



# **Ascent Classical Academy of Durango Charter School Application**

Submitted to the Durango 9-R School District  
February 7, 2022



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Dear Durango 9-R School District Board of Education,

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools is pleased to present this application for a K-12 classical charter school to the Durango 9-R School District. This school is known as Ascent Classical Academy of Durango. We are requesting a 5-year contract to begin in the fall of 2023. It is our intent to open with grades K-9, adding 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades over the subsequent years.

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango is a replication charter school and a member of the Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools network, a Colorado-based initiative to provide more families access to a high-quality American Classical Education. This proposed charter school has already received over 500 expressions of interest from families desiring this option in the community, surpassing the standard of interest recommended by the Colorado League of Charter Schools for a school at this stage.

This effort is driven by residents of the Durango and La Plata County community desiring a tuition-free K-12 classical charter option for their families, since there is not a classical, nor Core Knowledge, school in the entire southwest region of Colorado. The Steering Committee consists of local residents and full-time staff of Ascent Classical Academies, a strong combined team of local support and experienced classical educators and people who have started and operate charter schools in Colorado.

This application has been prepared in compliance with the Colorado Revised Statutes §22-30.5-101, et. seq, the Colorado Charter School Act. Consistent with the requirements of this Act, the Colorado Charter School Standard Application Guidebook (June 2015), and the Colorado League of Charter Schools Quality Standards for Developing Charter Schools (December 2018), it is our belief this charter school application for Ascent Classical Academy of Durango surpasses the requirements of Durango 9-R School District's policies LBD and LBD-R and is complete. Should the Board of Education or staff of Durango 9-R School District require more details, we will provide the relevant data in a timely fashion.

The charter proposal also meets the legislative intent of the Colorado Charter School Act, of creating school additional options with high, rigorous standards, expanding opportunities for all children, especially those identified as academically low-achieving, and providing different programs, educational techniques, and environments to children.

Community members and parents of young children and students throughout the area are excited by the prospect of having this proven and high-quality program in the Durango community.

Our team looks forward to working with the Durango 9-R School District throughout this process.

For questions or additional information, please contact:

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**ASCENT CLASSICAL ACADEMY OF DURANGO**  
**CHARTER APPLICATION**  
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## A. Executive Summary

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango (“ACAD” or “Ascent Classical Academy”) will be a classical, liberal arts school offering an American Classical Education in La Plata County, Colorado. The school will educate students from kindergarten through 12th grade. The school uses the content-rich Core Knowledge framework in grades K-8 and continues the content-rich approach in grades 9-12. Ascent Classical Academy of Durango proposes to open in the Fall 2023 with a charter from the Durango School District 9-R, starting with kindergarten through 9th grade (this may be altered based on demand closer to opening), adding one grade each year.

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango is a replication charter school and a part of the Ascent Classical Academy Charter School (“ACACS”) network. Members of the founding team, that includes support from Ascent Classical Academies, the education service provider (ESP), have successfully opened three similar schools in Colorado to date.

At full enrollment, which would happen after Year 7, Ascent Classical Academy of Durango may have approximately 684 students in 26 classes, and a maximum of 832 students if the maximum class size of 32 students is required.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Full Capacity
Kindergarten	52	52	52	52	52	64
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	52	52	52	52	52	64
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	52	52	52	52	52	64
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	52	52	52	52	52	64
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	52	52	52	52	52	64
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	52	52	52	52	52	64
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	26	52	52	52	52	64
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	26	26	52	52	52	64
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	26	26	26	52	52	64
9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	20	26	26	26	52	64
10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	-	20	26	26	26	64
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	-	-	20	26	26	64
12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	-	-	-	20	26	64
TOTALS	410	462	514	566	598	832

Table 1 - School Enrollment Growth

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango seeks to open through grade 8 or 9, depending on the available space in a school facility. ACAD prefers to open with grade 9 in order to offer high school level courses from the outset and to have the demand and capacity to hire upper-level teachers. This will allow the student, parents, and teachers to see the fruits of a rigorous kindergarten through high school curriculum and school culture from the outset.

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango is expected to be a destination school that families throughout the community seek as a choice for children. The school founders will work to promote the program to diverse segments of the community through robust advertisement and public meetings. There is not a tuition-free, classical K-12 school in the entire southwest region of Colorado and this school has significant interest to support this option.

## **Vision**

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango will develop the moral and intellectual skills, habits, and virtues upon which independent, responsible, and joyful lives are built, in the firm belief that such lives are the basis for a free and flourishing republic.

## **Mission**

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango will train the minds and improve the hearts of young people through a classical, content-rich education in the liberal arts and sciences, with instruction in the principles of moral character and civic virtue in an orderly, disciplined environment.

The Vision and Mission of Ascent Classical Academy of Durango include both the cultivation of wisdom and virtue, to provide its students the foundation that will enable them to flourish and live happy lives.

## **School Philosophy and Features**

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango will offer a classical education in the liberal arts and sciences. A well-rounded, liberal-arts curriculum prepares students for self-government, which is the foundation for flourishing in a free society.

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango will use the Core Knowledge sequence in grades K-8, a proven content-rich, cumulative, structured approach developed by Dr. E. D. Hirsch, Jr. This sequence integrates content across subjects by grade-level, and builds on previous learning in successive grades. A solid, specific, sequenced, and shared body of knowledge is necessary for all student to prepare for success in higher levels of education and to become informed, productive citizens and future leaders. The demands of this program can and will meet the needs of all students, including those with disabilities, English language learners, and gifted and talented students.

Classical education is language-intensive, based on the idea that, according to great philosophers such as Aristotle, human beings are thinking creatures, and everything they think is expressed through language. Whereas the accomplished speaker and writer will always be able to express ideas to others, the person deficient in language will always be at a disadvantage. To promote the mastery of language first in reading and spelling, Ascent Classical Academy of Durango will use an explicit phonics approach as that offered in the Literacy Essentials program to teach reading and literacy. The school's explicit phonics program is based on the pathbreaking research of Orton and Gillingham and has demonstrated success in also assisting English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities through multi-sensory instructional approaches. As with literacy, the school will teach explicit grammar such that students will master and be able expressly to identify the parts of speech in increasingly complex sentences.

Classical education is informed by the concept of the Trivium, the idea that learning builds on itself in successive stages of training the mind. The Trivium consists of three stages: Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric. Grammar establishes the foundational building blocks of early education with its focus on the learning of facts and rules and patterns of knowledge. For all the talk of “critical thinking” these days, no one can think at all without something to think about and rules to guide one’s thought. The Logic stage sets students on the course of examining the “why” questions concerning why human beings and natural phenomena and numbers work the way they do and how these subjects relate to each other. In the Rhetoric stage of learning, students draw upon their foundation of knowledge and practiced logic in order to develop and to express rational, responsible arguments in clear, persuasive, and elegant language.

While the Trivium is traditionally seen as sequential, the Ascent Classical Academy philosophy also understands these stages as iterative. In the high school years, when exposed to a new topic, such as chemistry or calculus, students will learn a new vocabulary, or “grammar,” and then progress through the logic and rhetoric stages within the subject.

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango requires a broad core curriculum in literature, history, sciences, math, music and art, and physical training, because in the liberal arts all disciplines are related and reinforce each other. A touchstone of that liberal-arts curriculum is the close reading and intensive discussion of the “great books” of our tradition. Students, prompted by the Socratic questioning of their teachers, will study great, compelling stories as though the characters are real and alive, thus gaining irreplaceable insights into the nature of human character and motivation as well as the love of beauty in a story well-told.

The study of history will concentrate on human beings’ efforts to achieve and to preserve the fruits of civilization—liberty, justice, science, security, prosperity, and the like—despite the inherent challenges of life and the outright opposition of the wayward and malevolent. The study of history will often be told through the words of the actors themselves through reading primary sources. Certain indispensable historical figures, such as Washington and Lincoln, and formative moments, such as the American Revolution and the Civil War, will be considered of signal importance. Geography, chronology, and biography—the building blocks of history—will be studied and mastered from the earliest grades.

Latin instruction is another important component to the literacy program. Because Latin is a highly-structured language, students will develop a deeper understanding of the grammar of the English language as well as insights into all languages. Further, since around half of all English words derive from Latin roots, the formal study of Latin and of “word histories” will engender in students a command over words and an appreciation for the force and dignity of language.

Mathematics is an essential part of a classical education. Mathematics acts as universal language in understanding the measurement and order of the physical universe. In addition to the practical aspects of numerical relations, mathematics teaches logic and abstract problem-solving which prepare the human mind for ordered thought. Ascent Classical Academy of Durango will use Singapore Math in the early grades to ensure students have a solid foundation of math facts and a deep, conceptual understanding of the subject. Math instruction will be ability-grouped, and students will take a placement exam to determine their level of

proficiency. In the upper school, mathematics will be taught in a traditional manner (e.g., through proof-based, Euclidean geometry) as opposed to chasing after passing fads or allowing calculators to take the place of human calculation through patient, sustained reason.

As with mathematics, the sciences will be taught by laying a foundation of fact on which will be built a fortress of conceptual understanding. Students in the elementary school will be taught the rudiments of sciences normally not studied until high school, such as chemistry and physics, in order to introduce them early on to the workings of the physical universe—thus inspiring both interest and wonder—and to prepare them adequately for those demanding branches of science in high school. Mastering the terminology and processes of science requires a large amount of lecture on the part of knowledgeable teachers, but from the early grades students will be called upon to engage in careful observation and exploration of nature and to reason from those observations.

The fine arts are likewise an integral part of the classical curriculum. Sadly, in our present test-driven educational universe the arts have largely been lost along the way. In a classical school, not only do the arts have a prominent place, but they are studied in way that fully honors and appreciates their methods and elements, their cultural significance, and their cultivation of that magnificent realm known as *The Beautiful*. Students will learn both art and music every year in grades kindergarten through eighth and be invited to take further elective courses in the high school. Just as the great works of literature and great moments in history are central features of the curriculum, so will be the great compositions in music and the visual arts.

The formal study and discussions of virtue are an integral part of the Ascent Classical Academy program. The cultivation of virtue, coupled with the pursuit of knowledge, in an orderly environment, is essential in developing the hearts and minds of students. The end goal of a classical education is not just the smart man or woman, but the good man or woman. To foster the practice of virtue and the acquisition of good manners and habits, the school will have a uniform dress code, a closed campus, and a robust code of conduct for all students, teachers, administrators, parents, and staff.

The culture of Ascent Classical Academy of Durango is shaped by the seriousness of our academic mission. The climate will be one of respect and decorum, which are vital for intellectual development and engagement in the pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness.

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango is not reinventing the wheel. Rather, it is replicating the model established and operated by the team at Ascent Classical Academies, with campuses in Golden, Lone Tree, and Windsor, Colorado. These schools all have successful track records and are recognized by the Colorado Department of Education as “high-quality” schools. The school will be using the academic program recommended by the Barney Charter School Initiative and adapted to align to the Colorado Academic Standards. Classical charter schools across the nation are in high demand and sought after by parents wanting a solid academic and solid moral foundation for their children.

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango staff will develop and use internal formative and summative assessments and administer other assessments as required.

Professional development for staff at Ascent Classical Academy of Durango will be primarily provided by Ascent Classical Academies with support from leadership, faculty, and staff from other established schools. Ascent Classical Academies, the school's management partner, will be charged to implement the academic program, establish the culture, and provide mentorship to Ascent Classical Academy of Durango faculty and staff.

The school is committed to providing an equitable opportunity for all children. With the conviction that a high-quality education should be available to every child, Ascent Classical Academy of Durango is not targeting students from a specific demographic but rather is open to all students. Ascent Classical Academy is committed to supporting any student who is willing to work hard and respond to the school's commitment to character. On that same note, Ascent Classical Academy of Durango staff will be actively working to reach out and inform families of disadvantaged and at-risk students about the program and the benefits of a content-rich curriculum and its ability to close the achievement gap. As a school offering an American Classical Education, this is the type of program described by Thomas Jefferson that influenced other historical figures to include Frederick Douglas and W.E.B. Du Bois.

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango was initiated by parents in the community and has received a positive reception, as evidenced by over 500 early Expressions of Interest and the support of community leaders. The school has also obtained support from many families not currently attending Durango 9-R schools, coming instead from home schools, from private schools, and out of district.

ACAD has reviewed its Expression of Interest data and has wide interest coming from Durango 9-R and neighboring school districts. A majority of applicants are not attending Durango 9-R schools, so ACAD is bringing new students into the district.

As a K-12 charter school, Ascent Classical Academy of Durango will be able to provide a high school charter option for many families.

The school is targeting the Durango area of La Plata County, to be accessible to families in Durango, Three Springs, Bayfield, and other nearby communities.

## **Leadership and Governance**

The headmaster of Ascent Classical Academy will be the academic leader of the school and be required to teach a class every year. The headmaster will be responsible for the academic and operational success of the school. The headmaster will report directly to the executive director of Ascent Classical Academies, and will be reviewed every year by the school's governing board.

The school is in the process of identifying a school leader and has had conversations with several excellent candidates.

All teachers will be highly-qualified, according to the latest Colorado Department of Education guidance, as content experts in the subjects they will teach and well-versed in language and other arts in the early grades.



The governing board of Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools will be the governing board of the school, as allowed by Colorado statute. The governing board is ultimately responsible for the academic, curricular, financial, and operational success of the school.

“If you treat an individual as he is, he will remain as he is. But if you treat him as what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be.” - Goethe.

## **B. Vision and Mission Statements**

### **Vision**

Ascent Classical Academy develops the moral and intellectual skills, habits, and virtues upon which independent, responsible, and joyful lives are built, in the firm belief that such lives are the basis for a free and flourishing republic.

### **Mission**

Ascent Classical Academy trains the minds and improves the hearts of young people through a classical, content-rich education in the liberal arts and sciences, with instruction in the principles of moral character and civic virtue in an orderly, disciplined environment.

The Vision and Mission statements were drafted after lengthy research, discussion, and creation of an agreed upon fundamental framework regarding the values, philosophies, and goals for Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools (“ACACS”). The Vision and Mission are consistent with the Colorado General Assembly’s declared purposes set forth in the Charter Schools Act, Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.) §22-30.5-102(2) and (3).

### **Philosophy Statement**

It is the belief of Ascent Classical Academy of Durango that all students benefit from a rigorous, content-rich, educational program that develops academic potential and personal character. The school will provide an orderly environment that fosters academic excellence through the habit of thoroughness, the willingness to work, and the perseverance to complete difficult tasks. Through a defined, traditional, classical, liberal arts curriculum, students will be prepared to become active, responsible members of their community.

ACAD believe it is the right and responsibility of parents to direct the upbringing and education of their children and that the school is their partner in helping them fulfill their responsibility.

### **Academic Standards**

Ascent Classical Academy will uphold high academic standards for all students regardless of background, socio-economic status, and ability. The curriculum will be a content rich, traditional educational model with provisions to challenge all students to fulfill their individual academic potential.

- Students shall take the defined curriculum and must earn promotion, completion, or graduation.
- English literacy is fundamental to student academic success in all subjects.
- Administrators and faculty are held accountable for each student’s achievement.
- The student schedule will be predominantly occupied by the defined curriculum.
- Students will be assessed through class work, regular assignments, periodic tests and portfolios, the levels of which will meet or exceed district, state and national requirements.
- Graduation requirements will meet or exceed those mandated by the authorizer and state.

### Development of Moral Character and Civic Virtue

- Ascent Classical Academy's environment, curriculum, and instructional style are designed to promote and build strength of character.
- Character is developed through a coherent program of expectations, modeling, and the study of historical and literary figures.
- Staff and faculty will encourage and model behaviors of honesty, respect, responsibility, compassion, and self-discipline.
- Students will be expected to practice and develop these traits.

### Learning Environment

Ascent Classical Academy will promote a safe, stimulating and disciplined environment.

- Individual student needs will be supported through a multidisciplinary team approach.
- There will be a defined standard of appearance and a closed campus.
- Explicit, defined expectations and consequences will be utilized to provide a safe learning environment through positive behavior reinforcement.
- Students, staff and governing board members will be expected to demonstrate consistent effort, initiative, and personal responsibility in order to pursue the good, beautiful and true.
- Physical activity, which promotes mental, physical and emotional growth, will be encouraged while reinforcing a healthy lifestyle.
- Teachers will provide the opportunity for students to develop good study skills, that make learning possible and encourage self-motivation.

### Expectations of Parents

- Parent and teacher partnerships benefit all students and will be conducted with civility and promote student success.
- Parents will exhibit honesty, respect, responsibility, compassion, and self-discipline at all school related events and activities.
- Parents will take an active role in the student's education by supporting the policies of the school, encouraging the student's completion of schoolwork, ensuring consistent attendance, attending parent-teacher conferences, and volunteering.

## C. Goals, Objectives, and Pupil Performance Standards

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango (“ACAD” or “Ascent Classical Academy”) has clear measurements to ensure the school remains focused on its mission.

The academic goals include explicit measures against which the academic achievement of students will be measured in accordance with C.R.S. §22-11-204, et seq. Organizational goals with explicit measures will indicate the school’s organizational and financial success and ensure ACAD can continue to provide a sustainable and high-quality education option to families and students for the long term.

Performance goals for ACAD are created using the **SMART** format, meaning they will be: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**mbitious and **A**ttainable, **R**eflective of and **R**elevant to the School’s Mission, and **T**ime-Specific. Baseline data for the School Performance Framework (SPF) will be obtained from state assessments given in 2024.

### Academic Goals

#### Growth

*Goal 1: Students grow academically in reading, writing, and math at a rate that ensures they are at or above grade level by 3rd grade, and stay at or above grade level through 10th grade.*

- Measure (a): In a cohort analysis of longitudinal growth, on average, students will show an average growth at or above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile, or exceed the geographic district, using the Colorado Growth Model using state approved assessments.
- Measure (b): Ethnic and racial subgroups, Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) students, English Language Learners (ELL) students, and Special Education students, will average 70<sup>th</sup> percentile growth, or exceed the geographic district, until reaching grade level. Once at grade level, these students will grow at the same annual percentile as the ACAD average based on the Colorado Growth Model using state approved assessments.

#### Proficiency

*Goal 2: Students meet or exceed state and district averages for mastery in reading, writing, and math.*

- Measure (a): The percentage of students, who attend the school for three or more years, found proficient or advanced using the CMAS Assessments for reading, writing, and math, will meet or exceed geographic district averages in grades 3 through 8.

*Goal 3: Student Growth Gaps will narrow at a rate meeting or exceeding state and district averages.*

- Measure (a): Decrease the gap in the percent proficient and advanced among all ethnic and racial subgroups by 10%, or exceed the geographic district average, by the end of 2026 school year on state approved assessments. The reduction in the gap is the result of increased proficiency of ethnic and racial subgroups and not a decrease of other groups.

- Measure (b): Decrease the gap in the percent proficient and advanced among English language learners (ELLs) compared to those who are not ELLs by 10%, or exceed the geographic district average, by the end of 3 school years. The reduction in the gap is the result of increased proficiency for ELLs students and not a decrease for those who are eligible. Growth will be measured using state assessments.
- Measure (c): Decrease the gap in the percent proficient and advanced among students eligible for special education (SPED) compared to those who are not SPED by 10%, or exceed the geographic district average, by the end of 3 school years. The reduction in the gap is the result of increased proficiency for SPED students and not a decrease for those who are eligible. Growth will be measured using state assessments.
- Measure (d): Decrease the gap in the percent proficient and advanced among students eligible for free and reduced lunch (FRL) compared to those who are not FRL by 10%, or exceed the geographic district average, by the end of 3 school years. The reduction in the gap is the result of increased proficiency for FRL students and not a decrease for those who are not FRL eligible. Growth will be measured using state assessments.

1. Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness

*Goal 4: Students will meet and exceed the state and district standards for Post-Secondary and Workforce Readiness.*

1. Measure (a): The average SAT score for ACAD students who attend for three or more years will exceed the geographic district average.
2. Measure (b): The graduation rate for students who attend three or more continuous years will be 95% or greater.

## Organizational Goals

*Goal 5: Ascent Classical Academy Durango will demonstrate fiduciary and financial responsibility.*

- Measure (a): Annual budgets demonstrate effective allocation of financial resources as measured by balanced budgets submitted to the authorizer.
- Measure (b): External, annual audit reports demonstrate Ascent Classical Academy Durango meets or exceeds professional accounting standards and state requirements.

*Goal 6: Parents demonstrate high satisfaction with the academic program and the clear, frequent, and open communication of Ascent Classical Academy of Durango.*

1. Measure (a): Average parent satisfaction with the academic program as measured by an annual survey at the end of the school year will exceed 80%.
2. Measure (b): Average parent satisfaction with clear, frequent, and open communication of the school, as measured by an annual survey at the end of the school year, will exceed 80%.
3. Measure (c): 85% of students remaining in district will re-enroll in Ascent Classical Academy of Durango.

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango expects, and will retain the right, to make revisions to the performance and growth goals as more information becomes available on state assessments. ACAD may also provide results from other nationally-normed tests, such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), or the Classical Learning Test (CLT) to demonstrate academic success.

## D. Educational Program and Standards

### 1. Educational Philosophy and Culture

#### Core Beliefs about Education and Instruction

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools (ACACS) seek to furnish a rigorous, content-rich, classical liberal arts education to students, regardless of socio-economic background or academic competence. This time-tested course of study will include the common principles of scholarship, citizenship, and moral virtue, with an emphasis on literacy, numeracy, civics, classic literature, and classical teaching methods. ACACS believes this type of rigorous education and culture will best develop the minds and characters of our students. The academic program adopted by Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools is aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS).

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools and its management team have successfully implemented this program at three Colorado charter schools, so this proposal is not theoretical but is currently serving children.

#### *SCHOLARSHIP*

To accomplish its mission, Ascent Classical Academy of Durango (ACAD) will lay a solid foundation of learning in literature, history, math, the sciences, languages, and the arts using several research-based curricula already widely used in successful classical schools in Colorado and around the country:

**Core Knowledge Sequence** — a specific, K-8 grade-by-grade core curriculum of common learning that aligns the various subjects at each grade level and provides an ordered progression from one grade to another.

**Literacy Essentials** — a multi-sensory, brain-based approach for teaching explicit phonics, which integrates writing, spelling, and reading and thus prepares students for success in all the language arts. This science-based reading program derives from the Orton-Gillingham approach to language acquisition.

**Singapore Math** — provides a conceptual approach to mathematics which allows students to progress from the concrete to the pictorial to the abstract in understanding numerical relations in both standard algorithms and more complex “story” or real-world problems, thus laying the foundation for algebra, geometry, and higher mathematics in both high school and college. Singapore Math is an internationally recognized program for teaching problem-solving in mathematics.

**Science** — The Core Knowledge Sequence teaches students complex sciences from the early grades, including subjects such as physics that students normally do not encounter until high school. This comprehensive approach will expose students to the major sciences in elementary school (biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, geology) and thus lay a strong foundation for the teaching of those sciences in the upper school. The approach will combine a mastery of facts with inquiry and experimentation through labs and exploration of the natural environment.

**Latin** —Through learning Latin over a period of years, students will gain fundamental insights into the grammar of languages, the vocabulary of all European languages that are largely derived from Latin (about 50% of words in English), and the ability to reason in all elements of linguistics. Students will start learning Latin and Greek roots in the middle grammar school years, then begin formal Latin by seventh grade, and take Latin throughout middle school and in at least one year of high school. By the end of the complete Latin course of study, they will be able to read ancient texts, as those written by Cornelius Nepos, Ovid, and Cicero.

**Modern Languages** —Based on teacher availability and student demand, a modern language will likely be taught as an elective in the upper school and may also be introduced in the early elementary grades, thus building oral and verbal language skills prior to the students' study of Latin and, later, capitalizing on their knowledge of Latin.

**Fine Arts** — In order to cultivate in young people a love and understanding of beauty, the school will require and encourage the study of music and the visual arts. The school will take a three-fold approach to the arts, by, first, teaching the history and theory of great music and art; second, having discussions on the deeper meaning of great compositions; and, third, allowing students to perform or imitate the great artists through concerts and the production of their own imitative drawing, painting, and sculpting.

**The Great Conversation** — The school will foster a spirit of inquiry and robust exchange of ideas through the study of the greatest works produced by our civilization over the last two and a half millennia. The characters, actions, and ideas explored in the great books have inspired thinkers and artists, and heroes and heroines, for centuries and are still very much alive in the minds and hearts of even today's young people when they are exposed to this "great conversation."

To this end, students at all levels, beginning in kindergarten, will be taught in part through the Socratic Method to encourage intelligent, logical, and independent thinking. The Socratic Method uses direct, intentional questions to guide students' understanding of characters and their virtues, vices, and challenges, as well as various human problems and their solutions. While most instruction in the early grades is direct, the amount of Socratic learning increases in each higher grade.

In the upper school, students will receive a classical, liberal-arts education that exceeds the Colorado Academic Standards. Students will be taught all subjects — literature, composition, math, history and government, the sciences, and the fine arts—through sound, time-tested methods. The curriculum will exceed standard high-school work and will anticipate or equal college-level courses, as by the extensive use of primary sources in history and reading complete literary works rather than relying mostly on textbooks. The school's teachers will be masters of their academic disciplines and often have advanced degrees in those fields. Seniors will be required to write and orally defend a Senior Thesis as a capstone to their academic experience at Ascent Classical Academy.

