\$7,149	\$7,149	\$270,750
	Retirement Plan--Other	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Social Security	\$2,826	\$2,817	\$2,817	\$2,817	\$11,268
	Social Security	\$2,480	\$2,836	\$2,914	\$2,914	\$110,352
	<b>Total Benefits</b>	<b>\$30,496</b>	<b>\$30,343</b>	<b>\$30,647</b>	<b>\$30,647</b>	<b>\$688,430</b>





*enrollment projection.*

*Provide the break-even point of student enrollment.*

Ascend Leadership Academy's budget is based on an enrollment of 160 students for the first year, 320 students in the second year, 400 students in the third year, 480 students in the fourth year, and 560 in the fifth year, which is full enrollment. The Board of ALA has researched its ability to reach full enrollment and believe we will meet these projections. One reason we believe we will meet these projections is due to the current demand for school choice options in the Durham Community.

The proposed location in Durham for Ascend Leadership Academy is a fast growing metropolitan area. The surrounding charter schools are at capacity and the surrounding traditional public schools are not performing. The waiting list for the surrounding charter schools also indicate a high demand for schools of choice. ALA's enrollment numbers are also consistent with or below the enrollment of other charter schools servicing middle and high school students in the Durham area.

For these reasons the school anticipates reaching full enrollment. However the school has developed a break even budget in the unlikely event that enrollment does not reach projected capacity each year. During the first year the school will be able to break even if the student enrollment is at least 110 students which is 68% reduction in projected enrollment. This will result in a corresponding reduction in revenue to \$854,080. ALA will reduce expenses commensurate to enrollment reduction and use a 6% decrease to sustain operations. The expense budget reduces to \$854,916.85. If this situation arises the school will adjust staffing, supplies, buses, and mobile classrooms.

*Discuss the school's contingency plan to meet financial needs if anticipated revenues are not received or are lower than estimated.*

If anticipated revenues are lower than estimated due to per student allotment reductions or lower student enrollment the school is prepared to take steps to ensure solvent fiscal operation. The school will take the following steps: apply for grants, fundraise through parent organizations, seek additional corporate donations, reduce staff positions and adjust the amount of money spent on instructional supplies, staff development, hardware and software to align with the lower student enrollment and number of staff positions.

*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. Be sure that the appropriate assurances documentation is provided in the appendices*

*Ascend Leadership Academy will not rely on sources of funds other than state, county, and federal funding in years 1 through 5. ALA plans to apply for grants and seek corporate sponsorships; however these funds will be used for supplemental materials or positions and not required operational budgetary items.*

*Provide the student to teacher ratio that the budget is built on.*

The student to teacher ratio is 17 to 1.

*2. 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.*

Ascend Leadership Academy plans to contract for student information and financial management services, custodial services, speech therapy, psychological services, and other services required for legally compliant delivery of EC services. For these services and any future contracts for services, the school will follow the following steps:

1. The school's lead administrator will receive multiple bids for any contract over \$5,000.
2. The bidding vendors must provide proof of insurance, background checks, and any other necessary liability coverage.
3. Vendors will provide references and experience specifically related to NC charter schools.
4. Recommendations will be taken to ALA's Board of Directors.

*3. Explain how the budget aligns with the school's mission, curricular offerings, transportation plans, and facility needs.*

The school's budget directly aligns to the school's mission by setting aside funds essential for purchasing materials and services necessary to create a state of the art digital media environment with high-quality leadership training. As seen in the budget Professional development for the Leader In Me program is fully funded each year. This Leader In Me training is the premier professional development program available for training teachers and students to create a culture as outlined in our mission. The budget also includes funding for technology purchases essential to setting up digital media labs. These labs are an essential part of pursuing the schools digital media curricular mission. The school also seeks to remove barriers for student enrollment which is evident in the funds allocated to student transportation. The budget also includes an adequate lease amount in relation to building size.

*4. What percentage of expenditures will be the school's goal for a general fund balance? Describe how the school will develop the fund balance.*

Ascend Leadership Academy will carry a fund balance average of 8% in our first five years of operation. The school's operational goal is to achieve a minimum cumulative fund balance of 90 days' cash on hand by the end of the first quarter of the fifth year. The fund balance will be developed using careful consideration and planning for expenditures so that they do not exceed expected minimum revenues. ALA believes the allotted general fund balance amount will provide security while allocating the majority of funds to support student instruction.

*5. Provide a description of proposed financing structure. Include financing of facilities, other asset financing and leases.*

ALA will enter into a partnership with an experienced charter school developer. Through the developer agreement, the school will first lease mobile classrooms. (Appendix O-7) The mobile classrooms will be placed on land purchased for the mobile classroom site and long term site for the permanent building. The school will lease mobile classrooms for the first two years of operation, during which time construction on the permanent facility will take place. ALA will transfer operations to the permanent facility at the beginning of year three. The developer will lease the

permanent structure to the school with an option to purchase. ALA plans to exercise the options to purchase in year six.

*6. 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.*

Currently, Ascend Leadership Academy does not have any assets from other sources. When ALA receives approval for its planning year, the administration plans to begin soliciting donations as a 501c3 organization from corporations for furniture and technological equipment.

**Financial Compliance:** (No more than a half of a page)

*How will the school ensure adequate internal controls, including segregation of duties, safeguarding of assets, accurate and adequate recording keeping?*

ALA will use a finance contractor which will provide a separation of duties and safeguards between the different levels of organizational authority. ALA will require two signatures on all checks. Authorized signing authority will reside with the lead administrator and two other Board members. The finance contractor will not retain any authority to sign checks. The school will designate a person to open the mail who will be different than the person remitting payments. All checks will be made through the accounting software LINQ. No handwritten checks or debit cards will be used on a bank account. The individuals with access to process checks through LINQ will have no signing authority on the bank account. Deposits will have two reviewers verifying the money received and deposited. There will be a separate person reconciling the bank statements from the person that makes the deposits. All purchases will be made through purchase orders. A monthly financial review will take place with the Board Treasurer and if applicable the finance committee. The finance contractor will also present the budget at each Board meeting.

*Provide any known or possible related party transactions (relationship, description of transaction and estimated dollars involved)*

Currently there are no related party transactions. However, the board chairman is related to operators of a finance and student services company in NC. This company plans to bid on the financial and student information services contract for ALA. The board chairman will follow the boards conflict of interest policy during these contract evaluations. The potential contract amount is less than \$50,000.

*Provide the name and contact information of the independent audit firm who will conduct the annual financial statement audit. If a firm has yet to be identified please list the firms the board has investigated.*

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