The curriculum, which has been tested in nearly thirty schools across the country, has proven to be successful for all students, including those with special needs and whose home language is not English. The



school will adhere to the conviction that a liberal education is an end in itself, and that standardized tests do not drive the curriculum.

### *CITIZENSHIP*

*If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be...*<sup>1</sup> – Thomas Jefferson

A leading purpose of a *public* education is to develop and ensure a knowledgeable, intelligent, humane, self-governing *public*. This purpose is not easy to achieve, as the number of unfree nations and peoples throughout history and today sadly proves. The American Founders understood that the preservation of a free republic would always depend on the capacity of the American people to know and understand their history and the first principles upon which this nation is founded. To this end, Ascent expressly offers an education for citizenship in the classical, American tradition. That education entails the teaching of an ordered sequence of American history in the grammar school grades (as is found in the Core Knowledge framework) to lay the foundation of students' understanding of the American story; study of the American Constitution in the eighth grade; followed up with two semesters of American history in the high school; classes in moral and political philosophy; and in the required year-long government course in eleventh grade.

In conjunction with the study of America's history and governing principles, students will be encouraged in the arts of self-government through the school's culture and its explicit cultivation of character, through extracurricular activities, and through the open invitation to serve in the larger community.

### *MORAL VIRTUE AND PERSONAL CHARACTER*

*Without virtue, man can have no happiness in this world.*<sup>2</sup>—Benjamin Franklin

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango holds that students should be taught not only to be smart, but also to be good. The way to teach children to be good is to have high expectations for their behavior and to guide them with explicit instruction in what being good really means. Traditionally, that instruction consists in a deliberate cultivation of the moral virtues. To this end, ACAD features a set of “core virtues” that the school will teach and foster, in addition to the many virtues that emerge from the reading of history and literature. These core virtues are *courage, moderation, justice, responsibility, prudence, friendship, and wonder*. These virtues will be more than motivational posters on a wall. They will be the language of instruction for both correcting and encouraging children. They will be defined at the outset of the school year. They will be discussed through the lives of great men and women in history and literature. They will become living templates of moral excellence for our students — while in school and for the rest of their lives. In addition to the teaching of virtue throughout the school and the curriculum, students will be required to take a course in moral philosophy. Such a class used to be what we now call the “capstone” course of great schools and colleges, as when James Madison went to Princeton. This class may be taught

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Letter to Colonel Charles Yancey*, Monticello, January 6, 1816.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *Articles of Belief*, November 20, 1728.

by the headmaster. If the great thinkers and moralists of our tradition are right — that happiness is the reward of a life well-lived — then there is no greater gift we could give our students than the knowledge of how to pursue and do good in the world.

Please see **Appendix 2** for further discussion of the philosophy of classical education.

### Research/Academic History of Classical Education

#### Overview: History and Misconceptions

Classical education has a long, eventful, and inspiring record in the history of the West and of America. It would be no exaggeration to say that the vibrancy of Western thought and culture has paralleled and in large part been the result of classical schooling, which might be summarized as the best that has been said, thought, done, and discovered. Even some of classical education’s greatest critics (e.g., Rousseau, Dewey, many modern politicians and thinkers) were themselves classically educated or wanted their children to be.

After being largely abandoned from the middle of the twentieth century (see a sad account of its demise in Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*, chs. 2 and 4) to roughly the year 2000, classical education has been making an impressive comeback over the last several decades. Colorado has been a leader in this movement through its many classical charter schools whose large waiting lists, college entrance records, and both state and national rankings are simply too consistent to ignore.

In its essence, a classical education holds to a traditional curriculum and traditional methods of teaching. Other ways of expressing what we mean by “traditional” are time-tested, of permanent value and validity, common-sensical, and timeless. The words of the greatest poets will ever touch the hearts of men and women as long as we feel as humans do. We need only be given the opportunity to hear those words.

While classical education has been dismissed by some as elitist or confined to a particular race or class, nothing could be further from the truth. Though it has grown out of the Western experience, classical education is universal in its appeal, just as are the ideas of liberty and independence. The classical curriculum recommended by Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson for a new nation dedicated to liberty for all is the same reading discovered by Frederick Douglass that inspired him to escape from the bonds of slavery, and that was later urged by W.E.B. Du Bois in the cultivation of black (African-American) leaders<sup>3</sup>. In fact, it could be argued that it is hardly possible to read and fully understand the profound words of the great champions of liberty in the past (Jefferson, Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King, Jr.) without the “cultural literacy” demanded by their highly complex and historically-rich speeches. Alas, the students of today, in high school and college, understand very little of what authors in the past took for granted.

Furthermore, the history of Western thought and literature is not monolithic — at any point. Socrates was executed for questioning democracy. The brothers Gracchi challenged the traditional Roman aristocracy

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<sup>3</sup> See W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Education of Black People*, ed. Herbert Aptheker. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001.

and wanted to distribute land and wealth to the poor. Protestants and Catholics were at war with each other for centuries. The anti-Federalists and Federalists certainly did not see eye-to-eye. A classical education does not dictate a particular outcome. Rather, it teaches students to understand the views and arguments of the past in order to shed light on our present world and how it came to be. It inspires young minds and hearts to seek truth but demands humility in that pursuit since truth has always been contested.

A classical education, much like a parent teaching a child adult things, requires our present age to grow up in order to read, speak, and think just as educated adults in the past did. Otherwise, we are cut off from our own roots, deprived of our own birthright, amnesiacs to our own cultural inheritance.

It has become a common saying (originated by George Santayana, though few know it) that those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it. We in the field of classical education would object to the word “condemned.” There are parts of the past we would not mind repeating: the conversations of Socrates and his pupils, the art of the Renaissance, the original performances of Shakespeare’s plays, the Constitutional Convention. Yet we agree that we must teach our students living in the confusing present a comprehensive view of the past so they may know, in Lincoln’s words, “whither we are tending.” A true classical education affords that opportunity to every young mind that undertakes this intellectual, cultural, and moral adventure.

Finally, as is consistent with the classical curriculum and manner of teaching, we take a low-tech, indeed almost no-tech, approach to teaching the fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic; Socratic inquiry and discussion; rhetoric and debate. Whereas most schools these days are throwing technology at every pedagogical problem, classical schools insist that young people must master the arts and sciences before using technology in a major way lest it become a crutch that inadequately replaces human thought. We must remember in our high-tech world that the original computer is the human mind. Calculators (in schools for decades) have rendered children and adults wholly incapable of once-common mental calculation. Spell-check has not made us better spellers. Texting has not given us a command over sentence structure. Reliance on “smartphones” has made us almost incapable of following a map. As any college professor teaching freshmen can tell you, students’ abilities to read, reason, and write about complex texts are at low ebb because young people have become almost completely dependent on technology over the last two decades.

Parents understand this. Indeed, parents who are themselves employed in the tech industry or who rely heavily on technology are those often the most insistent that children learn to think independently of computers and web-searches masking as “research.” Further, over-reliance on technology has rendered young people less able to hold their own in company and conversation. Many teenagers today can hardly look others in the eye or carry on a civilized exchange of ideas. When faced with speaking to others, today’s youth often resort to pulling out their iPhones and texting a friend or tweeting to the world (for an instant) the word “awkward.” The old way of teaching young people to thrive in society meant expecting them to shake hands, look people in the eye when speaking to them, and to take an interest in their conversation. “Multi-tasking” - texting while another person is speaking or while you are driving - is not a mark of twenty-first-century-global efficiency. It is simply a chronic case of bad manners or an act which jeopardizes the lives of others - and your own. Thus, students in a classical school will not have their

cellphones in class, nor have out their laptops pretending to do “research” while in reality “chatting” online or surfing the web. They will be required to have human conversations about profoundly human things.

### The Nuts and Bolts:

The curricular approach used begins with the rudiments of basic literacy and math skills and continues in a coherent and orderly fashion to the higher orders of knowledge, reasoning, and expression. In addition, the curriculum includes a strong civics component that will equip students to understand, articulate, and practice the principles on which this country was built, such as liberty, equality, natural rights, Constitutionalism, the rule of law, and self-government.

Classical education emphasizes the study of the liberal arts and sciences, including the humanities, math and sciences, and the fine arts, with the view that education is meant to develop the minds, hearts, bodies, and imagination of young people. Therefore, by its nature, a classical education is ordered, comprehensive, systematic, and by nature *ascending* from one level to the next.

At its core, classical education is:

*Systematic:* Adherence to a clear process allows for effective coordination of instructional resources and for measurement of student progress toward goals. Systematic study also allows the student to join what Mortimer Adler calls “the Great Conversation” – the ongoing conversation of great minds down through the ages.

*Rigorous:* To proceed through stages, students must master the expected material or skills inherent in each stage. Rigorous study develops virtue in the student. Aristotle defined virtue as the ability to act in accordance with what one knows to be right. The virtuous man, or woman, can force himself to do what he knows to be right, even when it runs against his inclinations. The classical education continually asks a student to work against his baser inclinations (laziness, or the desire to watch another half hour of TV) in order to reach a goal – mastery of a subject. <sup>4</sup>

Classical education has seen a resurgence in the past few decades, and the results have been impressive. The classical liberal arts approach has many documented successes within a broad range of school settings. These schools represent a broad range of demographics, demonstrating how classical education is proven to be effective for all learners, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, religion or socio-economic background.

## 2. Curriculum

Ascent Classical Academy offers a curriculum based in the classical liberal arts and sciences, with a strong emphasis on civic education. The academic program adopted by the school primarily follows the Hillsdale College K-12 Program Guide, a thorough framework for the K-12 program that includes course maps and class content outlines. Ascent Classical Academy has adapted this guide and re-sequenced portions of the content to align to the Colorado Academic Standards.

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<sup>4</sup> Susan Wise Bauer, *The Well-Trained Mind*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New York: WW Norton, 2009.

Our curricular approach is designed to build foundations of knowledge in the early grades.

Because children learn by building on what they already know, this curriculum benefits students with different learning abilities. The emphasis on foundational skills and rich content will enable teachers to effectively bring students with pre-existing academic problems up to grade level, and at the same time strengthen the knowledge base and challenge the academic potential of every student at grade level.

This section will focus on the following elements of our curriculum:

- E. Core Knowledge
- F. Literacy Essentials
- G. Math
- H. Science
- I. Latin
- J. Modern Foreign Language
- K. Handwriting/Cursive
- L. Fine Arts
- M. Use of Primary Source Documents
- N. Virtue Based Education
- O. The Great Conversation

### CORE KNOWLEDGE ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS SEQUENCE

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango will use the Core Knowledge sequence aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards. This is a specific, K-8 grade-by-grade core framework of common learning. Please refer to **Appendix 3** *Core Knowledge Alignment to the Colorado Content Standards* for a comprehensive review of the alignment. For direct evidence with regard to student achievement in specific classical schools that utilize Core Knowledge, please see **Appendix 4**.

In 1986, Dr. E.D. Hirsch, Jr. founded Core Knowledge (CK) based upon his idea of “cultural literacy”<sup>5</sup>: since its inception, the mission of the Core Knowledge Foundation has been to “provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them.” Core Knowledge is dedicated to the principle that every person benefits from a common knowledge base, while recognizing differing traditions and cultural contributions.

The CK Sequence has evolved from the field testing and consensus building that began in 1990. CK is the result of research into the content and structure of the highest performing elementary school systems

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<sup>5</sup> The source of this section is the Core Knowledge Foundation. *The Core Knowledge Sequence*. Charlottesville, VA. 2010.

around the world. The Core Knowledge Sequence is a grade-by-grade guide of specific topics in history, geography, literature, visual art, music, language, science and mathematics. The CK curriculum aims to achieve the following goals:

- Foster autonomous and knowledgeable citizens;
- Provide every student an equal opportunity;
- Foster community through a shared body of knowledge.

Core Knowledge philosophy holds that these goals are intertwined and dependent upon common knowledge, which enables people to communicate with fellow citizens.

The Core Knowledge Foundation website, <https://coreknowledge.org>, includes an extensive body of resources to support its sequence, freely available on its website. The Core Knowledge website includes research on the program, teacher resources, access to all student materials and readers, implementation guides, and other useful materials.

### Literacy Essentials

Beginning in kindergarten and continuing through sixth grade, Ascent Classical Academy will use the Literacy Essentials reading program, which is a multi-sensory and brain-based approach to teaching explicit phonics, reading, spelling, language arts, and composition. This program will be taught in conjunction with the Core Knowledge English/Language Arts framework.

The Literacy Essentials approach finds its lineage with Dr. Samuel Orton, a neuroscientist who researched the functioning of the human brain in learning language skills. He collaborated with teachers to combine his multi-sensory techniques with classical and Socratic instructional approaches to teaching, originally to re-establish language skills to trauma-induced brain-damaged veterans.

Today, Dr. Orton's methods are used to teach primary students. One of his last teacher- collaborators, Romalda Spalding, author of *The Writing Road to Reading* (1957), believed, as Ascent Classical Academy believes, that this method should be both to prevent and correct learning disorders, and most importantly to establish high literacy in virtually all children in the primary grades.

Literacy Essentials is an “explicit” phonics approach as defined and recommended in a Federal Compilation of Reading Research, *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, and takes a science-based approach to reading. Literacy Essentials incorporates phonics-based spelling with a rules system dating from the Webster-Oxford standardization of English spelling. It also provides phonemic/graphemic correspondences from contemporary dictionaries, enabling students to learn correct spelling as well as accepted pronunciations.

Literacy Essentials also has several tools available for introducing an informal exposure to Latin into our early grades. These resources provide for easy implementation on the part of the teacher and will enable students to start developing an increasing awareness of the Latin language, and its importance in English vocabulary and language.

Please see **Appendix 6** for an outline of the research basis of explicit phonics and the Literacy Essentials program which was built on the Riggs program.

### *LITERACY ESSENTIALS COUPLED WITH CORE KNOWLEDGE: LOVE OF READING*

At Ascent Classical Academy, we believe that reading is foundational for every subject. The activity of reading enriches vocabulary, develops speech and writing abilities, and makes knowledge acquisition possible. Our school will nurture a love of reading from kindergarten through high school graduation through our focus on reading rich and thought-provoking literature.

The use of the Literacy Essentials program helps ensure students have a strong reading foundation, and the Core Knowledge sequence, with its central focus on reading and content, will provide a rich array of reading materials and opportunities for the kinds of in-depth discussions that enhance the reading process and reading comprehension. This practice is closely aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards which emphasize critically analyzing text within the content area. Reading will be at the heart of all our students' learning, and it is our desire to create an environment where reading is natural and fluent.

Our focus on classical literature, with its content-rich vocabulary and rich portrayal of characters, will challenge our students intellectually and ethically. As students read and discuss great moral dilemmas and problems which have confronted mankind for centuries, they will learn the importance of the written word and discover its beauty. The diverse and rich literature in our classroom collections will engage all levels of readers, from kindergarten to twelfth grade. We offer readings which will challenge our students at all levels, so every student is inspired to read further and discover more.

### MATH

The study of mathematics should instill in students an ever-increasing sense of wonder and awe at the profound way in which the world displays order, pattern, and relation. Mathematics is studied not because it is first useful and then beautiful, but because it reveals the beautiful order inherent in the cosmos.<sup>6</sup>

A daily math block will be scheduled for the purpose of content mastery grouping students in K-8<sup>th</sup> grades, to address the needs of both mathematically-advanced students as well as those who struggle with mathematical concepts.

As the mathematician, astronomer, and physicist Johann Carl Friedrich Gauss observed, “*Mathematics is the queen of sciences.*” To provide a foundation in number sense and mathematical reasoning, Ascent Classical Academy adopts the Singapore program, followed by a traditional math curriculum roughly as follows. These levels represent average student groupings, though individual students will be placed according to ability:

- Kindergarten: Singapore Dimensions Math KA and KB

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<sup>6</sup> St. Jerome Curriculum Group, 2010, *The Education Plan of St. Jerome Classical School*, 15, [https://www.olwasilla.com/media/1/The\\_Educational\\_Plan\\_of\\_St\\_Jerome\\_Classical\\_School.pdf](https://www.olwasilla.com/media/1/The_Educational_Plan_of_St_Jerome_Classical_School.pdf).



- 1<sup>st</sup> Grade: Singapore Dimensions Math 1A and 2B
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade: Singapore Dimensions Math 2A and 2B
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade: Singapore Dimensions Math 3A and 3B
- 4<sup>th</sup> Grade: Singapore Dimensions Math 4A and 4B
- 5<sup>th</sup> Grade: Singapore Dimensions Math 5A and 5B
- 6<sup>th</sup> Grade: Singapore Dimensions Math 6A and 6B
- 7<sup>th</sup> Grade: Singapore Dimensions Math 7A and 7B (pre-algebra)
- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade: Algebra I
- 9<sup>th</sup> Grade: Geometry
- 10<sup>th</sup> Grade: Algebra II
- 11<sup>th</sup> Grade: Trigonometry/Pre-Calculus
- 12<sup>th</sup> Grade: Calculus I or other advanced mathematics

Depending on the mathematical foundation acquired in grades K-6, most students will begin pre-algebra concepts by 7<sup>th</sup> grade and move through the high school math sequence including Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Trigonometry/Pre-calculus, Calculus I or Statistics or suitable alternative. Students who progress through the math series more quickly may also finish Calculus II or another high-level course.

### *APPROACH TO MATH, GRADES K-7*

There are other fields in which knowledge is built on previous knowledge, but in no other field do the towers reach such heights, nor do the topmost layers rely so clearly on the bottom ones. The secret to proper teaching of mathematics lies in recognizing these levels and establishing them systematically. <sup>7</sup>

A chief aim in the study of mathematics is to understand the order and harmony inherent in the natural world as seen through its abstraction in mathematics. In elementary mathematics, this study primarily involves the study of quantities, of numbers and the relationship between numbers through arithmetic operations.

Mathematics has a core position in the grammar school curriculum for several reasons. As an abstraction of the natural world, the study of numbers often gives students a first opportunity to make the leap from concrete, measurable objects to abstract forms of understanding. That is, a number (an abstract idea) represents something real and measurable: three fingers, a dozen eggs, the ten feet to a basketball goal, the hundred yards of a football field. Further, the order and structure of the mathematics provides an excellent opportunity for the student to recognize patterns, solve problems, exercise the memory, study logical arguments, and hone reasoning skills.

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<sup>7</sup> Dr. Ron Aharoni. *Arithmetic for Parents: A Book for Grownups about Children's Mathematics*. New Jersey: World Scientific 2015.



Elementary mathematics primarily leads students through the arithmetic of numbers, beginning with whole numbers in kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grades and progressing to fractions and decimals in the 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grades. This is a marked transition that requires students to have strongly understood place value and the regrouping of numbers (borrowing and carrying). The Singapore math curriculum prepares students for this transition.

We agree with Dr. Aharoni's premise that a strong foundation in mathematics education in the early years is essential for success in the later years. By the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, students should have mastered the basic math facts of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Additionally, students should have acquired an initial understanding of the standard algorithms for multi-digit arithmetic operations and have a substantial exposure to measurement.

The Singapore Math curriculum provides students with an excellent first exposure to the foundational material of the arithmetic of whole numbers through the concrete-pictorial-abstract approach. It is characterized by incremental and explicit instruction using manipulatives, constant review, and growing abstraction. Its incremental approach provides a focus on the mastery of basic material coupled with plenty of practice, while also providing a strong introduction to procedural knowledge of more complicated arithmetic algorithms. Emphasizing the mastery of mathematical algorithms, drill, and review helps build students' confidence and skill in computations and word problems.

The Singapore Math curriculum's real strength comes with conceptual understanding. This feature makes it an excellent textbook series to use throughout the elementary grades, especially when the material shifts to fractions and decimals. Furthermore, Singapore Math provides an extended exploration (2-4 weeks) of one topic before moving to the next. This additional time allows students the opportunity to focus on the material and achieve a much deeper understanding.

This approach will establish a solid conceptual understanding beginning in the early grades and developing as the students advance. Because the curriculum will be used that most aligns with the goals of that grade level, this should minimize the need to supplement with material that is lacking in the curriculum. Ascent Classical Academy does include additional exposure to math facts in the grammar school to enhance automaticity on simple math operations. Finally, this approach will provide a solid basis in elementary mathematics for the student to transition to the abstract, upper-school mathematical subjects of algebra and geometry.

See **Appendix 6** for the research basis for Singapore Math.

### ***MATH CURRICULUM, GRADES 8-12***

As in the Grammar School, student achievement, not grade level, determines progress through the mathematics curriculum. For a description and sample curriculum outline of the math courses for the upper school, please see the math section of **Appendix 7**.

## Science

*Science is facts; just as houses are made of stone, so is science made of facts; but a pile of stones is not a house, and a collection of facts is not necessarily science.* – Jules Henri Poincaré

Although the rhetoric surrounding a classical or liberal-arts school often emphasizes the humanities, the sciences are no less important than the humanistic disciplines. Ascent Classical Academy will take a balanced approach to science education that includes direct instruction, teacher demonstrations, reading books, and experimentation. Science will be taught with an emphasis on scientific facts, including the incorporation of technical approaches to observing, describing, recording, ordering, analyzing, testing, and comparing predictions to observations.

Our teachers will provide multiple levels of instructional resources, with an emphasis on developing the literacy and vocabulary to successfully navigate increasingly complex scientific texts.

In grades K-8, Ascent Classical Academy will use the Core Knowledge science sequence. Samples and sequences of science curriculum resources, which are aligned with the Core Knowledge curriculum, are included in **Appendix 8**. For a description and curriculum outline of high school level science courses, please see **Appendix 7**.

## LATIN

*The etymology of a word would trigger lengthy discussion, often tedious for us as adolescents but abiding as we became adults...as young girls we were peppered with phrases of philosophical power from the ancients, and our father would show how these truths and lessons were alive and valid today.*<sup>8</sup> – Martha Wheelock and Deborah Wheelock Taylor

Learning Latin affords students a critical knowledge of English grammar and a basis for studying other foreign languages. Since over half of English words derive from Latin, students will considerably improve their English vocabulary and "word sense." Words used in everyday English have long histories. Knowing those histories, which may involve multiple languages, equips students with a greater command over those words. The English word *curriculum*, for example, contains the root word *cur* derived from the Latin verb *currere*, which refers to running through a track or course.

By learning Latin, students will learn English and other languages and use English and other languages more easily because of their deeper understanding of the architecture of language. They will expand their knowledge of vocabulary and comprehension. A foundational understanding of Latin will provide greater structure for students in grammar, literacy, writing, and comprehension, as well as provide an invaluable foundation for clear and precise thought. Most importantly, students will experience first-hand the beauty of the language.

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<sup>8</sup> Martha Wheelock and Deborah Wheelock Taylor, daughters of classicist Frederic Wheelock, *Wheelock's Latin*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition.

Intensive study of the grammar of language will instruct students in how to order those words into clear sentences and basic units of thought, and move into more complex sentences expressing more complex thoughts. Further, the frequent occurrences of Latin in the English language (such as *per diem*, *quid pro quo*, *ante bellum*, *e.g.*, *i.e.*, *status quo*, *et cetera*) will be clearly understood by graduates of our program. Finally, students in the high school will begin to be able to read ancient passages and works written in Latin that are the foundation of our literary, historical, and political tradition. For example, students who complete the normal Latin track will be able to read at least some Virgil in the original when they read the *Aeneid* in translation in the freshman classical literature course.

Students will be encouraged to take the appropriate level of the National Latin Exam.

Latin Roots will be introduced in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades using the following program:

*English from the Roots Up*, Volume 1, Joegil K. Lundquist

*English from the Roots Up*, Volume 2, Joegil K. Lundquist and Jeanne L. Lundquist

Students will receive explicit Latin instruction in the 6<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grades.

Grades 6 through 8 will use *Wheelock's Latin* by Frederic Wheelock and Richard LaFleur. *Wheelock's Latin* uses a deductive approach to the study of language, explicitly focused on the mastery of grammatical rules.

Grades 6 through 8:

Latin 1a: *Wheelock's Latin*, chapters 1-8

Latin 1b: *Wheelock's Latin*, chapters 9-19

Latin II: *Wheelock's Latin*, chapters 20-32

A student who completes Latin II in junior high is ready for Latin III in high school. This series is for junior high school students only.

Grades 9 and up:

*Wheelock's Latin* uses a deductive approach to the study of language, explicitly focused on the mastery of grammatical rules. This curriculum is appropriate for the high school level.

Latin III: *Wheelock's Latin*, finish book, move to translations (The Gallic Wars, Aeneid, works of Cicero)

Latin IV and beyond: Latin Literature.

The minimum Latin requirement for all students is to complete one year of Latin during High School. Students who complete the normal junior high school sequence will complete Latin III in their freshman year and will then choose whether to continue with Latin or take a modern language. Students who are

struggling in English will not begin the Latin sequence until they are proficient in their English skills. Once they are proficient, they will begin the Latin series.

Please see **Appendix 9** for further support for teaching Latin.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

As resources permit, Ascent Classical Academy may offer exposure to a modern language in the early grades, as these are the ages at which children most readily pick up languages. Modern foreign languages will also be offered at the high school level, in addition to Latin, as the school grows. To the extent possible, the course will be taught mostly in the modern language, preferably by a native or near-native speaker.

## HANDWRITING/CURSIVE: LITERACY ESSENTIALS

*... the beauty and nobility, the august mission and destiny, of human handwriting.*<sup>9</sup> – George Bernard Shaw

Starting in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, students will learn to write in cursive, which is a part of the Literacy Essentials. The benefits include the following:

Handwriting trains the brain. “The discipline of learning to write a legible script is as much an opportunity for character training as it is an exercise in handwriting. The physical act of writing requires focus, discipline, patience, attention to detail and accuracy – priceless skills for the young child at the beginning of his academic career . . . Cursive improves neural connections in the brain and is faster and easier to learn than printing.”<sup>10</sup>

- **Cursive improves the continuity and fluidity of thought in written communication.** Connecting letters increases the speed of writing. Increased speed improves attention span and the ability to excel academically. The connectivity of letters is pleasing to children. They feel the flow of the letters and they sense the delight of the movement.
- **Cursive improves neural connections in the brain.** Cursive improves the dynamic interplay of the left and right hemispheres of the brain. The physiological benefits of the release and control (up and down) movements of cursive help build pathways in the brain while improving mental effectiveness.
- **Cursive graphically illustrates the development of fine motor skills.** Handwriting is a frozen manifestation of the complex development of the brain. Few outward expressions convey a well-educated individual better than the ability to communicate thoughts and ideas effectively through the written word. Nice penmanship is like a business suit for your letter, it makes a good impression. Cursive is more individualistic and expressive than printing; it’s an art in itself.
- **Learning cursive can train self-control in ways that other methods of writing do not.** Cursive writing is a fluid, pleasurable kinesthetic exercise that helps ground student’s energies.

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<sup>9</sup> “Pygmalion Quotes.” Goodreads. Accessed July 28, 2018.

<https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/184399-pygmalion>.

<sup>10</sup> “Scope & Sequence of Learning.” Frequently Asked Questions About Cursive. New American Cursive Penmanship. Accessed January 29, 2022. <https://www.newamericancursive.com/faq>.

- Cursive can be particularly effective for students with dyslexia or dysgraphia. It can also aid in preventing the reversal and inversion of letters.<sup>11</sup>

Please see **Appendix 10** for further support for teaching cursive.

## FINE ARTS

Students at Ascent Classical Academy receive instruction in the fine arts. Studying music and the visual arts will inculcate love of the beautiful and equip students with important core knowledge about their culture. In keeping with classical education, Ascent Classical will teach music and art largely through the study of works and technique of the great masters, including Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Raphael, Michelangelo, and Monet.

### *Music*

This is why we teach music:

- i. Not because we expect you to major in music;
- ii. Not because we expect you to play or sing all your life;
- iii. BUT - so you will be better trained and become well-versed in an art form that is universal and timeless;
- iv. So you will recognize the beauty in music, and the way it expresses various emotions, sentiments, and dreams such as sadness, love, and triumph;
- v. So you will see how music shapes the culture of a people; and
- vi. So you will have more love, more compassion, more gentleness, more good - in short, more life.<sup>12</sup>

The goal of music instruction is to engage and enrich the child's understanding of music and deepen his or her ability to make and evaluate music.

In music, students will be exposed to a wide array of music from jazz to orchestral music as well as vocal music that includes songs from the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods. They will learn about composers and their music, the elements of music, and vocal ranges.

In addition to learning about music history and theory, students will also have the opportunity to perform music. The school may supplement the Core Knowledge music curriculum with the use of a blended approach of the following three methodologies: the Kodály method (language-based approach to teaching musical performance, including pitch and sight reading), the Orff-Schulwerk process (instrumental-based, including clapping, singing, dancing, and keeping a beat), and the Dalcroze approach (movement-based

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<sup>11</sup> "Why Teach Cursive Handwriting." Frequently Asked Questions About Cursive. New American Cursive Penmanship. Accessed January 29, 2022. <https://www.newamericancursive.com/faq>.

<sup>12</sup> "Why Teach Music?" Pennsylvania Music Educators Association. Accessed January 31, 2022, <https://www.pmea.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/whyteach.pdf>.

approach - eurhythmics, including rhythmic movement, aural training, and physical, vocal, and instrumental improvisation). Please see **Appendix 11** for a description of these methods. Our current curriculum outlines are based on a music teacher whose primary background is in the Kodály method, but any of these three methods provides a solid approach to the teaching music. The approach will depend on teacher preference.

The curriculum will meet or exceed the Colorado Academic Standards. Students will learn how to read and notate music, develop the ability to analyze and describe music, sing and play music, and draw cultural connections between music and other disciplines. An outline of the music curriculum, which is based on the Core Knowledge sequence, is included **Appendix 7 and 12**.

### *Visual Arts*

*Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we find it not.*<sup>13</sup> – Ralph Waldo Emerson

In the Visual Arts, students will learn about the elements of art, sculpture, portraits, still life, landscapes, photography, architecture, expression and abstraction, works of art from long ago, Greek and Roman Art, Medieval Art, the Renaissance, Impressionism, and Post impressionism. They will be exposed to Islamic art and architecture, African art, Chinese art, Japanese art, and American artwork. In addition to solidifying their understanding of art history and theory, students will also have the opportunity to do studio art, imitating the great artists and their techniques.

### **HISTORY: ORIGINAL SOURCE DOCUMENTS**

The classical approach to the study of history requires students to read and wrestle with original sources written by the men and women who made history or who offered the keenest contemporary insights. This kind of reading, though difficult, as it is written in the style of the time, is far more real and rewarding than the often-sterile narrative found in textbooks. Moreover, as is true of the present, the plans and ideas of how to achieve human freedom and happiness were contested. Students need to read the great debates of the past and study the results of political decisions in order to know how the world has come to be as it is--as well as the virtues and principles needed to build and defend civilization. Further, it is simply chronological arrogance to think that the philosophers and leaders of the past have nothing to teach us in the present. We want our students to join the ongoing conversation taking place across time. To do this, students need to study the original sources of history.

Examples of primary source documents include:

- Plato's *Apology* (on the trial of Socrates)
- The Declaration of Independence
- Private letters between John and Abigail Adams
- Frederick Douglass's *Narrative*

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<sup>13</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *ESSAY XI: Art*, from *Essays: First Series*, 1841.

- The Lincoln-Douglas Debates
- Diary of Anne Frank – experiences of Jews in World War II
- Speeches of Winston Churchill

Please see **Appendix 13** for a further discussion of the use of original source documents.

## CHARACTER AND VIRTUE EDUCATION

As outlined in the previous section, a set of core virtues will be adopted school-wide to build students' moral vocabulary and point them to the character traits necessary to live a good and happy life. Ascent Classical Academy will not have a separate program for the teaching of virtue. Instead, character education and moral culture are the foundation of the school and will be infused throughout the curriculum.

Many schools today talk of “social-emotional learning,” which is an idea classical education has always taken as an essential element to cultivate wisdom and virtue, both needed for people to live well. Ascent Classical's approach to inculcating virtue is not a separate program but firmly integrated into all subjects and grade levels.

The English word “character” is derived from the Greek *kharaktēr*, which means ‘engraved mark,’ or ‘etching.’ Excellence of character is the sum of a person's ethical and moral qualities. Good character requires continual practice. It is the foundation of self-government and necessary for the maintenance of a free republic. The founders of our nation had a deep understanding of this principle and its necessity:

*“No government can continue good but under the control of the people . . . their minds are to be informed by education what is right and what wrong; to be encouraged in habits of virtue and to be deterred from those of vice.”<sup>14</sup>*

*“There is no truth more thoroughly established, than that there exists... in nature an indissoluble union between virtue and happiness.”<sup>15</sup>*

*“To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without any virtue in the people, is a chimerical idea.”<sup>16</sup>*

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<sup>14</sup> “Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 10 December 1819.” Founders Online. National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-15-02-0240>.

<sup>15</sup> “First Inaugural Address: Final Version, 30 April 1789.” Founders Online. National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-02-02-0130-0003>. This is from George Washington's first inaugural address.

<sup>16</sup> “Judicial Powers of the National Government, [20 June] 1788.” Founders Online. National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-11-02-0101>. This is from a speech James Madison made at the Virginia Constitutional Convention.

Classical education encourages this training in the virtues and the attainment of good character. With an understanding that this comes only through long training, practice, and habit, Ascent Classical Academy considers instruction in the virtues to be an essential part of a sound education.

### THE GREAT CONVERSATION

Ascent Classical Academy will pursue *The Great Conversation*, as outlined by Robert Maynard Hutchins<sup>17</sup>, which introduces *The Great Ideas* series. The school will strive to cultivate a student body capable of having an ongoing conversation about what the greatest human minds have discovered and thought, inspiring students to pursue the conversation for the rest of their lives.

The following great idea topics are outlined in *The Syntopicon*<sup>18</sup>:

Angel - Animal - Aristocracy - Art - Astronomy - Beauty - Being - Case - Chance - Change - Citizen - Constitution - Courage - Custom and Convention - Definition - Democracy - Desire - Dialectic - Duty - Education - Element - Emotion - Eternity - Evolution - Experience - Family - Fate - Form - God - Good and Evil - Government - Habit - Happiness - History - Honor - Hypothesis - Idea - Immortality - Induction - Infinity - Judgment - Justice - Knowledge - Labor - Language - Law - Liberty - Life and Death - Logic - Love - Man - Mathematics - Matter - Mechanics - Medicine - Memory and Imagination - Metaphysics - Mind - Monarchy - Nature - Necessity and Contingency - Oligarchy - One and Many - Opinion - Opposition - Philosophy - Physics - Pleasure and Pain - Poetry - Principle - Progress - Prophecy - Prudence - Punishment - Quality - Quantity - Reasoning - Relation - Religion - Revolution - Rhetoric - Same and Other - Science - Sense - Sign and Symbol - Sin - Slavery - Soul - Space - State - Temperance - Theology - Time - Truth - Tyranny - Universal and Particular - Virtue and Vice - War and Peace - Wealth - Will - Wisdom - World

A list of representative books which will be studied at Ascent is included in **Appendix 14**.

### Guiding Principles for Curriculum

#### *GRAMMAR SCHOOL (K-6)*

Please see **Appendix 12** for the scope and sequence of the Grammar School program.

#### MODERN LANGUAGE

As resources permit, Ascent will offer a modern foreign language in Grades 1-5 in the lower school, to the extent possible taught entirely in the foreign language by a native or near-native speaker.

#### LATIN

The study of Latin will begin in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Students will be taught by a trained classicist.

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<sup>17</sup> Hutchins, Robert M. *The Great Conversation*. The Encyclopaedia Britannica Blog. Accessed January 31, 2022. [http://blogs.britannica.com/wp-content/pdf/The\\_Great\\_Conversation.pdf](http://blogs.britannica.com/wp-content/pdf/The_Great_Conversation.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Adler, Mortimer J. ed. *The Syntopicon: An Index to the Great Ideas*. Vols 1 and 2 of *Great Books of the Western World*. Chicago:Encyclopaedia Britannica.1992.



The rationale behind starting a modern language in the very early years and then beginning Latin in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade is that oral language comprehension, which will be the focus of instruction in the modern language in Grades 1-5, is well-suited for younger children. Latin is grammatically intense. By the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, students will have already studied a significant amount of English grammar (including Greek and Latin roots) and will be well prepared to begin the study of Latin.

## ENGLISH LITERACY

Students will build a strong foundation of literacy, including spelling, grammar, reading, immersion in rich vocabulary, and writing. The teachers of all disciplines will emphasize correct speaking and writing.

Ascent will provide a robust literacy program to work with students (particularly those coming from other schools) who require additional help in reading, spelling, and particularly writing. This will include special education students, so-called “gray area” students who do not qualify for special education, and students who have not reached grade level in reading.

The literacy program will lead with phonics. These lessons will be conducted largely during times in the student’s schedule that do not conflict with core courses, such as the modern language section.

## MATH

The daily math block will meet the needs of both mathematically-competent students as well as struggling learners.

## CIVIC EDUCATION

Civic education, teaching concerning the political order and the individual’s rights and responsibilities in that order, begins, of course, in the elementary school. Students will learn through American history the basic facts that led to the creation of the American republic and about Americans’ subsequent efforts to maintain liberty and justice under the rule of law. Further, they will be taught the first principles of our constitutional order, including understanding the meaning of national symbols and the Flag Code.

## MORAL LITERACY

Ascent will cultivate good character in its students by maintaining order and decorum in the classrooms, holding students accountable for their assignments and personal conduct, and explicitly teaching them the fundamentals of good character.

A set of core virtues will be adopted school-wide whose purpose is to build students’ moral vocabulary and thereby point them to the character traits necessary to live a good and happy life. As described earlier in our educational philosophy section, the virtues will be explained to students in detail, and the discipline and decorum of the school will be based upon the practice of these virtues. Virtues are not “values.” Virtues are excellences in character, rooted in nature, whose cultivation is necessary to live well and happily in civil society. Virtues are also a midpoint between extremes. As an example, courage is a virtue, and a midpoint between cowardice, and being brash.

In addition to cultivating a moral culture that will pervade the classrooms and the halls and thereby create an environment of “positive peer pressure,” the school will teach character through the curriculum.

Teaching the great stories of the Western and American literary tradition, the biographies of heroes and the achievements of peoples, and the art and music of our tradition provides guidance and inspiration in the pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness. The moral sense of young people naturally attaches itself to the good—as long as the good is clearly shown to them and admired. Without such examples to admire, young people in our culture too easily become cynical and jaded. By witnessing the great moral efforts of human beings, the students will expand their intellects and enrich their souls.

## CULTURAL LITERACY AND MEMORY

Achieving full literacy entails both the ability to read and to acquire knowledge of the core elements of our cultural heritage. To be able to think, people must have things to think about. To this end, Ascent Classical will embrace the principle of cultural literacy. Cultural literacy refers to the fundamental articles of knowledge necessary to read, speak, and write in any field of inquiry and to communicate with fellow citizens.

Just as calculators will not be used in teaching mathematics, so the attitude that “students don’t need to know facts...they shouldn’t rely on rote memory...they can always look it up” will be anathema. The minds of our students will be storehouses well-stocked with knowledge, which will be ordered and re-supplied daily.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL (7-8)

In the middle school, students will continue to work on the programs begun in grammar school, while going into greater depth. They will now have a class schedule of seven periods, including the four core courses of literature, history, math, and science, as well as Latin, physical education, and art/music. Please see **Appendix 12** for the scope and sequence of the middle school program.

The students will have an increased capacity for logic in their thinking, speaking, and writing. The junior high school presents much greater challenges in student behavior. To guide students through the storm of adolescence, the habits of *self-government* will be taught and reinforced.

## LATIN

Students will continue their study of Latin.

## ENGLISH LITERACY

Students will continue to build strong literacy skills.

As in the grammar school, Ascent will provide a robust literacy program in the middle school grades to work with students (particularly those coming from other schools) who require additional help in reading, spelling, and particularly writing. This will include special education students, so-called “gray area” students who do not qualify for special education, and students who have not reached grade level in reading.

Students will also continue studying grammar and continue in the writing program using the Institute for Excellence in Writing program (IEW).

The literacy program will, as in the grammar school, lead with phonics. These lessons will be conducted largely during times in the student's schedule that do not conflict with core courses and may be substituted for an elective or other non-core course as determined by the headmaster. This will most likely occur in the Latin section. Once the student is proficient in English skills, the study of Latin will begin.

Other avenues may also be used to immerse students in language, such as listening to books on tape, but never at the expense of the instruction in phonics-based reading and spelling.

## MATH

As in the grammar school, the math block will meet the needs of both mathematically-competent students as well as struggling learners.

## CULTURAL LITERACY

Cultural literacy remains a strong priority in the middle school as students are introduced to new topics and new books. For example, the students will not have yet studied the World Wars and will have to learn the "grammar" and basic facts of those important events, even as they are able to enter into a deeper level of inquiry about the causes and consequences than they would have been able to in the grammar school. Moreover, there will always be new students to the school who have not directly studied the basics of a given subject, and young people (indeed all of us) have a tendency to forget things. Therefore review is always important.

Teachers can never underestimate "what our Xth graders don't know." Consequently, teachers at all levels must ensure that students are directly taught the basic vocabulary of all subjects. This will enable students to understand the many references to concrete articles of knowledge that any given author assumes of his audience. Teachers, too, must often "look things up" when preparing lessons.

Core Knowledge will remain the curriculum for the core and elective courses through the eighth grade. Nonetheless, certain aspects of the Core Knowledge sequence in these grades may be altered or augmented in keeping with the practice of many schools using that curriculum in the middle school. For example, the literature part of the sequence may be enriched with more books, though the vast majority of literary works in the sequence will be read.

## CIVIC EDUCATION

In the eighth grade, students will begin a more complete study of the Constitution of the United States than is called for by the Core Knowledge Sequence. In fact, this portion of the history sequence will be made more robust by allotting more time for the Constitution and by interpreting the remainder of the eighth-grade history course in light of Founding principles. Considerable attention will be devoted to the manner of citizen the Founders envisioned and consequently to the rights and responsibilities required for successful self-government.

## MORAL EDUCATION

Just as the students' civic education will dwell on the principles of self-government, so the prevailing theme for teaching good character will be that of individual self-government.

To this end, the headmaster or other designated administrator will pay special attention to the middle school students: both in order to ensure proper discipline in the school and to teach the positive aspects of character. Separate lectures on the core virtues may be offered and required.

### *HIGH SCHOOL (9-12)*

The high school will build on the foundations laid in the grammar and middle schools. Students will be able to read much more demanding books, think more clearly about complex problems, and speak and write more effectively. In high school humanities classes (English and history), students will explore the classics of the Western and American tradition. In sciences and mathematics, students will learn the principal branches of those inquiries into the natural world. In the fine arts, students will continue to study classics of music, painting, and sculpture, while working on their own performance. In addition, foreign languages will be required. Character will be engrained in students by their studying and practicing the virtues.

The objective of the high school curriculum will be to explore issues and texts intensively and in depth. The focus for teaching literature will be the great books and the classics using the Socratic method. History will be taught mainly through the use of primary source documents—artifacts, documents, recordings or other sources of information created at the time under study. In the high school, for example, teachers of American History will introduce students to historical works that contributed to the formation of American society and culture such as George Washington’s *Farewell Address* and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s *Letter from Birmingham Jail*. Such primary sources will bring history to life and equip students with essential insight, and research and analytical skills. Students will learn a true account of the times through the eyes and words of those who experienced such events and helped shape history.

High school mathematics and the sciences will offer rigorous training in the fundamentals and theories of these disciplines. Students will receive extensive training in analytical thinking and the scientific method. High school students will take four years of science, beginning with the fundamentals of biology in the freshman year, chemistry in the sophomore year and physics in the junior year. Elective courses in mathematics and the sciences will be added in subsequent years as the school grows and as it better understands the needs of the student body. Textbooks will be used as a resource, not as the basis of the curriculum. Teaching in the sciences will likely include student exposure to reports of original research, observations or ideas such as Galileo’s *The Starry Messenger*, Sir Isaac Newton’s *Principia* or Euclid’s *Geometry*.

Please see **Appendix 7** for a description and sample syllabi of the courses offered in the High School.

The following two charts provide an overview of the High School curriculum and graduation requirements:



## Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools High School Course Map

Discipline	Ninth Grade	Tenth Grade	Eleventh Grade	Twelfth Grade
<b>English</b>	Classical Literature (Greece and Rome) *	British Literature *	American Literature *	Modern Literature *
<b>History</b>	Western Civ I (Greece and Rome) *	Western Civ II (Medieval, Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment) *	American History (Colonial America, American Revolution, 19th Century) *	Modern European History (1789 - present) *
<b>Science</b>	Biology I *	Chemistry I *	Physics I	Biology II, Chemistry II, or Physics II
<b>Math</b>	Algebra I *, Geometry *, or Algebra II *	Geometry *, Algebra II*, or Pre-Calculus	Algebra II *, Pre-Calculus, Calculus I	Pre-Calculus, Calculus I, Calculus II or Probability/Statistics
<b>Composition, Civics, and Philosophy</b>	Composition (1 semester)/Logic and Rhetoric *	Elective (P.E. requirement) *	American Government (1 semester) *  Moral Philosophy (1 semester) *	20th Century American History (1 semester) *  Economics (1 semester) *
<b>Music/Fine Arts</b>	Music *, Art	Music, Art	Music, Art	Music, Art
<b>Language</b>	Latin *	Latin or Modern Language	Latin or Modern Language	Latin or Modern Language
<b>Elective</b>	P.E. (1 semester) *, Open Elective	P.E., Open Elective	P.E., Open Elective	P.E., Open Elective

Unless otherwise noted, courses are one year.

Student achievement, not grade level, determines progress through the mathematics curriculum.

An asterisk (\*) indicates a course required for graduation.

A minimum of one semester of music is required / two years total in the fine arts.



## Ascent Classical Academy Graduation Requirements

	9-R	ACA
<b>English</b> Core courses: Classical Literature (2 semesters), British Literature (2 semesters), American Literature (2 semesters), and Modern Literature (2 semesters).	4	4
<b>Math</b> In addition to meeting the credit requirement, students must successfully complete Geometry (2 semesters) and Algebra II (2 semesters).	4	4
<b>Science</b> In addition to meeting the credit requirement, students must successfully complete Biology (2 semesters), Chemistry (2 semesters), and Physics (2 semesters).	3	4
<b>History</b> Core courses: Western Civ I (2 semesters), Western Civ II (2 semesters), American History (2 semesters), and Modern History (2 semesters),	3 (social studies)	4
<b>Government</b> Core course: American Government (2 semesters)	-	1
<b>Economics</b> Core course: Economics (1 semester)	-	.5
<b>Foreign Language</b> In addition to meeting the credit requirement, students must successfully complete one credit in Latin (1 semester).	2	3
<b>Composition/Rhetoric</b> Core course: Composition (1 semester) and Rhetoric (1 semester). Depending upon the student's readiness for the standard course, some students may be required to take as a prerequisite a one-semester basic composition course. Composition will transition to Logic in later years.	-	1
<b>Moral and Political Philosophy</b> Core courses: Moral Philosophy (1 semester) and Political Philosophy (1 semester)	-	1
<b>Fine Arts</b>	-	1
<b>Physical Education/Health</b>	1.5	1
<b>Electives</b>	9.5	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>

- Seventh or Eighth Grade students enrolled in a High School Latin II class or higher may receive High School credit. However, all students must complete at least 3 credits of foreign language while in High School, and one of those must be Latin.
- All students are required to complete the core courses.
- In addition to required coursework, all students are required to:
- Complete a senior Thesis with a grade of C- or higher AND
- Score either at least 500 on the math section of the SAT or at least 50 on the AFQT (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery).
- At the discretion of the headmaster, a student may be required to complete remedial courses in order to graduate.
- The headmaster has the authority to waive any graduation requirement except those required by law.
- Once enrolled full-time, a student will not receive credit from any other institution without the prior approval of the headmaster.
- Any student who attends the school part-time, then becomes a full-time student, must have the headmaster's approval to graduate.

## ENGLISH

The curriculum will include ancient Greece and Rome, British, American, and modern literature. A sample outline of the authors to be covered is included in **Appendix 7**.

The books will be thoroughly read and discussed, with the principle of “less is more” so that students will have a deep knowledge of, for example, two or three Greek plays or two or three Shakespearean plays, not a superficial knowledge of ten of them. The slower pace will challenge the stronger students to become more critical readers and allow the weaker students to keep up with the discussion.

In literature, the Socratic method will govern most discussions. The Socratic method is a systematic questioning of the students about key passages and themes that requires students to think carefully about the story and to consider the insights that story offers into human nature.

Great literature will be seen as moral. The decisions characters must make in certain settings and crises that are either virtuous or vicious, just or unjust, and that consequently leads either to greatness or infamy, happiness or misery. Literature will be discussed as it has been written. Students will come to understand love and hate, victory and defeat, justice and injustice, beauty and ugliness, temperance and intemperance, courage and cowardice, glory and shame, and magnanimity and pusillanimity—by reading and wrestling with the great stories and characters of Western literature. As a result, students will gain insights into their own complex human souls and hopefully be inspired to be great as well as good.

The books to be read in the literature curriculum will be chosen by the headmaster in coordination with the Director of Curriculum and Instruction.

## COMPOSITION

In addition to the attention given to writing in literature classes, the school will require at least a semester of formal composition in the ninth grade or in subsequent grades for students new to the school.

The class will solidify students’ knowledge of grammar, seek to fix the problems that frequently mar students’ writing, and offer an opportunity to put together the elements of writing they have acquired throughout their literature, Latin, and grammar study in the lower and junior high schools.

Foremost, the class will teach students how to write a compelling “thesis-driven essay.” This is a formal paper that makes a point and effectively employs language, marshals evidence, and orders an argument to make that point. This class may also assist with the writing of papers from other classes.

As the school grows, these writing skills will be developed in the earlier grades using the Institute for Excellence in Writing (IEW) program.

## HISTORY

*“To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain always a child. What does a person's life amount to without the historical consciousness that weaves one's life into the life of earlier generations?”*  
- Cicero



Students will take four years of history, plus a year of American government, and a semester of economics.

Though textbooks may be used to give students the background narrative of any historical period, the course will mostly be taught through the study of primary source documents.

The specific curriculum will be determined by the headmaster and Director of Curriculum and Instruction. The sequence will adhere to the guidelines set forth in the state standards, ensuring that students receive one credit in both U.S. and world history and half credits in both economics and government.

The overarching principle governing the study of history will be human beings' attempts to achieve both freedom and justice in a constitutional regime, in short, self-government. Further, history will explore humanities' great conflicts and achievements. A great deal of attention will be given to the Western and American political, religious, intellectual, cultural, and economic traditions. At stake are the questions:

- i. "What is the just regime?"
- ii. "What is the good citizen?"
- iii. "What is human happiness?"
- iv. "What peoples have achieved the most and why?"
- v. "What leads to the rise of a given people?"
- vi. "What leads to decline?"
- vii. "What have been the effects of good and great people (heroes) on history?"
- viii. "What have been the effects of bad people (villains)?"
- ix. "What did it mean to be a Greek?" "A Roman?" "A Medieval man/woman?" "A Renaissance man or woman?"
- x. "What is Enlightenment?"
- xi. "What is Awakening?"
- xii. "What is an American, this new man?"

## SCIENCE

Students will take four years of science in the high school, two of which will have a laboratory component.

Students should gain a genuine understanding of the physical world and be able to explain such complex scientific ideas and processes as genetic transmission, chemical bonding, atomic theory, and force. Teaching in the sciences will include student exposure to reports of original research, observations or ideas such as Galileo's *The Starry Messenger*, or Sir Isaac Newton's *Principia*.

As with mathematics, the classes will be based upon the study of one branch of science per year, the usual sequence being biology, chemistry, physics. To graduate, students must complete the science sequence through chemistry.

The fourth year will be reserved for higher levels of science such as second-year biology, chemistry, or physics. Other semester-long electives, such as astronomy, may be offered as well. With the permission of the headmaster, students may “double-up” in the sciences earlier than the senior year.

## MATHEMATICS

Students will take four years of mathematics in the high school.

Students will be placed in math courses by ability.

As in the grammar and middle schools, most math classes in the high school will not allow the use of calculators. There may be exceptions in the higher levels (beyond Algebra II), provided the students do not rely on calculators as a substitute for fully understanding the principles.

As with the other subjects, math will be taught in a classical manner. In addition to acquiring the necessary understanding of math facts, students will also learn the real math behind the algorithm, as opposed to simply performing the various operations without understanding what those operations really mean. This theoretical and conceptual approach, which was also the basis of Singapore Math in the earlier grades, forms a solid math foundation.

Beyond the level of pre-algebra, mathematics will be taught in sequence, with each year given to a particular branch of math: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Pre-calculus, and Calculus. Students may be allowed to “double-up” in math with the approval of the headmaster.

In order to ensure that students have actually mastered each level of math, the school may require a performance examination to be administered at the end of the year to determine which students may pass to the next level. Algebra I is the lowest level math course for which high school credit will be given.

## GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

At a minimum, students will complete a one-year course in American government.

Civic education is fundamental to the mission of the classical school. The government course will normally be taught in the junior year, while other electives in political philosophy may be offered as well in future years.

The government class in high school will be centered on the Constitution. Since the students in high school will be at a much higher reading level, the class will, in addition to the Constitution, read supporting documents such as debates from the Constitutional Convention, *The Federalist Papers*, *The Anti-Federalist Papers*, important Supreme Court cases, selections from Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, and the speeches of American political figures reflecting upon the Constitution.

Particular attention will be given to the original intent of the Framers of the Constitution by seeking to understand why they created a federal government with a separation of powers; limits upon the executive; a bicameral legislature with different terms and only one branch derived directly from the people; a system

known as federalism with national, state, and local governments having different spheres of action; a list of *enumerated* powers; a bill of rights, and so on. The class will seek to understand the Founders' views and explore the extent to which modern American history has been the attempt to get out from under the rule of law provided in the Constitution.

As in the history classes, a textbook may be used, particularly in order to familiarize students with the nuts and bolts of American politics (how a bill becomes a law, the party system, etc.), but the course as a whole will be taught through original sources.

## THE FINE ARTS

In high school, students will continue to study and perform in the arts, most likely in elective courses. Music will include performance courses such as choir, band, and orchestra (once the budget allows). Art will include both studio art and art history.

At a minimum, students will complete two semester courses in the fine arts, one of which must be music.

As in the K-8 curriculum, effort will be made to teach students how the arts provide transcendent and timeless lessons to human beings. They are both a reflection of the philosophy and ethos of a given age, as well as the striving of human beings to reach the realm of the beautiful. While technique and composition in either music performance or painting and sculpture are important matters to study, students will also explore the overall theme and meaning of any work of art or music. For example, what does the Sistine Chapel Ceiling tell us not only about Michelangelo's or Renaissance technique but also about the nature of man? What insight do we gain about the human spirit from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony?

In keeping with the spirit of liberal education, students will be taught the fine arts largely through the works of the best masters, including Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Raphael, Michelangelo, and Monet. Students will study the techniques of these artists to gain an insight into the creation of great works of art. This type of study will help students assimilate some of the techniques learned from the masters into their own work in the performance music and studio art classes.

To this end Ascent Classical will hold an annual "Evening of the Arts" where students are able to showcase their best artwork which they have completed during the year.

In music, students will be exposed to a wide array of music from jazz to orchestral music as well as vocal music that includes songs from the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods. They will learn about composers and their music, the elements of music, and vocal ranges.

## ECONOMICS

Students will take one semester of economics, typically in the senior year.

The economics class will explore the basic principles of free markets: supply and demand, the division of labor, pricing, and incentives. Aspects of both micro and macroeconomics will be taught. The course may employ a textbook but will not be driven by a textbook approach. The fundamental idea behind the class is

that man is an economic being: he is disposed to invent, build, and sell things in order to better his environment and improve his lot in life.

The relations between the market and the political regime will be explored, taking up the important question of what human efforts and enterprises should be performed by government and which should be performed by the free market.

Just as in government class, the perspective of the Founders, and in this instance the era of the Founding Fathers (classical theory), will serve as the guiding light of the class. Readings will include selections from Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations: Books I-III*, as well as more recent books such as Henry Hazlitt's *Economics in One Lesson* and selections from Thomas Sowell's *Basic Economics*.

## **LATIN / MODERN LANGUAGE**

Students will be required to take at least one more year of Latin in the high school, typically in the first year. After successfully completing Latin 1a, 1b, and II in grades 6-8, students are ready for Latin III in their freshman year of high school. (The Latin teacher will recommend placement based on a student's progress in Junior High.) This preparation will provide an opportunity for students to read some of their texts both in English and be able to read selected passages in the original Latin in their freshman Classical Literature course (for example, the first 32 lines of *Vergil's Aeneid*). This will give students a window into the beauty of the Latin language.

Students are required to take at least 3 years of a foreign language in high school, and will either continue in the Latin sequence after their freshman year, or take a modern language elective.

If a new student enrolls at the high school level with no Latin background, the student will be required to complete Latin I, and will have the option of continuing in Latin or taking a modern language to complete the high school foreign language graduation requirement.

## **MORAL PHILOSOPHY**

Students will take a semester-long class introducing them to the formal study of morality and right conduct.

The basic premise of this class is that man is a moral being: man, despite passions and appetites that often take him down the road to ruin, has a conscience (or a moral sense) that urges him to live virtuously. Indeed, living virtuously is the source of happiness, and happiness the reward of living virtuously.

In order to teach this primary lesson, the class will lay the philosophical foundation for living virtuously and show instances of virtue in action.

The class will not use a textbook but work through sources that shed light on the desirability of right living or the consequences of wrong living. While some of the readings may be from works of philosophy, others will be from literature and history. The purpose will be to show students how human beings attain both happiness and respectability when they live according to conscience and the highest ideas of the good life and how the anarchy of passion and appetite does not lead to genuine happiness or human excellence.

Students will see through noble examples in literature and history how human beings practice the virtues. They will also learn how virtue should be the governing force in human relations, whether in friendship, marriage, fatherhood and motherhood, leadership, business, politics, and so on.

The end and purpose of the course is to teach young people how to delight in doing the good and to arm them with the arguments needed to combat the moral relativist sophisms of our culture and the modern age.

## ELECTIVES

Electives may be offered in subjects other than those above. It is likely that students will wish to take electives in modern foreign languages, art, music, and technology.

Students may decide to continue in Latin beyond the year requirement for graduation, or they may study foreign languages as the school is able provide those teachers. The school will seek out teachers who are fluent in foreign languages, as the majority of the class will be conducted in the language being studied. As soon as possible, students will be required to read in the language, with the intent of being able to translate classic children's stories (at least) by the end of the first year. In subsequent years, the reading of literature in the foreign language will be a significant part of the course.

## SENIOR THESIS

The senior thesis will be looked upon as a culmination of a classical school education and the rite of passage to a life of virtue and self-government.

Every senior will write and deliver orally a senior thesis on a topic of his or her choosing that emerges from the curriculum. A satisfactory performance on the senior thesis will be required for graduation.

Because the assignment is writing intensive, it will most likely be anchored in the senior literature class. Nonetheless, the student's thesis may concentrate on books, events, or themes that draw on any of the core courses. In the spirit of *The Great Conversation*, the broad questions the thesis will seek to address are "What is a human being?"; "What is a citizen?"; "What is justice?"; "Who is a hero?"; "What is the beautiful?"; "What is the good life?"

These are big questions. Because teenagers are generally far from original thinkers or as yet experienced enough in life to give definitive answers, students will be invited to adopt a particular perspective on one or more of these questions based on the books, events, ideas, heroes, and human achievements that have most moved and provoked them. The students will then be able to speak through the perspective of great thinkers such as Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, the Founding Fathers, or Lincoln.

## CU SUCCEEDS PROGRAM

The school intends to participate in the CU Succeed program to allow direct college credit for courses taken at the school. CU Succeed program is for high school students wishing to pursue college credit during high school. The courses are college level and require that the high school teacher have at least a master's degree in the specified subject, and meet program qualifications to be an adjunct faculty member.

It typically takes one year at the high school level to complete a three-unit semester college course. In this case, the students enroll in the course in the semester that they will complete the course. This means that students start the course in the fall but have until February to officially enroll in the program (enrollment for college credit is not required to take the course).

The following are sample CU Succeed classes which may be offered, based on student interest and teacher availability. Unless otherwise noted, the courses are the equivalent of 3 college credits:

- Calculus I
- Calculus II
- Statistics
- Biology II
- Chemistry II
- Physics II
- Latin I or II (or above)
- French I or II (or above)
- Advanced Literary Studies (6 college credits)
- Advanced Language / Composition (6 college credits)
- American History

Further details about the CU Succeed program, including a list of courses that are guaranteed to transfer to any university in Colorado are included in **Appendix 15**.

Ascent Classical Academies are not college preparatory schools, as we aim to prepare graduates for success in any field they choose to pursue. While we expect graduates to be well prepared shall they decide to go to college, Ascent Classical Academy will also prepare them to enter the workforce, learn a trade, or enter military service.

While network schools have obtained state waivers from the Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP), the school will ensure each student has a post-graduation plan that helps guide students toward the post-graduation goals. This program is already in place at other schools and is handled by the Post-Graduation Advisor.

The graduation requirements for Ascent Classical Academy exceeds that of the authorizer and are aligned to the most entrance requirements of the most competitive universities, also exceeding the Colorado Higher Education Admission Recommendations (HEAR).<sup>19</sup>

The academic program proposed in this charter application is a replication school, with the program already in place in several schools. The program is known to be aligned to Colorado Academic Standards,

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<sup>19</sup> “Higher Education Admission Requirements,” Colorado Department of Higher Education, accessed November 12, 2021, <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/higher-education-admission-recommendations>.

and has successfully completed two reviews by the Colorado Charter School Support Initiative (CCSI) on its curriculum and instruction, conducted through the Colorado Department of Education.

Ascent Classical Academies continue to monitor student achievement and make adjustments to improve the academic program and instruction to support students.

### 3. Instruction

*“Wisdom begins in wonder.”<sup>20</sup>*

In classical education, the methods used to deliver the rich content to the students are as important as the content itself. Our goal is to provide an instructional setting in which our students can best develop their character and minds, including the cultivation of virtue and cultural literacy, effective communication skills, and civic responsibility. This requires the pursuit a rigorous curriculum, coupled with sound instructional methods. Ascent will base our instruction on the approaches used in the best public and private classical schools around the country.

#### Classical Teaching Methods: Effective, Disciplined Teaching and Learning

The basic principle of classical teaching is that the teacher is required to impart knowledge to students and is fundamentally responsible for the leadership and direction of the classroom. In a classical classroom in the lower grades, the desks are arranged in rows facing the teacher, and the classrooms are quiet, orderly, and disciplined. A highly knowledgeable teacher stands in front of the class and leads the students into an understanding of the subject matter. The teacher will also actively engage the students with questions, both written and oral, to develop the students’ ability to process and communicate information through language.

This approach is used in the higher grades as well but will often include the addition of the seminar class, in which the room may have a circular configuration. In both cases, the teacher provides the leadership in shaping the discussion of the subject matter, which requires the teacher to have both expertise in the subject and strong communication skills. There is an understanding that education is fundamentally a partnership between the teacher and student; the teacher provides a disciplined framework within which to achieve subject mastery, but the student ultimately has to do the work and make the effort.

The instruction at Ascent is based on the following understanding of human nature and education:

- Human minds long to know things and young minds often prove the most inquisitive.
- Children and young people have the mental capacities for learning.
- The memory is arguably the strongest of these capacities and must be exercised regularly, as would any muscle, in order to gain strength; students will memorize facts of history and geography, rules of phonics and spelling, facts of science and math.

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<sup>20</sup>Paraphrase of Socrates from Plato’s *Theaetetus*, which focuses on the relationship between philosophy and knowledge.

- Learning discrete facts about the world around them enables young people to begin to understand that world and thereby gain insight and confidence, thus inviting further inquiry.
- Knowledge of real subjects is both a marketable commodity and valuable for its own sake. Consequently, the teachers of the classical school will foremost be knowledgeable men and women, preferably trained in the arts and sciences.

### Approach to Instruction

#### *GRAMMAR SCHOOL (K-6)*

In the Grammar School, instruction will focus on the *explicit* teaching of the basic principles and rules of reading, writing, grammar, speaking, and math. A mastery of these principles and rules provides a strong foundation for all subsequent thought, without which the child will struggle in every subject in future years.

Instruction in the Grammar School will have the following characteristics:

- Lecture/direct instruction/dictation: teacher presents information; students listen.
- Modeling/demonstration: teacher illustrates how something is done.
- Principle-based question and answer: teacher asks question, students supply answer immediately.
- Read aloud: teacher reads from text.
- Singing/chanting/rhymes: students learn a song or chant that tells about information they are to know, while enjoying the learning experience.
- Drilling small bits of information: memorization technique that helps students learn large quantities of information.
- Flashcards: the review small bits of information on cards – usually math or vocabulary.
- Sound-offs: group memorization of data by dividing up facts.
- Explicit and Systematic Phonics Instruction: the direct teaching of letter-sound relationships through a specified sequence, the foundation for literacy is established and provides students the ability to decode the printed word. Students will be required to “sound out” words based upon the rules of phonics, not to guess at them, and spelling will be taught by applying phonetic rules.
- Explicit English Grammar Instruction: the use of tools such as diagramming and the study of root words, students will be equipped to speak and write with a high degree of communicative competence. As students learn to identify parts of speech and seek to develop syntax, they are able to clearly communicate with society on all levels. As students deepen their understanding of the English language and its structure, they improve their ability to easily and fluently express more complex thoughts.
- Vocabulary Instruction: knowledge of the origin and meaning of words, including Latin and Greek roots. Teachers are required to be well-versed in language (Ascent will have a preference for hiring liberal-arts graduates in languages such as English, the classics, linguistics). Extensive use of dictionaries, as opposed to guesswork methods such as “inferring meaning from context.” Teachers will recognize the value of constantly explaining words to students. Require students to speak Standard English rather than slang. The teacher will correct ungrammatical language.



- **Literature Instruction:** reading of classic literature rich in language; fairy tales, fables, poetry, to include memorization of famous lines and poems. Children are particularly adept at memorization, and are able to learn songs, rhymes, and recite facts with relative ease. Because young children are so eager to memorize, we challenge them by providing substantial subject matter for them to memorize.
- **Numeracy Instruction:** learning and memorizing arithmetic facts, and also understanding the concepts behind numerical relations. For example, What is a fraction? What does it mean to multiply two threes ( $2 \times 3$ )? What is place value? When students learn only the algorithm, they do not understand the mathematics behind the equation. No calculators. Premature use of calculators undermines numeracy or “number sense.” The human mind is the original calculator. When human beings forget this, they become no more than appendages to their machines.
- **Instruction in the Power of Memory:** Ascent will place instructional value on learning beautiful words by heart and will bring back the lost art of recitation. The memorization of great poems and lines from literature and speeches is the key to actually “owning” them – capturing the beauty of language in a student’s soul to draw on for the rest of his or her life.
- **Instruction in Moral Literacy:** the development of good character in our students by maintaining order and decorum in the classrooms, holding students accountable for their assignments and personal conduct, and explicitly teaching them the fundamentals of good character. The components of the discipline plan will be made clear elsewhere.
- **Introduction to instruction in the Socratic Method:** while most instruction will be direct, the idea of the Socratic Method will be introduced with increasing intensity as students advance through the elementary grades.

### *MIDDLE SCHOOL (7-8)*

Instruction in the middle school builds on the programs begun in the grammar school, with students continuing to accumulate knowledge and advance in skill areas. Students’ increased capacity for logic in thinking, speaking, and writing will enable them to go into greater depth in their coursework. More focus will be placed on developing analytic thinking and reasoning skills, including the capacity for abstract thought, discovering relationships between fields of knowledge, and fitting knowledge into a logical framework. The level of interactive discussion between students and instructors increases as students learn to reason and develop conclusions.

- **Integration and analysis:** Students are expected to demonstrate the ability to move beyond facts to logical integration and analysis. For instance, in the study of literature, whereas the grammar stage student is expected primarily to show comprehension through summary, the logic stage scholar is asked to interpret and evaluate how multiple elements of fiction contribute to the meaning of a text. Similarly, in mathematics, the students are expected to recognize relationships in numerical patterns, explain relationships (e.g., equivalences and probabilities) and to distinguish between the effectiveness of problem-solving strategies for various problems and contexts. The study of science extends beyond factual presentation and rehearsals of scientific inquiry to introductory investigation and experimentation with data gathering and data analysis.
- **Organization of arguments:** During the middle school years, students are beginning to think independently and develop a propensity for argument. Classical education teaches students of this age to argue well and order facts into organized statements and arguments based on sound reasoning from first principles. “Where is your evidence?” will be the question constantly asked by

teachers in every discipline. The study of logic helps students understand the fundamentals of a good argument. Practice in making written and oral arguments helps to further develop these skills. Teachers encourage the use of argumentation in each subject, understanding that each subject has its own logic. In science, we use the development and testing of a hypothesis. In math, we develop a student's ability to logically orient numbers through the more abstract concepts of algebra and geometry.

- Guided writing: teacher leads students in a writing assignment
- Guided problem solving: teacher leads students in solving problems in math, logic, science
- Guided oral presentations: teacher provides directions to lead students through sharing information
- Guided reading and response: teacher leads students through a text using text parsing, questioning, and inferences
- Supervised independent practice: teacher monitors student work in class
- Teaching of Study Skills: Time management, organizing, memory techniques, note-taking, outlining, and research will be emphasized throughout Ascent Classical Academy and integrated throughout the curriculum to equip students for higher learning. Developing stamina for challenging and complex work is imperative for the promotion of a strong work ethic.

### *HIGH SCHOOL (9-12)*

At the high school level, the Socratic method will increasingly be used in the study of history through original sources, literature through complete classic works, the sciences through intensive experimentation, understanding of the concepts, and applied science. The mathematics program will emphasize complete understanding of the concepts behind numerical relations. As students master the material, they become increasingly capable of taking part in *The Great Conversation*.

- Utilization of Primary Source Documents: Primary sources are materials that were created by those who participated in or witnessed the events of the past. Examples include letters, reports, photographs, drawings, sound recordings, motion pictures, and artifacts, as well as other items. Although rights and duties are not tangible, primary sources that reflect and reinforce them are. Primary sources illustrate real events and experiences and introduce students to the individuals who lived them. Primary sources have a significant appeal to students not only in terms of their tangibility and authenticity; their physical attributes can further capture student attention. The letterhead, handwriting, special markings, size, color, texture, or other features of a document can engage students and help them to recall information later.
- The Socratic Method: The use of direct, intentional questions to guide students' understanding of problems and their solutions will be a fundamental part of instruction, particularly in literature and history courses in the high school.
- Effective Communication: Rhetoric is the art of communicating well. Once a student has obtained knowledge of the facts and developed the skills necessary to arrange those facts into logical arguments, the student must then develop the skill of communicating those arguments to others. During the high school years, we will focus on helping students develop their minds to think and articulate concepts to others. Writing papers, researching, and orating ideas are skills required in all subjects. Ascent adds polish to these skills to create a knowledgeable student who can communicate effectively. We leverage these skills through the final requirement of the defense of a senior thesis.

## TARGET POPULATION

Our curriculum and supplemental programs are time-tested and researched based, and have successfully been implemented for students from academically, socially, and economically-diverse backgrounds. For instance, these include Westside Preparatory School (inner city Chicago), to Estancia Valley Classical Academy (New Mexico), to South Bronx Classical School, Vanguard Classical Academy (Denver), and the Thomas MacLaren School (Colorado Springs).

Ascent Classical Academy's emphasis on foundational skills and a content-rich curriculum is beneficial to students with a variety of learning abilities and backgrounds. One example already cited is Singapore Math. English Language Learners will benefit from the program's clear and simple explanations of math concepts, which are often just a few words in a cartoon balloon.<sup>21</sup> The program's detailed instruction, questions, problem solving, and visual and hands-on aids — such as blocks, cards and bar charts — ensure that students master the material. Ideally, students do not move on until they have thoroughly learned a topic. Educators say that slowing down the learning process gives students a solid math foundation upon which to build increasingly complex skills.<sup>22</sup>

Another example is the Literacy Essentials method — appropriate and recommended for teaching all students the explicit phonics, reading, and language arts they must learn in order to succeed. Literacy Essentials is a multi-sensory, brain-based approach that addresses virtually every student's learning style through four pathways to the brain: sight, sound, voice, and writing. This time-tested method not only provides a strong foundation for students who demonstrate academic progress but is also an effective program for students with pre-existing academic problems. This approach accelerates the learning process and provides an optimal learning opportunity for each student.

Another feature of the Literacy Essentials method is its use of appropriate sequencing. Literacy Essentials begins at the student's speech and oral comprehension levels; it allows students to build one skill upon another, always moving from the known to the unknown. Students are presented with a limited number of concepts — or information — in a given period of time. They then practice these concepts in a variety of ways until mastery is achieved. This method will serve ELL students as well as students with special needs across the spectrum.

In addition to offering robust faculty training in core academic subjects, Ascent Classical Academy will provide training in classroom differentiation strategies for students with specific needs. Ascent Classical Academy will cooperate with the authorizer and the Colorado Department of Education to ensure appropriate resources are brought to bear on problems that may arise. Additional special education services will be provided by specialists in accordance with a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). For more detailed information about serving students with special needs, please refer to [Section E](#), Serving Students with Special Needs.

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<sup>21</sup> "Singapore Math: Simple or Complex?" *ASCD*, November 1, 2007, <https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/singapore-math-simple-or-complex>.

<sup>22</sup> Hu, Winnie, "Making Math Lessons as Easy as 1, Pause, 2, Pause...," *New York Times*, September 30, 2010. <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/01/education/01math.html>.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF CURRICULUM: TIMELINE, LEAD CONTACT, AND ACTION STEPS

As a replication school, Ascent Classical Academy has a well-defined curriculum consisting of the following programs, aligned with the Colorado Academic Standards:

- Core Knowledge Literature, Science, Music, History, and Art (K-8)
- Literacy Essentials
- Singapore Math
- Latin
- Upper-Level Math, Science, Literature, and History
- Modern Language

### *Timeline*

The required program will be implemented in the first year of operation. As the high school grows, the appropriate courses will be added. The High School Course Guide, included in **Appendix 7**, outlines how additional high school classes will be phased in after Year 1.

### *Lead Contact*

The headmaster is the lead at the school, responsible for the continuous improvement of the implementation and monitoring of the curriculum. The headmaster is also augmented by the Ascent Classical Academies Director of Curriculum and Instruction and other subject area specialists throughout the Ascent Classical Academies team.

### *Action Steps*

Throughout the year, in order to ensure student mastery of the curriculum, the headmaster will observe and evaluate the teachers' effectiveness in delivering instruction. Likewise, the headmaster will receive feedback from the faculty regarding the continuous improvement effort.

## ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The small-school environment and the cohesive K-12 model created at Ascent Classical Academy will be the foundation from which all our students will benefit, especially those who enter at below grade level.

Ascent Classical Academy believes that an early and on-going evaluation of student preparedness to meet the demands of the curriculum is vital. There will be several methods of student evaluation and contact with parents.

### *School Improvement Plan*

A key goal of the school's learning measurement process will be to provide results of findings and outcomes by way of communication and feedback to students and overall stakeholders. Students, parents, school and home office staff, and board members will receive published reports of student achievement on an individual and collective basis with the intention of encouraging community ownership of learning outcomes and increased accountability for the teaching and learning practices the school espouses.

These practices will be re-evaluated on an annual basis to allow for adjustment of techniques, strategies, curricula and other relevant programs with the intention of more significantly affecting learning outcomes. Such adjustments will ultimately be incorporated into the school's improvement plan to provide a vehicle for continuous, reflective improvement and overall academic success.

### *Testing and Data Analysis*

As students enter the program, the school will conduct our own data analysis and assessment of student learning. Assessment tools may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Literacy Essentials and Singapore Math student inventories;
- Aimsweb or DIBELS, as diagnostic reading assessments;
- WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) for ELL students;
- Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)
- Teacher-created assessments;
- Portfolios;
- Assessments;
- Observations.

Data from such assessments, in addition to the state required assessments, will be used to identify students not making adequate progress toward the Colorado Academic Standards, and to create an individualized program to improve measurable learning outcomes.

Students' educational needs will be evaluated by our highly-trained teachers. Students identified as below grade level will immediately be provided with interventions and strategies to help them improve. Instruction will be targeted to bring students up to grade level (or better) and challenge their academic potential for optimal learning. Our ability to monitor and assess these students' progress will be greatly enhanced due to our small student population.

If a student proves to have major deficiencies because of a weak educational background or some other reason, the classroom teacher will, in conjunction with the student services team, work on intervention strategies which may include some pull-out tutoring and additional assignments with the understanding that the purpose is to bring the student up to grade level.

In the case of 7th-12th grade students, additional tutoring and support may be assigned in place of electives. If the student does not have a strong foundation in English, the pull-out is likely to occur during the Latin section, as it is vital that students have a strong foundation in the English language before beginning a study of Latin. Parents will be notified of the particular strategies that are adopted.

### *Promotion and Retention / Reading Mastery*

Solid literacy is the foundation of all learning. Without the ability to read well, a student cannot advance in English, history, the sciences, the arts, and even mathematics. Since language is the basis of all human interaction, a person cannot thrive independently in the world when possessed of only a halting literacy. The ability to read, particularly in the early elementary grades, will therefore be a requirement for promotion.

The school will follow the criteria of reading competency set forth in the Literacy Essentials program. Since students in kindergarten and first grade will advance in literacy over the course of the year and all will be given explicit phonics instruction throughout the year, the inability to read at the outset should not be a cause of concern. Parents will be told well in advance if their child may need to be retained.

### *Student Academic Support*

At least once per quarter and in a timely fashion, failing notices will be sent out for students who have a D or an F in an academic subject with the hope that a student's progress can be remediated before failing the term.

In certain cases where more intervention is necessary the teacher, in conjunction with the student services director and under the direction of the headmaster, may decide to pursue an IEP best meeting the needs of the student.

The objective at Ascent Classical Academy is to maintain the rigorous curriculum designed for each grade. Students may need additional tutoring and support to meet the demands of the program, but we cannot offer remedial classes.

### *Student Achievement*

Students at Ascent Classical Academy should expect to be challenged and to work hard. All students will be expected to master basic skills and content material as well as to master higher order thinking. Teachers will use performance grouping within the class, where appropriate, in kindergarten through 6th grade. Placement in core subjects in grades 7-12 will be based on aptitude and mastery of previous material. An academic advisor will work closely with students to ensure proper class placement and promotion.

As the 9th through 12th grades grow, Ascent Classical Academy expects to offer additional courses for college credit (CU Succeed) for students choosing a greater challenge.

## CLASSROOM CULTURE AND BEHAVIORIAL EXPECTATIONS

As evidenced throughout the application Ascent will place a strong emphasis on virtue and the building of character in all our students. Our teachers and administration will set the tone and model virtuous behavior that will then be reinforced during the instruction in the classroom. When appropriate, discussions in class will be centered on our core virtues; students will discuss these ideas as they arise within the literature and text being read.

We find that many students will do the right thing because it is the right thing—not for a prize or to avoid punishment. They expect fair treatment and will thrive in an environment that is committed to teach right from wrong, the difference between justice and injustice, and the importance of serving others. Swift, clear enforcement of the rules is vital; good behavior must be reinforced, and poor behavior dealt with expeditiously.

Our character development program will contain the following elements:

- Teachers will establish the principles, and define the rules and behavioral expectations for students, based on school-wide policy.
- Students will be expected to encourage their peers to adhere to these pillars and school administrators will manage student conduct according to these principles.
- Conduct which disrupts learning or threatens to disrupt the operation of the School; which interferes with the rights and privileges of students or other citizens; which endangers the health, safety, or welfare of any person; or which damages property will not be tolerated.
- Students will receive progress reports that include not only academic progress, but progress reflective of their adherence to these character principles.
- Learning Environment

Students are expected to uphold the following Honor Code:

“I am honorable and responsible in conduct, honest in word and deed, respectful of others, and will promote the same.”

More detailed information on our discipline policy is outlined in [Section F: Student Discipline, Expulsion, or Suspension](#).

## SCHOOL STRUCTURE

The school is a replication school and the application team has been involved in the establishment of other Ascent Classical Academies and classical charter school. The team has consulted the Barney Charter School Initiative at Hillsdale College for guidance on curriculum and school structure.

Ascent Classical Academy will locate within the geographic boundaries of the Durango 9-R School District. While parent interest in this school is from a wide geographic area, the school is targeting south-east of Durango around Three Springs. There is not a public K-12, nor Core Knowledge, nor classical option available in the entire southwest Colorado region.

The selection of curriculum, hiring of staff, design of our facilities, and the structure of the school will be carefully chosen and maintained to support the mission directly.

The K-3 years are the most critical in the lifelong academic and personal success of a young student. Ascent Classical Academy is similar to other classical programs with the curricular focus on mastering basic, key concepts to prepare students for long-term success, especially with literacy.

Ascent Classical Academy will intentionally integrate two separate schools – Grammar and Upper – into a unified school on one campus. A “family” atmosphere of respect and cooperation will be promoted among school leaders, teachers, students, and parents, and every individual will be recognized as a part of the family.

The school intends to open with grades K-9 adding 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Year 2, 11<sup>th</sup> grade in Year 3 and 12<sup>th</sup> grade in Year 4. The opening grade configuration will depend heavily on the facility the school occupies.

### *Rationale for Opening K-9 in the First Year*

Ascent Classical Academies believes that opening as a K-9 school in the first year will provide a strong foundation for achieving the best educational instruction for students, based on the following observations:

- A school with high school grades at opening is more attractive to the kind of highly talented headmaster candidates needed to lead a great school.
- A school with high school grades at opening can attract highly talented teachers who can also serve at the middle school level, thus bringing that level of talent into grades for which recruiting is often more difficult.
- A school that opens with grades K-9 brings a new faculty together in the first year in a way that overcomes a natural sub-grouping which occurs between the grammar-school teachers and the upper-school teachers. Instead, the teachers develop a common commitment to the school’s mission and to each other as one school, as opposed to two separate schools.
- One of the values of a K-12 school is vertical integration of academic program. Upper grade teachers are subject leaders and can coordinate the curriculum track back down to previous years. A school with upper-school teachers at the outset who are specialists in curriculum subjects can assist the grammar-school teachers in subjects which they, as generalists, may seek support from those specialists.
- A school that opens as a K-9 overcomes the potential problem that other schools face which open with fewer grades. This problem rests in the enticement to delay in opening the high school due to its perceived difficulty, and the tendency to wait until all the challenges of the first few years are past. This hesitation can stifle the school’s movement toward fulfilling its full educational mission.
- A classical school delivers instruction from a challenging and serious curriculum. Teachers find it professionally stimulating, but also very difficult. In time, the curriculum will strengthen the teachers intellectually. A school that opens as a K-9 will permit the teachers to grow in this fashion with the students, and to learn of the content delivered in grades below the one they teach. Without opening K-9, it is quite possible that new high school teachers who arrive after the school’s opening year will be in a difficult catch-up mode as they teach students who have been learning from this curriculum for several years.
- Many families have more than one child and would want to have all their children in one school. A K-9 range of grades at opening provides a greater probability of having this interest met.



- Ascent Classical Academies has found opening with too many high school grades, does not allow students enough time to complete all the graduation requirements due to the few electives.
- Finally, the United States Department of Education has placed a focus on charter schools providing a high-school option. This priority is reflected as a priority area in the federal charter start-up grant.

#### 4. Supplemental Programs, Specials or Electives

As a liberal arts program, Ascent Classical Academy offers a rich and broad core curriculum which includes a wide variety of disciplines and subjects, including foreign languages and the fine arts. Our strong focus on the core curriculum will limit our elective offerings.

- The classical school will encourage a robust extracurricular life in music, drama, leadership, community service, public speaking, chess, math and science clubs, team sports, etc. These activities, however, will most likely occur after school hours, rather than during the day.
- Choir, band, and orchestra will be considered a part of the fine arts curriculum and therefore *will* be taught during the school day. Show choirs, jazz bands, and other select groups will hold practices after school.
- Students must maintain a sufficiently high grade point average, as determined by school policy and monitored by the headmaster in order to take part in extracurricular activities.

All supplemental programs, sports, and extracurricular activities are aligned to support the Vision, Mission, and philosophy of the school.

Sports programs must be self-funding. No funding will be allocated to sports programs until teacher salaries are competitive and the school's programs that comprise the core mission are fully funded.

The school will establish sports as interest and resources allow.

Student activities must be related to the curriculum. The following activities are samples of student clubs that will be encouraged at Ascent Classical Academy, based on student interest:

- Chess Club
- Drama Club
- Geography Bee
- Guitar Club
- Math Counts
- Science Bowl
- Spelling Bee
- Yearbook Club

### Humanities Day at Ascent Classical Academy

The school may implement a Humanities Day or some similar event, to showcase the kinds of discussions and conversations that teachers and students have every day in class. It will be a day of lectures, readings, performances, and discussions about the humanities. This will provide an opportunity for our local community to join in the Great Conversation, to ask questions, and interact with our teachers.

### Evening of the Arts at Ascent Classical Academy

This is an opportunity for students to showcase their best artwork that they have completed during the year.

### Homeschool Enrichment and Support

This school is likely to include a homeschool enrichment program as currently offered by its other campuses. Participants in this program attend one day a week and are funded as part-time students, since they attend for 90 hours per semester. The homeschool enrichment program includes content developed by experienced homeschool parents and is aligned to the classical philosophy of the school. Examples of opportunities are offered in this program include classical performance, music, nature study, great biographies (a study of remarkable men and women in history), and art.

## **5. Professional Development**

### Individual Professional Development Plans

Ascent Classical Academy provides professional development for all teachers. Teachers are provided research-based professional development, based on school improvement goals, and will meet in professional learning communities regularly as grade level teams, to analyze student data, and design units and accompanying lessons. The headmaster will help assess and provide professional development to teachers specific to the needs of the school. New and experienced teachers will be taught to expand upon their initial knowledge base in reading instruction in order to refine their instructional delivery and increase their effectiveness. Teachers will meet with administrators, after benchmarks and testing assessment periods, to analyze student progress and develop an action plan. Finally, staff will be trained to support the instruction of classical materials within Core Knowledge and the implementation and delivery of the Literacy Essentials program through required professional development prior to the opening of the school.

### General Expectations

Teachers at Ascent Classical Academies are expected to possess a degree in a subject such as literature, history, mathematics, science, or an equivalent core subject that indicates a mastery of their discipline. They must have an ability to convey knowledge to young people.

Ascent Classical Academies use the Core Knowledge sequence as a framework, leaving the teacher with significant autonomy but also significant responsibility to shape day-to-day lesson plans. Classes in each grade will share the same curriculum maps adopted by other Ascent Classical schools; there will be some variation from teacher to teacher, but not a wide divergence in pace or approach.

At the elementary level, the classroom teacher is the primary teacher, but students will be taught Latin by a classicist (grade 6), and art, PE, and music by arts, or “specials,” faculty members.

Prospective teachers are expected to have and maintain an intellectual life and be capable of discussing major topics within the scope of a liberal arts curriculum.

The work environment at Ascent Classical Academy is collegial, with teachers frequently participating in extracurricular activities ranging from reading groups with fellow teachers to chaperoning clubs and dances for students.

Individual professional development plans will be administered by the headmaster, developed in collaboration with the teachers and the Director of Curriculum and Instruction, as needed.

### *FIRST YEAR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING (AUGUST 2023)*

In August, immediately prior to the opening of the school, Ascent Classical will provide a 14 day professional development program for the new teaching staff.

#### [Ascent Classical Academies Professional On-Site Training](#)

This training will include a 10-day professional development program provided by content specialists and master teachers from other Ascent Classical Academy schools.

Ascent Classical’s teacher training agenda is as follows:

- Day 1: Philosophical Foundations of Classical Education; Overview of Core Knowledge
- Day 2: Academic Policies; Classroom Management
- Day 3: Science; History
- Days 4-5: Math
- Day 6: Grammar; Composition; K-6 Literature
- Days 7-10: K-6 Phonics/Spelling/Handwriting; 7-10 Literature (Day 7 only); Latin (Day 7 only)

Instruction in the teaching of Core Knowledge and Singapore math is included, including the philosophy and design methodology of these programs.

The sequence may change depending upon scheduling.

After the intensive initial specialized training, an additional five to six days of professional development are conducted so that the teaching staff can coordinate within grade levels and within disciplines.

The Student Services Team will ensure that as a part of this professional development time, the teachers, staff and administrators have training in meeting the needs of special education, English language learners, gifted and talented, and those students with Section 504 plans. This includes the process of identification, assessment, developing a plan, monitoring, and evaluation.

## *SUBSEQUENT YEARS*

Professional development topics for subsequent years will depend on the needs of the staff, based on their feedback and assessments from the school leadership team and the Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Teaching faculty may participate in training at other Ascent Classical Academy school, with staff from those other schools.

Additional professional development topics include:

### *General*

Foundations of Classical Education  
Classical Education Foundations and Moral Philosophy  
Culture, Discipline, and Classroom Management

### *History*

Teaching Elementary Topics  
Teaching the American Founding  
Teaching the U.S. Constitution  
Teaching Western Civ I (Constitution of the Roman Republic)  
Teaching Western Civ II (Renaissance)  
Teaching 20<sup>th</sup> Century American History (and other upper-level courses)

### *English / Literature*

Literacy Essentials “201”  
Grammar  
Composition  
Cultivating the Moral Imagination of Young People  
Teaching Elementary Literature (Example: Tom Sawyer)  
Teaching Upper-Level Literature  
Teaching Poetry

### *Latin*

Latin for Everyone  
Building Classroom Resources for Beginning Latin and Beyond  
Latin Prep and Exams  
National Junior Classical League

### *Math*

Teaching Mathematics Instructional Philosophy  
Teaching Singapore Math  
Teaching Pre-Algebra  
Teaching Math in the Upper Levels

## *Science*

### Science Instructional Philosophy

Lectures on the teaching of Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Electives

## *Music*

Ideas for Curriculum Planning, Lesson Content, and Assessment within Music Courses

Integrating Music within the Arts and Other Subjects

Growing your Music Program

Learning Theory: Master Teacher Profile

## *Art*

Teaching Art

In addition, teachers, staff, and parents are invited to visit other Ascent Classical Academies and other classical schools to see how established classical schools function.

### Teacher Prep Time and Additional Professional Days

During the school day, teachers typically have two prep periods and 5 classes.

### New Teachers and On-going Staff Development:

The Center for High Impact Philanthropy makes the following observation regarding teacher quality:

“A quality teacher is one who has a positive effect on student learning and development through a combination of content mastery, command of a broad set of pedagogic skills, and communications/interpersonal skills. Quality teachers are life-long learners in their subject areas, teach with commitment, and are reflective upon their teaching practice. They transfer knowledge of their subject matter and the learning process through good communication, diagnostic skills, understanding of different learning styles and cultural influences, knowledge about child development, and the ability to marshal a broad array of techniques to meet student needs. They set high expectations and support students in achieving them. They establish an environment conducive to learning and leverage available resources outside as well as inside the classroom. The headmaster will ensure that teachers have the appropriate IEP training to coordinate with student services and staff regarding the identification of students for student services. Teachers will have an understanding of the development, implementation, and assessment of intervention plans.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> “High Impact Philanthropy to Improve Teaching Quality in the U.S.” The Center for High Impact Philanthropy. School of Social Policy & Practice. University of Pennsylvania. Spring 2010.  
[http://www.impact.upenn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/2015/03/UPenn\\_CHIP\\_TQProjectBlueprint\\_Mar10\(1\).pdf](http://www.impact.upenn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/2015/03/UPenn_CHIP_TQProjectBlueprint_Mar10(1).pdf).

Ascent Classical Academies has developed a school professional development program for new and continuing teachers, administrators, and other staff.<sup>24</sup> The headmaster and teaching staff will implement this program at the school with support from Ascent Classical Academies. The purpose of this effort will be to ensure that teachers who are new to the school are able to effectively implement the school's curriculum, and to be a part of a culture of continuous improvement.

The professional development program has the following general structure:

- Needs assessment;
- Goal setting;
- Improvement;
- Assessment.

The headmaster will provide feedback to teachers and staff throughout the year. This will be facilitated by frequent “drop-in” observations, informal observations, and formal observations. Department heads and teachers will also observe and provide feedback to teachers throughout the year. Ascent Classical Academies will have master teachers from across its schools support and provide specific training for teachers, based on the needs of the campus.

Teachers are required to post their lessons plans for review by school leadership and the Director of Curriculum and Instruction. These plans are reviewed to ensure teachers are properly pacing content and to identify areas that teaching faculty may need additional support. These reviews also allow the school to monitor the academic program to ensure the school is able to continue monitoring and improving the program.

### Academic Discussion Groups

Part of the staff development program at Ascent Classical Academy will include the cultivation of intellectual collegiality amongst the teaching staff. Once a month, the faculty will meet to discuss a text that has been provided to them beforehand. Sometimes these texts have an obvious connection with teaching and learning, but occasionally the piece is simply read because it is interesting or especially well written. The point of the discussion is often less about the text than about fostering discussion between the veteran Ascent Classical Academy faculty and its newest members.

Teachers should participate in weekly conversations because, in nuanced and subtle ways, these exercises will bear fruit in their classrooms. It is also important that faculty have an intellectual outlet and are not consumed by the grind that can be the first year of teaching at a school like Ascent Classical Academy. For parents or students, but especially for prospective teachers interested in applying to Ascent Classical Academy, the following is a representative list of the types of articles that may be discussed:

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<sup>24</sup> Our plan will include programs and elements that are consistent with state and district policy. Please refer to [Section R](#) Waivers for more information.

- Augustine. *"The Teacher,"* in *Against the Academicians and The Teacher*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1995.
- Esolen, Anthony. *Ten Ways to Destroy the Imagination of Your Child*. Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books. 2010.
- Hicks, David V. *Norms & Nobility*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America. 2009.
- Highet, Gilbert. *The Art of Teaching*. New York: Vintage Books. 1989.
- Huxley, Aldous. "Knowledge and Understanding," in *Complete Essays, Volume V, 1939-1956*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002.
- Mansfield, Harvey C. "Science and Non-Science in Liberal Education," in *The New Atlantis*, Summer 2013.
- Murray, Charles. *The Europe Syndrome and the Challenge to American Exceptionalism*. <http://www.american.com/archive/2009/march-2009/the-europe-syndrome-and-the-challenge-to-american-exceptionalism> (accessed on 23 January 2014).
- Nelson, Robert H. "The Secular Religions of Progress," in *The New Atlantis*, Summer 2013.
- Newman, John Henry. *The Idea of a University*, chapters 5-7. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982.
- Oakeshott, Michael. "A Place of Learning," in *The Voice of Liberal Learning*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001.
- Oakeshott, Michael. "The Voice of Conversation in the Education of Mankind," in *What is History and Other Essays*. Charlottesville, VA: Imprint Academic, 2004.
- Orwell, George. "Notes on Nationalism," in *Essays*. New York: Everyman's Library, 2002.
- Pieper, Josef. *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*. Translated by Alexander Dru. San Francisco: Ignatius Press. 1963.
- Ruskin, John. "The Nature of the Gothic," in *On Art and Life*. New York: Penguin, 2005.
- Schall, James V. "What a Student Owes His Teacher," in *Another Sort of Learning*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988.
- Schumacher, E.F. "The Greatest Resource – Education," in *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2010.
- Sowell, Thomas. "Intellect and Intellectuals," and "Knowledge and Notions," in *Intellectuals and Society*. New York: Basic Books, 2010.
- Thompson, C. Bradley. "The New Abolitionism: Why Education Emancipation is the Moral Imperative of Our Time," in *The Objective Standard*, Winter 2012-2013.

Participation in Colloquia and Humanities Day will also be encouraged.

Some additional sample resources for veteran teachers include the following:

The Colorado Council for Economic Education (CCEE) provides economic and personal financial literacy (PFL) programs for Colorado K-12 teachers and students. Throughout the year, CCEE offers classes that

enable teachers to help students meet Colorado’s Academic Standards in both Economics and PFL. Participants receive solid economic content, engaging pedagogical practices, as well as state-of-the-art teaching resources / materials. These courses are usually offered with the option of graduate-level continuing education credit for teachers.

#### [The Bill of Rights Institute: Constitutional Seminars for Teachers](#)

These professional development programs are designed to include both content and pedagogy. The day-long seminars engage teachers with leading academics on important constitutional principles, historical events, and Supreme Court rulings. Led by a Master Teacher, teachers explore ways to bring knowledge to the classroom using Bill of Rights Institute materials and teaching strategies. Each participant in the one-day programs is given a professional development certificate showing completion of 6 contact hours of instruction. State and local requirements for continuing education credits vary widely, but the Bill of Rights institute is happy to provide any documentation that a participating teacher may need to satisfy these requirements.

## **6. Annual Calendar & Daily Schedule**

The following draft of the 2023-2024 calendar outlines the course of the school year, which is divided into two semesters with four quarters and includes 166 total days in school (student contact days) and 180 teacher work days.

The initial professional development program, previously described, takes place in early August.





## Ascent Classical Academy of Durango 2023-2024 School Calendar

2023							2024							Total days	Block days	Hours per day	Total hours	Minimum req'd	Extra hours	Extra days	
August							January							Secondary	164	0	6.75	1,107	1080	27.00	4
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Elementary	164	0	6.75	1107	900	117	4
		1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5	6	Kindergarten (1/2)	164	0	3.25	533	450	83	4
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	7	8	9	10	11	12	13								
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	14	15	16	17	18	19	20								
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	21	22	23	24	25	26	27								
27	28	29	30	31			28	29	30	31											
						2							16								
September							February														
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday								
					1	2					1	2	3								
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	4	5	6	7	8	9	10								
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	11	12	13	14	15	16	17								
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	18	19	20	21	22	23	24								
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	25	26	27	28	29	30									
						19							20								
October							March														
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday								
1	2	3	4	5	6	7						1	2								
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	3	4	5	6	7	8	9								
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	10	11	12	13	14	15	16								
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	17	18	19	20	21	22	23								
29	30	31					24	25	26	27	28	29	30								
						20	31						16								
November							April														
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday								
			1	2	3	4		1	2	3	4	5	6								
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	7	8	9	10	11	12	13								
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	14	15	16	17	18	19	20								
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	21	22	23	24	25	26	27								
26	27	28	29	30		17	28	29	30				20								
December							May														
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday								
					1	2				1	2	3	4								
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	5	6	7	8	9	10	11								
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	12	13	14	15	16	17	18								
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	19	20	21	22	23	24	25								
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	26	27	28	29	30	31									
31						16							18								
June							June														
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday								
						1							1								
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	2	3	4	5	6	7	8								
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	9	10	11	12	13	14	15								
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	16	17	18	19	20	21	22								
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	23	24	25	26	27	28	29								
30						0	30						0								

Contract days
No School
First/Last day
No School/Teacher Workday

Day start	Day finish	Minimum per day
7:40 AM	3:00 PM	440
Instructional Minutes (min)		Instructional Minutes per Day
35		405

The grammar school has a 6.75 hour day (7:40-3:00). The number of student hours in school for the year is 1,107.

The Upper School has a 6.75 hour day (7:40-3:00). The number of student hours in school for the year is 1,107. Thirty-five minutes is removed from the 440 minutes in each day to account for lunch and the passing time from lunch to the next class in accordance with CDE guidance.

The class schedule is ordered according to the following principles:

### GRAMMAR SCHOOL

- English and math are best scheduled in the morning when the students are most alert.
- English literacy subjects are best taught at the beginning of the day in grades K-4. This schedule also allows parent volunteers to participate right after they bring their own children to school (primarily in grades 1 and 2, and possibly 3).
- In the grammar school grades, “Reading” means the students read the practice reading books in their ability-grouped circles. “Literature” means the teacher is teaching a work of literature to the students.
- A common math block (9:50-10:40 am) across all grammar school grades permits ability grouping of the students.
- Art and music are taken every other day. PE is conducted every day.
- With a school of several hundred students, daily opening activities (attendance recording, pledge of allegiance, recitations, and announcements) are best done in the classroom.
- In the elementary school, lunch is staggered somewhat to prevent overcrowding of the lunchroom and playground.
- Recesses and restroom breaks are scattered through the schedule to accommodate the younger students.
- Kindergarten includes a half- and full-day option.
- With the exception of the kindergarten teacher (who teaches music and art), teachers have prep time during the music/art/modern language/P.E. “specials.”

The Grammar School schedule is as follows:

# Ascent Classical Academy of Durango

## Grammar School Schedule

Time	Grade K	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
7:40-7:50	Opening	Opening	Opening	Opening	Opening	Opening	Opening
7:50-8:00	Phonics/ Reading/ Orthography	Reading	Reading	Literature	Literature	Orthography/ Grammar/ Handwriting	Orthography/ Grammar/ Handwriting
8:00-8:10							
8:10-8:20							
8:20-8:30							
8:30-8:40							
8:40-8:50		Phonics/ Reading/ Orthography	Phonics/ Reading/ Orthography	Orthography/ Grammar/ Handwriting	Orthography/ Grammar/ Handwriting		
8:50-9:00	Recess					Recess	Recess
9:00-9:10							
9:10-9:20	History/ Science	Literature	Literature	Recess	Recess		
9:20-9:30							
9:30-9:40		Recess	Recess	Literature	Literature		
9:40-9:50	Reading						
9:50-10:00	K Singapore Math					5 Singapore Math	6 Singapore Math
10:00-10:10		1 Singapore Math	2 Singapore Math	3 Singapore Math	4 Singapore Math		
10:10-10:20							
10:20-10:30							
10:30-10:40							
10:40-10:50	Lunch					Lunch	Lunch
10:50-11:00							
11:00-11:10		History	History	Art/ Music	PE		
11:10-11:20	Recess						
11:20-11:30							
11:30-11:40	Music/ Art			Lunch	Lunch	PE	Art/ Music
11:40-11:50							
11:50-12:00		Science	Science				
12:00-12:10							
12:10-12:20				PE	Art/ Music	Science	Science
12:20-12:30	Literature						
12:30-12:40		Lunch	Lunch				
12:40-12:50							
12:50-1:00							
1:00-1:10	PE	Art/ Music	PE	History	Science	History	History
1:10-1:20							
1:20-1:30							
1:30-1:40		Recess	Recess				
1:40-1:50							
1:50-2:00	Phonics	PE	Art/ Music	Science	History	Recess	Recess
2:00-2:10							
2:10-2:20							
2:20-2:30							
2:30-2:40	Recess	Reading	Reading	Recess	Recess	Literature	Literature
2:40-2:50							
2:50-3:00							
	Math Facts	Math Facts	Math Facts	Math Facts	Math Facts	Math Facts	Math Facts

## UPPER SCHOOL

- There are seven 50 minute daily class periods plus a 30 minute study hall. There is a single lunch period
- Students can consult with teachers, begin homework, and receive additional reading instruction (if needed) in a common study hall after lunch. The study hall, which generally takes place in the student's homeroom, is 30 minutes. Expectations about studious behavior are established from the beginning.
- The standard teaching load is five classes, though there may be some variation.
- The schedule assumes a 5-minute passing period is adequate.
- The entire upper school follows the same schedule.

Sample schedules for the junior high and high schools are included below:

## Ascent Classical Academy Junior High School Sample Schedule

	7a	7b
Period 1	CK English	Latin B
Period 2	CK Science	CK English
Period 3	7a Singapore Math / Algebra I	CK History
Period 4	Lunch	Lunch
Period 5	Latin B	CK Science
Period 6	CK Music/Art	CK Music/Art
Period 7	CK History	7b Singapore Math
Period 8	Elective	Elective

	8a	8b
Period 1	CK Science	CK History
Period 2	Latin C	Algebra I
Period 3	Algebra I / Geometry	Latin C
Period 4	Lunch	CK Science
Period 5	CK English	Lunch
Period 6	CK History	CK English
Period 7	CK Music/Art	CK Music/Art
Period 8	Elective	Elective

# Ascent Classical Academy

## High School Sample Schedule

	9a	9b
Period 1	Biology I	Geometry / Algebra II
Period 2	Latin I	West. Civ. I
Period 3	Geometry / Algebra	Composition/Basic Comp./Elect.
Period 4	Lunch	Lunch
Period 5	Composition/Basic Comp./Elect.	Classical Literature
Period 6	West. Civ. I	Biology I
Period 7	Classical Literature	Latin I
Period 8	Elective	Elective

	10a	10b
Period 1	British Literature	Algebra II / Geometry
Period 2	Chemistry	British Literature
Period 3	P.E. / Elective	P.E. / Elective
Period 4	Lunch	West. Civ. II
Period 5	Elective	Elective
Period 6	Algebra II / Pre-Calc	Lunch
Period 7	West. Civ. II	Chemistry / Physical Science
Period 8	P.E. / Elective	P.E. / Elective

	11a	11b
Period 1	Amer. Gov / Moral Philosophy	Amer. Gov / Moral Philosophy
Period 2	American History	Physics
Period 3	American Literature	Elective
Period 4	Lunch	American History
Period 5	Elective	Lunch
Period 6	Pre-Calc / Algebra II / Calc	American Literature
Period 7	Physics / Chemistry	Pre-Calc
Period 8	Elective	Elective

	12a	12b
Period 1	Modern European History	Modern Literature
Period 2	20th C. Amer. Hist./Economics	20th C. Amer. Hist./Economics
Period 3	Elective	Elective
Period 4	Lunch	Calculus
Period 5	Elective	Elective
Period 6	Calculus / Pre-Calc	Lunch
Period 7	Modern Literature	Modern European History
Period 8	Elective	Elective

## E. Serving Exceptional and Educationally Disadvantaged Students

### Serving Students with Special and Diverse Needs: Program Administration

Many titles are given to students who struggle in school: exceptional, at-risk, special, IEP, 504, disadvantaged, etc. To simplify the language in the section of this application, this application will collectively name them “exceptional,” but will describe its approach to each group individually within its section within this part of the application.

#### Overview

Ascent Classical Academy Durango (“ACAD”), is committed to serving all students who are willing to work hard to be successful in the program. This commitment extends to all students in the school including those who have physical, emotional, behavioral, learning, and other disabilities, those students with exceptional academic capabilities, and those who may simply lack the academic or behavioral knowledge and skill needed to independently access the general education program. Simply, the school has the same vision for exceptional students as other students, which is to develop within them the intellectual and personal habits and skills which will lead them to live responsible, independent and productive lives.

#### Commitment

ACAD is committed to serving **ALL** students in their efforts to develop within themselves, the intellectual, personal habits and skills upon which they will build responsible, independent and productive lives:

- Both by law and intent, ACAD will work to ensure that all students progress towards academic independence.
- ACAD is committed to providing **ALL** students with a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment with data-driven specialized instruction throughout the school setting.
- ACAD knows federal and state laws governing the instruction and support of students with disabilities, including the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Colorado Exceptional Children’s Education Act.
  - The school uses a comprehensive, whole school, data-driven approach to identify, instruct, support, and assess students, including exceptional students.
  - ACAD accommodates the different learning styles and the needs of all students so that they make progress towards academic independence and successfully transition to their preferred career, training, and independent living plans after they complete their K-12 education.

#### Exceptional Student Programs

The student services team at ACAD provides formal and informal support programs under all federal, state, and/or local laws, policies, and guidelines for the following groups of students:

- Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs),
- Students with Section 504 plans (504),

- English Language Learners (ELL),
- Gifted and Talented with Advanced Learning Plans (GT/ALP),
- Students identified as at-risk (likely to fail).

### Programming and Support for Exceptional Students

#### *Identification and Planning*

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango decisions about providing access to Level-4 interventions and supports are made when one or more of the following events occur:

- The student enrolls with an existing and current IEP or 504;
- The student does not make progress when exposed to best first instruction or in response to Tier 1-3 interventions; or
- Parents request an evaluation (often after outside evaluation has occurred).

For students who arrive at school with an IEP or 504 plan, ACAD will follow the student's plan and will make adjustments as needed in collaboration with teachers and parents. Sometimes, this means conducting a new evaluation as changes in placement (e.g., a new school) can have a significant impact on a student's ability to access the general education program. For students who are not making progress via interventions or whose parents request a formal evaluation, the student services team will execute an evaluation that consists of observations and assessments selected to identify suspected academic and/or functional deficits.

Once an evaluation is complete, the team will meet to discuss findings and to determine if the student qualifies for a formal special education or a 504 program. If the student qualifies for an IEP, the team will also identify the goals, accommodations, and services that will best help the student progress towards independence. If they qualify for a 504, the team will identify accommodations and supports to help the student access the general education program. The student services team will also identify disabilities and place the student in formal programs (IEP, 504, ELL, GT, etc.) as needed. Depending on the suspected nature of the student's deficit(s), the evaluation, qualification, identification and program design will take anywhere from a few days up to 60 days if the student demonstrates more complex cognitive, communication, academic, health, social/behavioral and/or motor skill issues affecting their ability to independently access the general education program at ACAD. Note that for all exceptional students, ACAD will follow federal, state and authorizer requirements for all evaluations, eligibility, programming, and assessment processes.

#### *Program Quality*

To ensure that the programs developed and operated by the ACAD student service team meet legal and academic requirements, the school will:

- **Use Data:** By law, design, and intent, data must be used to make decisions about student placement, specialized and differentiated programming, and progress. Data will be sourced from state testing, normative assessments, screeners, curriculum-based measures, progress monitoring, evaluation specific tests, work samples, teacher feedback and observations. ACAD



will use the following assessments (note that the list changes as students and programs progress):

- **IEP/504/At-Risk**: CMAS, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, Acadience, the WISC-5, WPPSI-4, CELF-4, GFTA, CASL, WIAT-3 or WIAT-4, OWLS-2, BASC-3, BOTS-2, TVPS-4 assessments as well as outside data (e.g., from a therapist), classroom results, teacher feedback, and observations to provide insight into students with (or who may need) IEPs and 504 plans.
- **ELL**: WIDA Access
- **GT/ALP**: Colorado Gifted and Talented test (CoGAT)
- **Provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**: The programming provided by student services must ensure that students receive a free and appropriate education. This means that students with formal support programs (IEP and 504) must have access to the same expectations that the school has for all students while their needs are also covered by specially designed instruction and services (IEP) and accommodations (IEP and 504). In addition, students must be placed in the least-restricted environment, which means that they must be placed in the general education environment with non-disabled peers as much as possible. At ACAD, the intent is to ensure that through instruction, support, and practice, students with formal programs work in their general education classrooms at least 80 percent of their time at school by ensuring that their program is fully implemented by trained teachers and specialists, that accommodations and modifications are implemented with fidelity, and that students aged 15 and above have robust plans for their transition to the post-K12 life.
- **Deliver a Continuum of Services**: ACAD can support students who can work in their classrooms from 40-100 percent of the school day regardless of their disability category. The Local Education Agency (LEA) supports students with more significant needs and who require modified instruction. To confirm placement, students' progress will continue to be monitored and reported at least quarterly. If progress isn't made, programming will become more intense in services and goals and may also be expanded (e.g., to include functional behavior assessment and programming, executive functioning, etc.).

### Programming to Support Exceptional Students

Federal, state, and local laws require LEAs and schools categorize students into a variety of programs including special education (IEP), 504, English Language Learner (ELL), Gifted and Talented (GT), and At-Risk (e.g., READ plan, general lack of progress, etc.). ACAD will develop, execute, assess, and adjust programming using research-based practices and evidence-based programming (where possible) for each student regardless of their specific program. Note that it will do this in accordance with student needs and school expectations as well as all applicable federal and state laws as well as district requirements.

## **Serving Student with Special Needs: Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 Plans**

### Serving Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)

As public schools, charter schools have open lotteries and must provide appropriate special education services as needed by students with disabilities. ACAD welcomes, and will identify, instruct, assess, and accommodate students per the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as well as state and district requirements to provide a free and appropriate education for any student with an identified disability that affects their ability to fully engage in the educational program at ACAD.

As a charter school, ACAD uses a lottery system to identify students for enrollment. Therefore, based on selection by a random lottery, the school will accept any student with an IEP within boundaries set by the authorizer. ACA expects students to arrive with existing district IEPs, out-of-district IEPs (from both in-state districts as well as out-of-state districts), Individual Service Plans (non-binding IEPs created by private schools with district support), and/or with evident needs (e.g., a doctor's diagnosis of ADHD or ASD) for special education support. Existing IEPs will be accepted, implemented, and updated as needed through IEP amendments through the existing period for the IEP. In- and out-of-state IEPs will be accepted and modified through the required student IEP transfer process and amendments once the IEP is accepted. Students identified as possibly needed special education support will be evaluated and programs designed per federal, state, and LEA requirements for initial IEP evaluations.

### Individualized Education Program (IEP Components)

Each ACAD IEP will include the following federal and state required components as well as any requirements specifically required by the LEA:

- The student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, describing how the student is currently doing in school and how the student's disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the general curriculum.
- Annual goals for the student, meaning what parents and the school team think he or she can reasonably accomplish in a year.
- The special education and related services to be provided to the student, including supplementary aids and services (such as a communication service) and changes to the program or supports for school personnel.
- Accommodations that mitigate the impact of a student's disability on their ability to independently access the academic program as well as more accurately demonstrate their level of mastery of knowledge and skills.
- How much of the day the student will be educated separately from nondisabled students or not participate in extracurricular or other nonacademic activities such as lunch or clubs (called extent of nonparticipation).
- How (and if) the student is to participate in state assessments, including what modifications to tests the student needs.
- Service delivery details, such as when accommodations and services begin, how often they will be provided, where they will be provided, and how long they will last.

- How school personnel will measure the student's progress toward the annual goals.
- For students who are or who will turn 15 during the IEP year, the IEP will also contain goals and services to support planning for the college and/or career transition.

In terms of focus and tone, and understanding that parents and students are critical elements in ensuring that the IEP is successful, the IEP team will write the IEP to ensure that parents, the student, and IEP team can both understand and execute it. Once the IEP has been finalized, the special education coordinator and teacher will provide a copy to parents and will also share the student's goals, accommodations, and services with classroom teachers via a secure, online, school-based system. In addition, students with IEPs (especially in upper school) will be provided with copies of their accommodations to help develop their self-advocacy. Each student's IEP will be reviewed at least annually. The student will be re-qualified for special education support at least every three years. The IEP will end no later than when the student graduates from school. As important as the official schedule, the student services team will frequently contact parents to gain their perspective on their student's progress under the IEP. This can include informal discussions via email, text, telephone, and face-to-face as wanted or needed by any member of the student's IEP team.

### Special Education Instructional Programs and Practices

In full compliance with IDEA, ACAD is committed to providing a continuum of services in the least restrictive environment that is appropriate to the individual student's needs. Because best first instruction occurs in the classroom, ACAD will focus on educating special education students in the mainstream classroom. The student services coordinator, specialists, interventionists, and para-professionals, and teachers will work with regular classroom teachers to provide effective instruction, accommodations and modifications, and support for special education students so that they achieve their IEP goals and so become more independent students. For example, depending on the disability, a student's IEP might include accommodations such as oral testing, extended time, alternative formats, human readers and scribes to ensure that students can both learn and demonstrate their knowledge and skill accurately.

At the same time, to ensure that ACAD provides instruction, practice, and support for all identified areas of need, students may also require pullout from the general education classroom(s) to work with the special education teacher and specialists such as the speech language pathologist, mental health provider, occupational therapist, and interventionists. In addition, students may work with special education teachers and paraprofessionals to increase their instruction and practice time with content and functional skills. To minimize the impact of these pullouts, ACAD will pull students from art, music, PE, and/or study hall (note that ACAD expects that students who miss art, music, and PE will have the chance to participate in these classes at least part of the year by switching the pullout times between music/art and PE the semester break). In general, ACAD's goal will be to ensure that students with IEPs will work in their classrooms at least 80 percent of the school day with the school's preference to be more than 90 percent of each day. In the event the student requires more out-of-classroom instruction and practice, the IEP team will work to minimize disruption to the student's participation in core content classes.

### Assessing and Monitoring the Progress of Special Education Students

As with all students, special education students' progress is monitored using a variety of assessments including curriculum-based, teacher-made, standardized (e.g., Acadience), and district and state assessments (e.g., CMAS). At ACAD, all students with IEPs will have an annual meeting which includes parents, special

education teacher, the general education teacher, and Student Services Director) at which the data are reviewed to confirm the student's progress towards achieving IEP goals as well as academic independence. At the meeting, instructional strategies, goals, accommodations, and services may be adjusted. Strategies may be refined or modified based on the student's progress. Note that a parent or the special education teacher may submit a special request to have a student and their IEP reviewed, re-evaluated, reviewed or modified before the annual evaluation with the agreement of the parent. Amendments to an IEP can occur at any time and can be held with or without a formal meeting at the parents' discretion. Also, each student will undergo a complete re-evaluation every three years to confirm their continued eligibility for special education. Finally, the special education teacher will send home quarterly progress reports that document the student's progress towards his or her IEP goals.

### Non-Supported Special Education Students

In the event that ACAD believes that a student's disability or disabilities will make it impossible for the student to access the academic program at ACAD even with the support of an IEP, the school will work with the LEA, parents, and specialists to confirm whether ACAD can enroll the student. In the event that the LEA confirms that ACAD should not enroll the student, the LEA will provide services for that child. While minimal direction has been provided by the LEA for the purposes of this charter application, ACACS understands that the costs of serving higher needs students is included in the 3% administrative charge currently withheld by the LEA.

### Special Education (IEP) Summary

Component	Description
Relevant Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Federal: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):</u> Most recent update Part B Regulations became effective December 31, 2008.</li> <li>• <u>Exceptional Children's Education Act (ECEA):</u> Most recent update became effective March 1, 2016.</li> </ul>
Number of students with IEPs	Approximately 10% of the student population (+/- 50 students within two years). 60-65 percent will be in grammar school with balance being in the upper school.
Expected most common disabilities	The team will support any disability. Based on experience in other classical schools, expects that the most common disabilities will include communication/language, academic, other health impairments (e.g., ADD/ADHD), executive functioning, motor skills, and autism spectrum disorder.
Initial intervention components	Academic, mental health, communication/language, occupational therapy, phonics, fluency, comprehension, arithmetic, pre-algebra, handwriting, sentence-building, longer form writing (e.g., 5 paragraph essay), executive functioning, note-taking, study habits for assessments, working memory and processing speed.

Component	Description
Curriculum components	Curricula may include such Orton-Gillingham-based programs as the Literacy Essentials (phonics, spelling, handwriting), Lindamood-Bell (phonics), <i>Read Naturally</i> (fluency), McCall-Crabbs (comprehension), Singapore Math, teacher-made content, etc.
Support team	Special education coordinator (licensed), special education teacher (licensed), mental health provider, occupational therapist, speech language pathologist (licensed), reading interventionist(s), para-professionals (bachelors with education experience), career and college coordinator, district experts in assistive technology, audiology, vision, etc., assessment coordinator.
Evaluation/Assessment Tools	Cognitive, communication, academic, social/behavior, health, and motor skill assessments such as WISC-5, CELF-5, GFTA-3, OWLS-2, WIAT-3, BASIC-3, BRIEF, Bruininks-Oseretsky Test of Motor Skills, ASD evaluation tools, curriculum-based measurement, teacher-made assessments, Acadience, and others as indicated by specific student characteristics, evaluations provided by outside experts (e.g., behavior specialist, psychiatrist, etc.).
Assessment schedule	At least quarterly or as described in a student's IEP.
Training	The professional development focus for ACAD will be to develop the student services team and when appropriate classroom teacher's ability to provide reading, arithmetic, and writing interventions, functional interventions for behavior, executive functioning, studying, test taking, working memory/processing speed, and disability specific expertise such as autism spectrum disorders, dyslexia, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
Reporting schedule	Quarterly or as needed/wanted by the team, including parents.
Exit Timeframe	When academically independent or with graduation from high school (up to age 21).

### Serving Students with Section 504 Plans

This type of plan falls under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which is the part of federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against public school students with disabilities. A 504 Plan defines a person with a disability as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity (such as reading or concentrating). In addition, they must have a record of the impairment (e.g., an evaluation provided by a medical doctor). Also, the impairment or significant difficulty can't be temporary must be shown to impact their ability to fully participate in school. Like an IEP, each 504 Plan outlines how a child's specific needs are met with accommodations and modifications to mitigate barriers to learning. Note that Section 504 defines "disability" in very broad terms, which is why children who are not eligible for an IEP may often qualify for a 504 plan.

Once a student's 504 plan has been finalized, the 504 coordinator and teacher will provide a copy to parents and will also share the student's goals, accommodations, and services with classroom teachers via a secure, online, school-based share.

### *Identifying and Determining Eligibility for 504 Students*

ACAD will identify 504 students through a referral from parents, school staff, community agencies, medical providers, the student, and/or other concerned parties. This referral will be made or delivered to the school's 504 coordinator. Upon receipt of the referral, the 504 coordinator will work with parents and the school staff to determine if an evaluation is warranted. If it is, the school will conduct the evaluation using data from outside assessments as well as assessments conducted by the school. If the school decides that an evaluation won't occur, the school will notify parents. Once the evaluation is complete, the 504 coordinator as well as other individuals familiar with the student will meet with parents to review data to determine if the student is eligible for a 504 plan and to consider the design of that plan and especially the accommodations that will best support the student's academic progress. Once the plan is agreed to and in place, the team will meet annually to review the student's progress and update the plan as needed. The team will also meet every three years to complete a re-evaluation. Finally, if the student becomes able to access the education program at ACAD independently, the team will schedule a re-evaluation to support a decision to discontinue services.

### *Instructional Programming and Practices*

The majority of 504 students will receive the majority of their instruction in the classroom. As needed, they will be provided their environmental, instructional, and/or behavioral accommodations by their teacher(s) and/or para-professionals under the oversight of the 504 coordinator. In addition, they may also work with specialists (e.g. mental health professional, reading specialist) for instruction and practice to develop skills the student needs to become more independent learners. They may also receive services to mitigate issues related to their disability such as transportation, school health/nursing services, counseling, audiology, physical therapy, orientation, and mobility support.

### *Assessing and Monitoring the Progress of 504 Students*

ACAD will conduct formal annual reviews to update a student's 504 plan. The school will also conduct a formal triennial re-evaluation every three years to reconfirm the student's eligibility for his or her 504 plan.

### *504 Program Summary*

Component	Description
Relevant Law	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
Number of students with 504 Plans.	3-5 percent of the student population or 10 to 15 students.

Component	Description
Expected most common disabilities.	While ACAD will be prepared to support any disability, based on experience in similar classical schools, the most common disabilities are expected to be related to executive functioning (attention, focus, organization), allergies, and vision or auditory processing issues as well as academic and health issues that don't rise to the level of a special education disability.
Initial intervention components	Accommodations including extended time and separate locations for assessments, reading interventions, access to specialists.
Curriculum components	School-based.
Support team	504 Coordinator, mental health provider, occupational therapist, speech language pathologist (licensed), reading interventionist(s), district experts in assistive technology, audiology, vision, etc., and the school assessment coordinator.
Evaluation/Assessment Tools	School-based as well as any required LEA, state, or federally required assessments. Some students may come with outside assessments as well, which will be considered during the initial evaluation as are updates from outside support (e.g., a vision therapist).
Assessment schedule	Annual plus quarterly for classroom grades.
Reporting schedule	Annual review. Triennial re-evaluation every three years.
Exit timeframe	504s can follow a student to post-high school placements including into college and career.

## **Serving Students with Special Needs: Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) / Response to Intervention (RtI)**

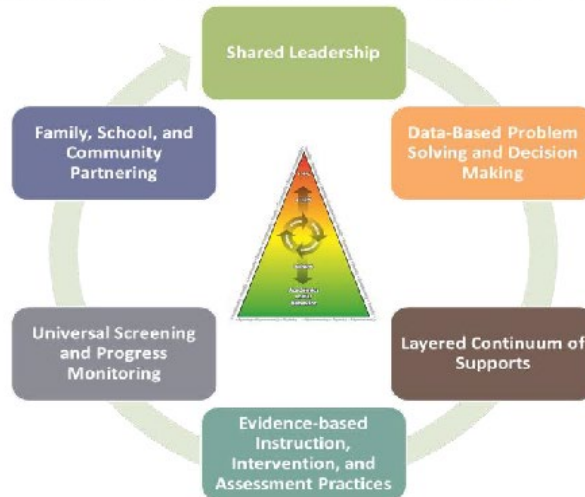
### Identifying Exceptional Students

ACAD believes that all students deserve the very best education possible. For that to occur, the school is committed to provide best first instruction in the classroom for every student. At the same time, given the school's high expectations for academic success and the behavior required to achieve it, ACAD will provide a comprehensive support system for all students built around the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and Response to Intervention (RtI). Schools commonly use these two terms to describe the process by which they identify, categorize, and support struggling students. While similar, they are not synonymous. RtI describes a system of support to specifically improve academic outcomes (primarily reading). MTSS describes a systematic way to support not only students who have academic deficits through RtI, but also to organize a more complete response to supporting struggling students.

The MTSS process drives this through shared leadership, data-based problem solving and decision-making, layered continuum of supports, evidenced-based instruction, intervention, and assessment practices, screen and progress monitoring, and family, school, and community partnering as illustrated in the district's essential components of MTSS diagram:



## Colorado MTSS Essential Components



With support from Ascent Classical Academies, (“ACA”) and other Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools (“ACACS”), ACAD has the expertise to develop, execute, and improve its MTSS program. Experience indicates that academically, the initial focus of the MTSS system will be to provide additional instruction and practice in reading (phonics, fluency, and comprehension), math (primarily arithmetic through pre-algebra), and writing (handwriting, spelling, use of common conventions, sequence, and editing). In addition, ACAD will provide instruction and practice in functional skills (e.g., dress, deportment, management of emotions, social interactions, test anxiety, public speaking) as well as note- and test-taking skills, materials management, and executive functioning.

### ACAD MTSS Academic Support System Overview

Within MTSS, academic components of ACAD’s will consist of four levels of intervention and support for all at-risk students. Tiers 1-2 describe academic instruction and interventions delivered primarily by teachers within the classroom. Tier 3 will include support from specialists. Tier 4 describes process by which students who aren’t making academic progress via tiers 1-3 are then provided out with additional instruction and support generally outside the classroom. While the student services team will support students at all levels of academic progress, its primary responsibility will be to develop and operate Level 4 interventions.



### *Tiers 1-4 Summary*

- **Tier 1: Benchmark:** Tier 1 focuses on developing and delivering direct, best first instruction and practice in the classroom to all students. In the grammar school, this means that students will focus on developing key skills including a deep knowledge of phonograms, spelling, vocabulary, handwriting, arithmetic and number sense, and sentence and paragraph structure and writing. In the upper school, teachers will focus on generalizing and applying knowledge and skills learned in grammar school to literature, Latin, grammar, mathematics, science, and history. At all grade levels, Tier 1 instruction will be supported by clear and high expectations for behavior and executive functioning including regular exposure to the school's core virtues.
- **Tier 2: Strategic:** Tier 2 focuses on providing interventions in the classroom to support improvements in specific academic and functional issues exhibited by one or more students. The classroom teacher will analyze data, select the intervention material and method, instruct, and assess progress. The teacher will also document and communicate progress to the student(s), parents, and other teachers as appropriate.

**Tier 3: Intensive:** Tier 3 focuses on students who are not making progress despite their participation in Tier 1 or Tier 2 levels of instruction and practice. As with Tiers 1 and 2, the classroom teacher takes the lead, but he or she can also reach out to school specialists including the student services team (e.g., special education teacher, school psychologist, speech language pathologist, occupational therapist, paraprofessionals, etc.) for additional help to develop the intervention, provide instruction, and assess student progress. The teacher will continue to be responsible for communication with parents.

- **Tier 4: Exceptional Students:** In addition to instruction, practice and support gained through Tiers 1-3, exceptional students are qualified to participate in Tier 4 supports and programs (e.g., IEP, 504, ELL, GTA, etc.) through formal reviews of records, outside input (e.g., a doctor's diagnosis of a disability), parent and teacher input, and normed-assessments. Once qualified, Tier 4 students will receive additional instruction and support to improve their ability to independently access the general education program at ACAD through improvements to cognitive, communication, academics, social/emotional/behavior, health, and motor knowledge and skills. As needed, they will also receive instruction and support to develop functional skills such as reducing test anxiety, public speaking note- and test-taking, materials management, and executive functioning.
- ACAD accommodations will generally follow the 2015-2016 Colorado Instructional Accommodations Manual: A Guide to the Selection and Implementation of Accommodations for Students with Disability.<sup>25</sup>

### **Serving Students with Diverse Needs: English Language Learners (ELLs)**

ACAD wants all students to master English. An English Language Learner (ELL) is a student who is unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often comes from a non-English-speaking home

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<sup>25</sup> Colorado Department of Education. "2015-2016 Colorado Instructional Accommodations Manual: A Guide to the Selection and Implementation of Accommodations for Students with Disability." Accessed January 31, 2022. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/accommodations>.

and background, and who typically requires specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and in his or her academic courses. At launch, ACAD expects to enroll 15-20 students who may be ELL students. ACAD will follow the requirements of the Colorado English Language Proficiency Act (HB14-1298) when developing and operating its ELL program. Specifically, the school will:

- Identify, through the observations and recommendations of parents, teachers, or other persons the students whose dominant language may not be English.
- Assess such students using instruments and techniques approved by CDE to determine if their dominant language is not English.
- Certify to the department and LEA those students in the school whose dominant language is not English.
- Administer, provide, and assess the effectiveness of programs for students whose dominant language is not English.

#### Identification of English Language Learners

ACAD will identify ELL students using the following CDE-required process:

1. Require every student's parent or guardian complete a Student Language Data Form/Parents Home Language Questionnaire as part of the enrollment process. This form identifies students whose Primary or Home Language is Other Than English (PHLOTE).
2. The ELL coordinator will follow-up with parents to confirm that the student does in-fact belong on the ELL list based on the significance of the language to the student's ability to communicate at home and the frequency of its use.
3. If parents confirm that their student does belong on the list (and if they consent to assessment), the ACAD ELL coordinator will proctor the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) test. If a student scores as being Fluent English Proficient (FEP), the parents will be notified and no further ELL services will be provided. If the student is not proficient, their score may place them in either the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) or the Not English Proficient (NEP) categories. Parents are notified and with their permission, ELL services start.
4. The ACAD ELL coordinator will create an ELL plan for each student who is LEP or NEP. They will work with the student's classroom teacher and his parents to create an ELL plan for each English language learner at the school. This plan will include annual goals and mastery benchmarks for the student, as well as a description of the strategies and tactics for instruction, practice, and assessment.

#### Instructional Programming and Practices

ELL instruction will consist of intense exposure and work with the Literacy Essentials explicit phonics program used throughout the school. Once an ELL student masters the sounds of the English language, he will progress through the Access Literacy program to learn the grammar and structure of English, as well as developing their vocabulary, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. If necessary, ELL students may also be assigned to a reading-focused ELL intervention for additional instruction and practice.

If an ELL struggles to meet benchmarks, the ELL coordinator and the regular classroom teacher(s) will collaborate to identify additional interventions that can be used to improve the student's progress towards English-language proficiency. When a student reaches proficiency (level 6) on the ACCESS for ELLs

assessment and all other assessment data indicate strong English language skills, the student will exit ACAD's ELL program.

ELL students may also receive testing accommodations in the same way that students with IEPs and 504s receive accommodations for testing.

#### Assessing and Monitoring the Progress of ELL Students

Once the ELL plan is in place, the ELL coordinator will also develop and maintain a portfolio to track students' progress. This portfolio will include interim assessment data and results from the annual ACCESS for ELLs to provide a comprehensive picture of the student's progress in developing English language skills. Progress will be reported to parents and the district quarterly or to the district's preferred schedule, whichever is more frequent.

#### **Serving Students with Diverse Needs: Gifted and Talented Students (GT)**

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango believes all students should be treated like they are "gifted" by providing access to a very challenging curriculum, through the flexibility of its program, and through the high academic and behavioral expectations that will be in place in all classrooms. Gifted students are often described as those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains. Domains include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system (e.g., mathematics, music, language) and/or set of sensorimotor skills (e.g., painting, dance, or sports)." At launch, ACAD expects to enroll 15-20 students who may be GT students.

The development, administration, programming, and assessment of ACAD's GT program will be guided by the Colorado Exceptional Students Educational Act, and specifically by section 2220-R-12.00 Gifted and Talented Student Programming. This law requires administrative units to identify GT, implement gifted education student programs providing programming options and services for gifted children, and assessing their effectiveness. ACACS's current program is aligned to requirements of the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI) but will make adaptations for the local LEA.

#### Identification of GT Students

In general, identification of students as gifted incorporates three main components: academic, cognitive, and observational:

- I. Academic characteristics are based on the results of standardized, curriculum-based, teacher-made tests, and classroom results.
- II. Cognitive input will come from data captured by the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) administered students in Grade 2 as well as other cognitive evaluations such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children-5<sup>th</sup> Edition (WISC-5), Stanford-Binet, or Woodcock-Johnson.
- III. Observational data comes from parents, teachers, and outside sources (e.g., doctors, therapists, and other experts).

With academic, cognitive, and observational input, the ACAD student services team will review the body of evidence and formally confirm the designation. With designation as gifted, the student services team will work with the student, parents, and teachers to develop an Advanced Learning Plan (ALP).

### Advanced Learning Plan (ALP)

If the student is determined to meet GT requirements, the student services team will identify areas of strength that may include verbal reasoning, reading, writing, quantitative, non-verbal, creative, talent, and leadership. ACAD also recognizes that GT students' strengths usually lie in a few areas – they do not need to show strength in all areas considered as GT. With these determinations made, the GT coordinator, classroom teacher(s), and parents will develop and Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) that describes a goal designed to help them both take advantage of their capabilities and becoming more independent students by:

- Taking control of their learning
- Having a deeper understanding of their learning style and become strength-based learners
- Becoming the driver in improving their education
- Acquiring learning skills that will apply to learning situations in life
- Developing a greater sense of their abilities

### Instructional Programming and Practices

At ACAD, the GT coordinator will work with the student, their parents, and the teacher to implement the student's ALP. Work on the goal(s) within the ALP may occur at school, outside school, and/or online.

### Assessing and Monitoring the Progress of GT Students

ACAD will assess the GT student's progress annually to confirm progress towards the goal(s) in the student's ALP using academic and observational data and will provide the report to the student, parents and LEA.

## **Serving Students with Diverse Needs: Student Who Are Educationally Disadvantaged or Have a Physical Disability**

### Serving Educationally Disadvantaged Students

Experience at other new classical schools suggests that the largest cohort of exceptional students can be traditionally educationally disadvantaged (ED) students, as concerned parents seek a new school in the hopes of improving their student's academic progress. ACAD defines an "educationally disadvantaged" student as any student not performing near or at grade level in one or more content or functional areas for a variety of reasons. At launch, ACAD expects that 50-75 students may be educationally disadvantaged.

### *Identification of Educationally Disadvantaged Students*

ACAD will identify ED students through Tiers 1-3 of its MTSS and RTI process. The school will consider data collected from curriculum-based and teacher-made assessments, content-oriented assessments such as Acadience, intervention progress monitoring, informal assessments, discipline data, teacher observations and parent feedback. The school will also use the Economic Data Survey (EDS) tool and homeless screener to identify students from economically disadvantaged or homeless backgrounds.

### *Instructional Programming and Practices*

The nature of classical education and its implementation at ACAD supports ED students. Grammar school programming includes a very specific focus on phonics, spelling, and handwriting through the Literacy Essentials program, math through Singapore Math, and Core Knowledge for literature, writing, history, and science. These provide students with the necessary foundation skills they will need to apply and generalize their knowledge and skills as they progress in age and grade, especially as curricula. In the upper school, the focus moves from developing academic knowledge and skills to its application and generalization by studying classical literature and history, science and mathematics. This programming and the practice of teaching in the Socratic style, combined with a school culture built on seven core virtues and clear and high expectations for both academic and behavioral success, provide students with clear goals and boundaries for their learning. High school students who are ED or low-performing will also be monitored by the post-graduation advisor, and work with parents, to help mitigate the risks of students dropping out before graduation.

At the same time, the school recognizes that because many incoming students will not have been previously exposed to its high academic and behavioral standards, it will be incumbent on the school to provide support. To this end, ACAD will provide support through tactics such as ability grouped math classes, resource support, formal and informal tutoring as determined by the headmaster and staff, extra time as needed, academic clubs, and athletics. Finally, students will wear uniforms to promote the school's culture and reduce distractions.

### *Additional Support and Practices*

Students identified as economically disadvantaged or homeless will also be supported by assistance with lunch, waiving of student fees, and assistance with uniforms.

### *Assessing and Monitoring the Progress of ED Students*

The assessment and monitoring of ED students will occur through the schools MTSS program with teachers, support staff, and administrators meeting regularly both formally and informally to determine which students will benefit from additional support and how that support should be formatted and executed. Data will flow from classroom, school, and state assessments as well as from assessments specific to individual students. The goal for ED students, as will be for all ACAD students, is to be academically independent and meeting achievement and growth expectations.

### Serving Students with Physical Disabilities

In most instances, the United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR) has issued Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidance in conjunction with Section 504 guidance. As mentioned earlier in this section, the school will provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with physical disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act defines disability as: 1) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity; 2) a record of such an impairment; or 3) being

regarded as having such an impairment (see 29 United State Code (U.S.C.) § 705(9)(B) and U.S.C. § 12102(1)).<sup>26</sup>

The school will identify a facility that is ADA-compliant to allow access by students with disabilities.

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<sup>26</sup> “Questions and Answers on the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 for Students with Disabilities Attending Public Elementary and Secondary Schools.” Office of Civil Rights. United States Department of Education. Accessed on January 31, 2022. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-504faq-201109.html>.

## **F. Student Discipline, Expulsion, and Suspension**

### **Discipline at Ascent Classical Academy**

Discipline at Ascent Classical Academy of Durango, (“ACAD”), serves the educational mission. The establishment of the culture of ACAD is not only a necessary condition for educational success, but also a core component of the educational program. The school seeks to draw students out of the youth culture that pervades much of their adolescent lives and into the community of wonder, with each person actively pursuing a habitual vision of greatness illustrated by the best our tradition offers.

The foundation of discipline and order at Ascent Classical Academy of Durango is the realization that a civilized learning community demands certain fundamental norms of courtesy, ethics, and orderly behavior in order to fulfill its mission. The intent to create an orderly, disciplined community is evidenced by the ACAD uniform policy, a closed campus, and focus on good character and virtue.

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango welcomes children into its program with the understanding that they will be on time for class, be properly groomed, complete their assignments, follow rules of good classroom order, be honest, and follow the spirit and letter of the Family Handbook (see Appendix 16). The Family Handbook will be available to students and parents upon enrollment and posted on the school’s website. Parents and students must acknowledge that they have read and understand the expectations set out in the Family Handbook at the beginning of each school year.

Unless there are clear mitigating circumstances, students are responsible and accountable for their actions. Students in the seventh through twelfth grades are entirely capable of living appropriately in the ACAD culture. Students in the earlier grades will receive more guidance in developing good habits and character, an effort in which parents are also included.

A high premium is placed on the teacher’s personal investment in the student and the school resists the practices that depersonalize so many schools. ACAD does not relate to students principally under the rubrics of rules and regulations; rather, the school emphasizes the dignity of the teachers and students and of a culture marked by strong ethics, legitimate and caring authority, friendliness, compassion, patience, kindness, goodness, truthfulness, and beauty. Within that framework, rules, regulations, and consequences are merely means to an end. Just as the school expects teachers to expend considerable energy into coaching and directing the students to take on the educational goals of the school, ACAD also expects teachers to encourage students in the face of difficult tasks and to praise them for work well done.

Students who do not live up to these fundamental expectations need to be corrected. In many cases, a verbal correction is sufficient. Faculty may expect this correction to suffice. If it does not, however, further actions may be required.

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango distinguishes between academic deficiencies (which require an academic response, and are addressed through remedial and corrective action) and nonacademic misbehavior.

## **Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS)**

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) is an empirically validated, function-based approach to eliminate challenging behaviors and replace them with pro-social skills. Use of PBIS decreases the need for more intrusive or aversive interventions (i.e., punishment or suspension) and can lead to both systemic and individualized change. PBIS fits well within a broader framework defined by the school's core virtues – courage, moderation, justice, responsibility, prudence, friendship, and wonder.

PBIS can target an individual student or an entire school, as it does not focus exclusively on the student, but also includes changing environmental variables such as the physical setting, task demands, instructional pace, and individualized reinforcement. It is successful with a wide range of students, in a wide range of contexts, with a wide range of behaviors.

Blending behavioral science, empirically validated procedures, durable systems change, and an emphasis on socially important outcomes, PBIS always involves data-based decision making using functional behavioral assessment and ongoing monitoring of intervention impact.

### **Why Do We Need PBIS?**

- Problem behavior is the single most common reason why students are removed from regular classrooms. Even though students with extreme problem behavior represent only 20% of school enrollment, they can account for more than 50% of behavioral incidents.
- Harsh punishment and zero tolerance policies have not been effective at either improving behavioral climate in schools, or preventing students with problem behaviors from entering the juvenile justice system.
- Three years after being excluded from school, almost 70% of these youth have been arrested.

Failure to implement the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), due to a lack of incentives or negative attitudes toward children with challenging behaviors by administrators, policy makers and school personnel, is unacceptable. Students should not be excluded from school based solely upon inappropriate social behavior. Appropriate services can readily address and modify many of these behaviors, leading to more positive outcomes than simple punishment.

### **How is PBIS Implemented in School Settings?**

PBIS is based on behavioral theory. Problem behavior continues to occur because it is consistently followed by the child getting something positive or escaping something negative. By focusing on the contexts and outcomes of the behavior, it is possible to determine the functions of the behavior, make the problem behavior less effective and efficient, and make the desired behavior more functional. This often involves changing systems, altering environments and teaching new skills, as well as focusing on the problem behavior.

PBIS should be a collaborative effort among parents, teachers, counselors and administrators; all partners should be committed to its implementation. PBIS is more effective when it includes the target individual as well as other significant individuals, such as peers, teachers, and parents.



### What Are the Benefits of PBIS?

All students, both disabled and non-disabled, can benefit from **PBIS**:

- Research conducted over the past 15 years has shown that **PBIS** is effective in promoting positive behavior in students and schools. Use of **PBIS** as a strategy to maintain appropriate social behavior will make schools safer. Safer schools are more effective learning environments.
- Schools that implement system-wide interventions also report increased time engaged in academic activities and improved academic performance.
- Schools that employ system-wide interventions for problem behavior prevention indicate reductions in office discipline referrals of 20-60%.
- Appropriately implemented **PBIS** can lead to dramatic improvements that have long-term effects on the lifestyle, functional communication skills, and problem behavior in individuals with disabilities.
- A review of research on **PBIS** effectiveness showed that there was over a 90% reduction in problem behavior in over half of the studies; the problem behavior stopped completely in over 26% of the studies.

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango will establish a strong proactive Positive Behavior Intervention and Support system to encourage a positive and effective approach to discipline. Through a consistent and effective **PBIS** system, we expect to:

- Support student achievement.
- Reduce suspension and referral rates.
- Increase attendance.
- Maintain a healthy and positive school climate.

### Components of a School-wide PBIS System

- Administrator support, participation and leadership.
- Common purpose and approach to discipline centered around the school's core virtues.
- Clear set of positive expectations and behaviors.
- Procedures for teaching expected behavior.
- Continuum of procedures for encouraging expected behavior.
- Continuum of procedures for discouraging inappropriate behavior.
- Procedures for ongoing monitoring.

## Curriculum

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango incorporates awareness and discussion around its core virtues throughout the school, curriculum, and instruction. Teachers incorporate the virtues into lectures and discussions with students.

### Classroom Management

- Set/Define Expectations

Classroom expectations posted:

- Consistency through students' classes
- Respond to individual needs, strengths, and preferences
- Maintain environment conducive to learning (alter as necessary)
- Teach new skills – replacement to the challenging behavior
- Reinforce positive behavior

### Consequence System

Level One	Staff Warning Teacher or administrator warning Verbal reprimand (teacher or administrator) Confiscation
Level Two	Notification of parent or guardian Administrator/student conference Detention: before school, after school, or during lunch Assignment of work detail at the school Billing of parent for damages to property In-School alternatives Probation
Level Three	Conference with parent/guardian Suspension as determined by staff Development of expectations contract
Level Four	Out of school suspension Alternative to suspension (Parental attendance at school) Remedial discipline plan Letter of restraint Charges filed or report made to law enforcement officials

Within each Level, consequences may include detention, probation, suspension, and expulsion. These consequences are defined as follows:

- **Detention:** A teacher, staff member, or an administrator may assign detention. Detention may be served before school, during lunch, or after school. The duration of detention may be between fifteen to sixty minutes, depending on the offense.
- **Probation (In School Suspension):** The headmaster, or his designee, may assign probation. This may be up to three-days from attending a specific class or all classes. The student will be assigned work from the teacher of the specific class that he/she has been removed. The student will be allowed to reenter the class only after a consultation meeting including the student, parent/guardian, teacher and the principal, or his designee. Depending on the results of the consultation meeting, the probation may become permanent for the remainder of the semester or school year.
- **Suspension:** Only the headmaster may suspend a student. These suspensions shall last from one to ten days in length. If the suspension is an out of school suspension, the student will not be allowed on campus for the duration of the suspension. The student will not be allowed to return to school until a parent or guardian attends a complete day of class with the student at the end of his suspension term and attends a meeting with the headmaster or his designee. Suspensions may become recommendations for expulsion.
- **Expulsion:** Only the headmaster may recommend a student for expulsion. The school will follow authorizer policies on expulsion.

#### Possible Infractions/Violations

In general, students must be polite and attentive or there may be consequences. Infractions and violations include but are not limited to:

- Interference with the movement of people at an exit, entrance, or hallway of a school building without authorization from an administrator.
- Interference with an authorized activity by seizing control of all or part of a building.
- Use of force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent participation in an authorized assembly.
- Use of force, violence, or threats to cause disruption during an assembly.
- Interference with the movement of people at an exit or an entrance to School property.
- Use of force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent people from entering or leaving School property without authorization from an administrator.
- Disruption of classes or other school activities while on School property or on public property that is within 500 feet of school property. Class disruption includes making loud noises; trying to entice a student away from, or to prevent a student from attending, a required class or activity; and entering a classroom without authorization and disrupting the activity with loud, inappropriate, or profane language or any misconduct.

- Interference with the transportation of students in School vehicles.

### **Discipline of Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities are neither immune from the Ascent Classical Academy of Durango disciplinary process nor entitled to participate in programs when their behavior impairs the education of other students. ACAD will comply with the Individuals and Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in disciplining these students. Students with disabilities who engage in disruptive activities and/or actions dangerous to themselves or others will be disciplined in accordance with their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), behavioral intervention plan, and this policy. Nothing in this policy shall prohibit an IEP team from instituting consequences for disorderly or unacceptable actions as a part of the student's IEP. The plan shall be subject to all procedural protections established by the IEP process.

All students, including students with disabilities, may be suspended for violations of school policies in the Family Handbook. For suspension of a student with disabilities, a team including student services staff members and the headmaster, will determine whether the student's behavior is a manifestation of the disability and whether the student's disability impaired his or her ability to control or understand the impact or consequences of the behavior. Once the team determines that a behavior was not a manifestation of the disability, disciplinary procedures shall be applied to the student in the same manner as applied to non-disabled students. A student with disabilities whose behavior is determined to be a manifestation of his or her disability may not be dismissed but will be disciplined in accordance with his or her IEP, any behavioral intervention, and the school's discipline policy.

### **Title IX and Discrimination**

Each ACACS school has an appointed Title IX and Discrimination coordinator to review Title IX and discrimination complaints. Information on filing these types of complaints will be posted on the school's website. Title IX coordinators receive specific and relevant training.

### **Appeal Process**

The appeal process follows the parent grievance policy adopted by the ACACS governing board and will be posted on the school's website. Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools makes use of a multi-step appeal process in dealing with student disciplinary matters. First, either the student or his/her parent/guardian corresponds, orally or in writing, with the assistant principal. The assistant headmaster has the authority to informally determine routine matters of student discipline without consulting with other members of the administration. The assistant headmaster may choose to speak with whoever proves helpful under the circumstances.

If the situation is not resolved at this first level, then the student or his/her parent/guardian may communicate, orally or in writing, with the headmaster. If, on the other hand, the first step is skipped, then, absent unusual circumstances, the headmaster will direct the student/parent/guardian to first speak with the assistant principal. The headmaster may take any appropriate steps to hear all perspectives on the issue and then provide a plan on how to resolve the appeal. The headmaster may require any person to submit a written statement about the situation.

If the student or his/her parent/guardian is not satisfied with the decision of the headmaster, then they shall submit an appeal to ACA using the online form found on the school's website on the parent grievance page. The full-time ACA staff will review the complaint to determine any violations of law or policy, and decide on the appropriate actions to take.

The final step will be for a complainant to submit another appeal via the online form, indicating all the previous steps have been followed, and request the ACACS governing board review a complaint. The ACACS governing board chair may decide to refer the complaint to a board committee of two members, the entire board, or to decline to review the appeal. The governing board may call for others to present written statements as well.

If an appeal is referred to the entire board, the appeal will be heard in an executive session of the board unless the parent, guardian, or non-minor student requests the appeal be conducted in an open meeting. At the board meeting, the student/parent/guardian and/or their representative shall have the opportunity to address the board. The board may also choose to hear from any other person. The board shall allot time enough for all sides to be given an adequate hearing. The board shall then deliberate and render a final decision, which is not subject to further appeal.

Policies on discipline and suspension are found in **Appendix 16**.

## G. Plan for Evaluating Pupil Performance

### 1. Assessments

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango (“ACAD”) will use internal school level assessments to evaluate both student needs and the effectiveness of the academic programs, and external measures to measure student performance and comply with authorizer and state requirements to ensure content standards will be met. The ACAD team has access to experienced assessment coordinators through the Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools (ACACS) network and its affiliation with Ascent Classical Academies.

#### Incoming Student Assessment

Accepted students to ACAD may be required to take standardized and subject-specific tests, both created by faculty and available through curriculum providers, like Singapore Math. This will allow the school to place students in the appropriate math classes, e.g., and measure student performance at our school. The school will also request students’ previous state assessment data for growth and longitudinal analysis. Testing will only be done once a student is offered a seat in the school and will not be required as a condition of being offered a seat.

#### Formal Assessments

Grade	CMAS/CoAlt	Acadience Reading (Formerly DIBELS)	ACCESS	PSAT/SAT
K		09/2023, 12/2023, 04/2024	01/2024	
1		09/2023, 12/2023, 04/2024	01/2024	
2		09/2023, 12/2023, 04/2024	01/2024	
3	04/2024	09/2023, 12/2023, 04/2024	01/2024	
4	04/2024		01/2024	
5	04/2024		01/2024	
6	04/2024		01/2024	
7	04/2024		01/2024	
8	04/2024		01/2024	
9			01/2024	04/2024
10			01/2024	04/2024
11	04/2024 (Science and Social Studies only based on selection)		01/2024	04/2024
12			01/2024	

Ascent Classical Academy will administer the above formal assessments. These assessments will provide information to determine if the school is achieving its goals and objectives, as well as meeting other requirements. The dates estimated in the above table are estimates, based on the 2021-2022 Colorado Department of Education (CDE) state assessment tentative windows.<sup>27</sup>

**The Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS)** include several assessments: math, English Language Arts (ELA), science and social studies.

The ELA and math assessments will be administered in grades 3-8. The science and social studies assessments will be given at various points throughout a student's academic career, in accordance with CDE guidelines.<sup>28</sup>

The CMAS is administered in the spring of the academic year. These assessments are used to determine academic performance, growth, and gaps in learning among the student body and a tool in measuring our academic goals. The assessments provide data on school performance required by the Colorado Growth Model and to create the School Performance Framework (SPF). Ascent Classical Academy will use the data to measure and track growth among its students, however ACACS also relies on other measures that better align with its academic program and sequencing, to include the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS).

The Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act (READ Act) requires schools to conduct interim assessments of literacy development of students in grades K-3 in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, and vocabulary development, including oral skills, reading fluency and reading comprehension.

Acadience Reading Diagnostic is a READ Act compliant assessment approved by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE)<sup>29</sup> to assess literacy. Acadience measures oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension. This test will be administered in the fall, winter, and spring in grades K-3 and used as an additional tool to help teachers identify student progress and guide instruction. Vocabulary will be assessed by teachers using other assessments from the Literacy Essentials program.

The CO PSAT is administered in the spring for students in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades. It is a measure for ELA and math.

The SAT is administered in the spring and required for 11<sup>th</sup> grade students. The SAT is a measure to assess Ascent Classical Academy's performance in Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness and a component of the SPF. It is also used as a college entrance exam.

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<sup>27</sup> Colorado Department of Education. "General Assessment Information." Accessed January 31, 2022.

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/GeneralInfo>.

<sup>28</sup> Colorado Department of Education. "CMAS - Mathematics, English Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies Assessments." Accessed January 31, 2022. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/cmas>.

<sup>29</sup> Colorado Department of Education. "READ Diagnostic and Summative Assessments." Accessed January 31, 2022. <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/readdiagnosticandsummativeassessments>.

The ACCESS for ELLs is an English language proficiency assessment given annually in grades K-12 to students identified as English language learners (ELLs)<sup>30</sup>. ACAD will meet federal guidelines for screening of students whose primary or home language is other than English to identify students who may qualify for English Language Development programming. ACCESS for ELLs will provide an objective assessment when a student meets proficiency in English and help Ascent Classical Academy staff improve its student services for English language learners.

#### Other Formal Assessments

Ascent Classical Academy will also make use of other formal assessments such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). This assessment is a nationally norm-referenced test that is a helpful diagnostic tool, in addition to the state required criterion-referenced assessments.

The Classical Learning Test (CLT) will be offered to students wishing to have an alternative college admissions assessment<sup>31</sup>. The CLT is accepted as an alternate college admissions test by an increasing number of colleges and universities and better aligns with Ascent Classical Academy classical model.

#### Interim and Summative Assessments

Ascent Classical Academy will use teacher- and staff-created interim and formative assessments to adapt and drive student instruction. These will include quizzes, tests, essays and other checks on learning. Teachers will develop their own assessments with the assistance of the program materials adopted throughout the school, and ensure the assessments are aligned to standards and learning objectives.

Literacy Essentials, Core Knowledge, and Singapore also have assessment tools to help guide teachers as they develop more thorough and in-depth assessments. Teachers will develop and use appropriate assessments to track student progress, areas needing improvement, and identify students needing additional support or referral as part of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS).

## **2. Data Management and Data Support for Teachers**

As an ongoing practice, data from both summative and formative assessments (informal and formal) will be collected and analyzed monthly to determine if students are making the expected progress, particularly in grammar school reading and math. The data collected will be used to determine appropriate placement in content mastery groups for math as well as evaluating student strengths, challenges, and weaknesses in the core content areas. The data from all assessments will be disaggregated to show a trend analysis not only for each student, but for all students. ACAD will use the results of the data to create information and intelligence to drive instruction. Adjustments will be made to instructional delivery and any other areas necessary to improve student achievement. The school will not expect significant adjustments to curriculum in the first three years as the academic program is implemented.

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<sup>30</sup> Colorado Department of Education. "English Language Proficiency Assessments." Accessed January 31, 2022. <http://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/ela>.

<sup>31</sup> Classical Learning Test. "How does the CLT compare to the SAT, ACT, and PSAT?" Accessed January 31, 2022. <https://www.cltexam.com/compare>.



Ascent Classical Academy believes in the importance of good assessments but also understand student learning and how teachers teach is central rather than merely focusing on raising test scores and school grades. Assessment should not always happen at the end of a lesson or unit but along the way. This ensures teachers have an opportunity to evaluate and inform instruction. Students also play a role in assessment as they assess themselves through reflection of their own individual work, mastery, and how they can improve and build on prior knowledge.

Student growth is an important measure of academic progress and the school's success. ACAD will primarily use the CMAS assessment to evaluate student growth to the Colorado Academic Standards. Using this data, the staff will determine the need for more frequent assessments based on student growth and performance.

The headmaster and Ascent Classical Academies staff will be responsible for creating and managing a performance management plan to monitor continuously student and school performance and to adjust assessment practices to fulfill the vision and mission of the school. The Performance Management Plan will include three components: a) a Student Information System (SIS), b) interim and formative assessments, and c) a data management system. Costs to implement and support the systems required in this plan are reflected in the budget. These systems are already in place at other campuses.

#### Student Information System (SIS)

A Student Information System is a software application or service that collects and stores items such as student contact information, grades, and attendance. Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools use a district implementation of PowerSchool given its open platform and modules that allow the automation of student applications, registration, and other functions that allow the school to meet its mission and vision.

Teacher training on the SIS will be provided during the training that takes place prior to the start of school each year. ACAD will deliver all required data for state reporting to the authorizer in the state-approved data formats.

#### Interim and Formative Assessments

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools use a number of formative and interim assessments to ensure student learning is successful on a daily basis:

- **End-of-Lesson Assessments** – A teacher's lesson planning requires an informal formative assessment with each lesson taught. Teachers must be able to show evidence that the lesson's learning target has been met by a majority of students. These informal assessments also help the teacher identify students who need additional teaching or opportunities for practice. If a teacher finds that an unexpected number of students do not pass the assessment, then other strategies will be implemented, such as re-teaching the material, offering better notes or practicing note-taking skills, using better handouts or reading material, coaching students on study skills, or offering a regular tutorial or review session. End-of-lesson assessments may include a classroom assignment that is reviewed by the teacher, such as a quiz or short writing assignment.

Teachers in grades K-8 will develop assessments based on guidance from the Core Knowledge material and the Ascent Classical Academies resource libraries to ensure assessments and learning objectives are in line

with the curriculum and sequence. Though teachers are responsible for creating their own examinations, they may use model tests provided by these organizations or master teachers in similar schools. The Core Knowledge Sequence used by ACAD is aligned with Colorado Academic Standards.

- **Interim Assessments** – These are more formal, teacher-developed assessments that are given at the end of a major unit. They provide the teacher with information about specific standards students have mastered, which need re-teaching, reinforcement, or additional practice, and which students are struggling with which skills. Interim assessments may be a test or a formal writing assignment. Assessments are developed at the beginning of the unit to provide evidence that students have mastered the standards and learning targets. Interim assessments will be given to measure progress against short-term and long-term goals.

### Data Management System (DMS)

Ascent Classical Academy Charter School is currently considering a new data management solution. The team is currently interested in the Performance Matters application, that integrates into PowerSchool, the network's current SIS. The system enables teachers and administrators to view data and create reports that provide meaningful information that can be used to plan for instruction and ensure that students' needs are being met. The data management system will also allow for longitudinal analysis of student growth. Student plans, such as Response to Intervention plan, English Language Development plans, and Individual Education Plans (IEPs), are maintained in Enrich.

### **3. Performance Standards**

The school will issue grades to each student for each class in which a student is enrolled. ACAD believes firmly in grade integrity. Grades will reflect the range between true mastery and insufficient knowledge of a subject.

A - Mastery	D - Insufficiency
B - Proficiency	F - Failing
C - Sufficiency (Competence)	

In addition to these general parameters, Ascent Classical Academy will be using a 4.0 grading scale to calculate Grade Point Averages (GPAs) in the high school. Core high school classes are taught at an honors level and will be awarded an additional point for purposes of GPA calculations outside the school. The letter and numerical grades for this system are listed below:

A	94-100%	4.0	C	74-77	2.0
A-	90-94	3.7	C-	70-74	1.7
B+	87-90	3.3	D+	67-70	1.3
B	84-87	3.0	D	64-67	1.0
B-	80-84	2.7	D-	60-64	.7
C+	77-80	2.3	F	0-60	0

The grading scale as defined above is utilized for all students. Incompletes should only be given under special circumstances as determined by the headmaster. Parents will be informed of the student's progress throughout the year.

Notices will be sent for students who have a D or F in an academic subject with the intent that the student's progress can be remediated before failing the term. A parent portal (PowerSchool provides this capability), which keeps parents up-to-date as grades are entered, may be used in lieu of notices sent home. Nonetheless, there should be an initial evaluation sent home after the first few weeks of the year. Further, parents whose native language is not English will be offered a special tutorial on the use of the parent portal.

If a student demonstrates significant deficiencies because of a weak educational background or other reason, the classroom teacher(s) will, in conjunction with Student Services, work on remediation strategies. This may include pull-out tutoring with the understanding that the purpose is to bring the student up to grade level. In the case of 7-12 grade students, extra tutoring may be assigned in place of electives or study hall. Parents or guardians will be informed and involved in developing strategies to support their child.

Additional information on course offerings and descriptions, promotion and graduation requirements, GPA calculation, triggers for intervention, and other related topics, are available in [Section D - Education Program and Standards](#) or the Family Handbook in Appendix 16.

The school will analyze and report assessment data and academic success annually to parents. The School Accountability Committee will monitor academic performance more frequently, throughout the year, and will make recommendations to the headmaster, who will keep the governing board informed.

ACAD will share the school's annual state assessment, PSAT/SAT, and other standardized exam results with parents and guardians through email, links on the school website, and in a letter reflecting individual scores sent home with students. The school will communicate with authorizer personnel to ensure they have the latest information. The public will also have access to Ascent Classical Academy of Durango's assessment results through other online resources like the Colorado Department of Education's Schoolview (<http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview>).

As part of the accountability process, the School Accountability Committee will also assist in developing the annual Unified Improvement Plan (UIP), a statutory duty of that committee.

## H. Enrollment Policy

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools has adopted the following non-discriminatory enrollment policy as required by law.

Ascent Classical Academies (ACA) admit students of any race, creed, color, sex, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or ancestry, and without regard to a student's disability or need for special education services, to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. Further, ACA does not discriminate on any such basis in administration of its educational or admissions policies, scholarship or athletic programs, other school-administered programs, or in its employment practices.

Within the time limits and priorities described below, students shall be enrolled at Ascent Classical Academy (ACA) in two rounds, the First and Second Enrollment Rounds.

### **First Enrollment Round (Lottery)**

The First Enrollment Round will be conducted by random lottery, consistent with all applicable laws and guidance.

#### Lottery Overview

In the event interest in a grade exceeds its capacity, enrollment is determined by a random lottery system. All completed applications turned in by the deadline will be eligible for the lottery. All applicants are randomly selected during the lottery. Should there be more lottery applicants than available seats, students are randomly assigned waitlist numbers. ACACS does not carry its enrollment list over from year to year and students not selected in the lottery will be invited to reapply for the following year.

#### Lottery Application Process

The headmaster or designee will determine, based upon the total number of students currently enrolled, how many enrollment openings are available for each grade level. Class size may be approximately 25-32 students per class with two or three classes per grade, totaling 50 to 96 students per grade. Classes may be over-enrolled by two students per class to account for natural attrition. The headmaster may determine final class sizes. Applications are processed online. Prospective parents without online access may come to the school to apply or use a terminal at a public library. The application will not request demographic information or if a student requires special services.

#### Lottery Application Criteria

Parents may submit an enrollment for their child anytime during the Enrollment period for the appropriate grade level for their child and only for the upcoming school year. Only full-time students will be accepted.

### Weighted Lottery Guidelines

The content-rich curriculum, instructional style, and culture at ACACS contribute to creating a learning environment where children with various needs and backgrounds can thrive. To attract and serve families not otherwise served with quality education options, ACACS offers a weighted lottery, where Free and/or Reduced Lunch (FRL) eligible children are given a weight within their lottery category. This is intended to increase the chances for FRL-eligible children to obtain an offer through the lottery. Headmasters will set the weight of the preference based to student demographics.

### Lottery Application Deadline

All applications for the lottery must be filled out completely and legibly. Applications received after the deadline indicated below will be added to the end of the waitlist in the order they are received.

### Lottery Mechanics

When the number of eligible applicants exceeds the space available in a particular grade to which admission is sought, a process of random selection shall be conducted. Random selection will occur when the priority list of applicants has been exhausted. ACACS's lottery is conducted giving consideration to a number of different priority statuses.

#### *Priority 1: Founder Preference*

Those children whose parents/guardians were active in the planning process by serving on the founding interim governing board, an advisor to the founding interim governing board, active volunteer who completes 30 hours of service, or other criteria established by the Governing Board beneficial to the successful founding of the school, will receive priority for admission if their applications are received by the application deadline. Said families must have been designated a "founding family" by ACACS. Reserved Priority 1 seats will not exceed 20% of grade capacity, as required by federal guidance. Priority 1 families will taper off throughout the existence of the school as their children graduate. Founding Family status will no longer be given after the opening day of the school.

#### *Priority 2: Staff Preference*

Children of staff members of Ascent Classical Academies and Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools who work 30 or more hours per week will receive priority for admission. These children will be allowed to remain in the school regardless of whether or not the parent/guardian remains employed by the school.

The total number of students enrolled under the priority Founder/Staff policy will not exceed 20% of the school's population. If there are fewer spots than the number of priority applicants, then a separate lottery is held for these applicants with priority status. Children of Founders and Staff are given priority over siblings. Any student falling under the Founder/Staff policy who is not eligible for priority due to exceeding the 20% threshold, will be designated to the next highest applicable priority level.

#### *Priority 3: Sibling/Household Preference*

It is the intent of ACACS to support whole families and create a cohesive and inclusive school community. Siblings of enrolled students will receive priority for admission if their applications are received by the

designated deadline. Families may also apply for household priority. Household priority is given when a child, who is not a sibling, lives with a currently enrolled or admitted family. In this situation, custody papers or other legal documentation must be provided to claim priority.

Siblings of multiples, such as twins or triplets, will be grouped together within their respective priority category.

#### *Priority 4: Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools Network Preference*

ACACS allows a preference to children who have previously attended the school or another school in the Ascent Classical Academy Charter School network. Children must have attended a complete school year at an affiliated school to be eligible for this preference.

#### *General Lottery*

Once priority seats have been filled, ACACS holds a general lottery as described above. The lottery will be held no later than the second Monday of February. Seats will be assigned randomly.

At the conclusion of the lottery for each grade level, applicants will be ordered on a waitlist for each grade.

### **Second Round Enrollment**

The Second Round Enrollment period opens as soon as the First Round is closed to new applications.

Applicants applying in the Second Round will be offered open seats or placed on a wait list on a first-come, first-served basis, after the First-Round lottery is conducted and wait lists established.

### **Grounds for Denial of Admission**

Subject to the school's responsibilities under the Exceptional Children's Educational Act and applicable federal, state and local laws, the following will constitute ground for denial of admission to the school:

- Failure to meet an age requirement.
- Having been expelled from any school district in the preceding twelve months.
- Having engaged in behavior in another school during the preceding twelve months that is detrimental to the welfare or safety of other students or of school personnel.
- Failure to comply with state immunization laws, including providing documentation of an exemption.
- Falsification of application or enrollment documents.

### **Time Frame and Public Notice**

The First-Round application period will take place from October through 2:30pm of the Friday of the first full school week of January. Grade-level lists will be compiled no later than the second Monday following the close of the First-Round application deadline. Once a name is drawn, the parent(s) will be notified by email and given 72 hours to accept or decline the seat. This offer is only for the grade level the parent applied to for their child. If the parents(s) cannot be contacted because they failed to make notification of changes in their email or phone number, they shall be removed from the lottery pool.

If the parent declines an opening offered to their child, that child's name is withdrawn from the application pool and the parent(s) may choose to reapply at a later date.

If a student is offered a seat into the school after August 1, the parent or guardian must respond within 48 hours or that child's name is withdrawn from the application pool. The parent or guardian may choose to reapply to be put back into the application pool.

Openings at ACACS schools will be advertised at school information meetings, on web sites, public newsletters, and posted in the schools. ACACS will not discriminate in recruiting and will reach out broadly to the entire community, including households that do not speak English as a primary language, students with disabilities, and other underserved groups to inform of early enrollment list availability.

### **Enrollment Deadline**

The school will only accept new students after October 1st with approval of the campus headmaster.

### **Re-Enrollment for Current Students**

Families with children currently attending the school do not need to enter the lottery each year but they must do two things to secure their seat for the following year.

Each December parents or guardians of students currently enrolled in the school will receive a form asking if they are planning on returning the following year and if so, how many children they would like to reenroll. This information helps determine how many seats are available for the lottery. Failure to return the forms by the deadline may result in the loss of a student's seat for the following year. This step is **NOT** the registration for the following school year. Additional steps must be taken to secure a seat for the following year.

All currently enrolled students must be re-registered between April 1 and June 30 for the next school year. A student is not fully registered until this step is complete.

ACACS will notify currently enrolled families of the registration process via e-mail and in writing via the school newsletter at the end of each school year. School staff will offer several reminders via e-mail. The school is not required to make individual reminder calls.

It is the sole responsibility of the parent or guardian to keep his or her e-mail and phone numbers updated as well as follow the registration process and meet the required deadlines. If a parent or guardian fails to make the deadline and fails to notify the admissions director, the seat will be offered to the next person on the wait list. The parent or guardian may choose to have the student's name added to the bottom of the wait list.

## **Complete Registration Process**

After being offered a seat at the school, parents or guardians will be required to complete additional steps to complete their registration, including notifying their current school of their acceptance of a seat at the school and authorizing their child's records be transferred to the school.

This deadline will be established by the headmaster, or designee, and communicated to parents or guardians. If parents or guardians do not inform their previous school and authorize the release of their child's records by the deadline, they may forfeit their seat, and it will be offered to the next child on the waitlist.

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools retains ownership of its Enrollment Policy and may update it as needed, to include ensuring compliance with federal grant guidelines. The policy will include strict prohibitions on discrimination and meet all applicable laws.

## **Online and Part-Time Programs**

Enrollment and participation in an online or part-time program of the school does not give the child a priority for the lottery of the school.

References to "parents" in this policy also apply to legal guardians.



# I. Governance

## 1. Governing Board

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango (ACAD or Ascent Classical Academy) is a replication charter school and part of Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools (ACACS), a Colorado-based charter school network organized under C.R.S. § 22-30.5-104.7. As such, the governing board is already established and operating other charter schools in Colorado. The board governs by Policy Governance<sup>32</sup>. The governing board will oversee and create the educational and operational policies of the school to ensure adherence to the school's stated mission, vision, and philosophy. The implementation of board policies and procedures, and daily operations will be the responsibility of the school headmaster and the executive director of the education service provider (ESP). Board bylaws and governance policies are already adopted and available in the appendices. See **Appendix 16, 18, 20, 21 and 28**.

A typical charter application for a new school would include information on a steering committee and how that body will transition in the governing body of the charter school. In the case of ACAD, most of this content is not applicable. ACACS has engaged the education service provider of its existing campuses, Ascent Classical Academies, to lead the effort to establish this charter school. Nonetheless, the ESP team is working alongside members of the local community to bring this school to the Durango, and greater, community. Since an experienced, full-time team is dedicated to opening this school, there is a significant, and the necessary talent and expertise to ensure the success of the school.

### Mission and Vision Guidance

The mission and vision will guide all the efforts to govern and operate ACAD. These statements, along with the philosophies described previously, will be guiding principles driving the board's decision-making processes for the students and families served. The mission will be posted prominently throughout the school building, included on all board meeting agendas, and referenced before making any key governance and operating decisions. It will also be included as an important aspect in parent and community communications and documents, such as the family handbook.

### Board Governance Overview

It is the responsibility of the board to oversee the academic, financial, and organizational viability of ACAD. The board will focus on governance while the management partner, ACA focuses on day-to-day operations. The steering committee will continue working to successfully open the school under the direction of the governing board.

Responsibilities of the governing board include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The board will evaluate all aspects of the school as being consistent with the mission, vision, and philosophy of the school as defined in the ACAD approved founding document.
- The board will approve and evaluate the headmaster annually.
- The board will operate openly and comply with all statutory requirements of a public governing body.

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<sup>32</sup> John Carver, *Boards That Make a Difference*, Third ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006).

- The board is responsible for providing strategic leadership for the school.
- The board has a fiduciary responsibility to ensure that the ACAD students receive maximum benefit from the educational resources available.
- The board is responsible for financial oversight to support the financial stability of the school.
- The board has final responsibility in all fiscal affairs of the school.
- The board will provide oversight of the management partner, ACA, to ensure the organization is serving the needs and expectations of the school.
- The board will conduct an annual self-evaluation to assess and ensure effectiveness.

### Board Composition

As the governing board of a charter network, the board oversees several schools in Colorado. The governing board is self-replicating, with existing members appointing new members. The ACACS network board endeavors to ensure representation from the geographic areas in which it operates and intends to appoint a member from the Durango area. This network governance structure is endorsed by the Colorado Department of Education.

Per the ACACS bylaws, the governing board does not have quotas on who may be on the board though does not allow employees or contractors as voting members. The board is composed of a minimum of five directors, while preferring to operate with at least five members, all on three-year terms. When considering candidates, the board identifies desired skillsets and those existing among its members. The board solicits applicants from among its parent population and broader community and also actively recruits candidates with the desired skillsets and commitment to the mission and vision of the organization.

The governing board members are:

**Rob Williams:** Mr. Williams is the Chairman of the Board of Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools. He is the Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of the Erie County Investment CO; a firm primarily involved in real estate and oil and gas development ventures. Mr. Williams participates in and substantially influences all strategic operating decisions and oversees all accounting, administrative, auditing, information technology, and tax functions for Erie, its affiliates, and subsidiaries. Before joining Erie, he was employed as a tax accountant with a public accounting firm. Mr. Williams is a certified public accountant (CPA), and a member of several accounting organizations: the American Institute of CPA's; the Colorado Society of CPA's; and the Council of Petroleum Accountants Societies. He has a Bachelor's degree in accounting and a Master of Business Administration (emphasis in finance and accounting) degree from Regis University. Rob and his wife, Katie, have 2 children who attend Ascent Classical Academy of Douglas County.

**Stephen Gilmartin:** Mr. Gilmartin is the Vice-Chair of the Board of Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools. Mr. Gilmartin is an attorney and public policy advocate, having litigated in courts at all levels in multiple states including the Supreme Court of the United States and the Colorado Court of Appeals. Mr. Gilmartin is also an expert in business processes and software tools, serving as a consultant to small and medium sized companies to reduce their costs, improve efficiencies, and drive information based decision making. Mr. Gilmartin earned a BA with honors in Sovietology from the University of Vermont. He earned his JD from Emory University School of Law. Mr. Gilmartin and his wife have three children and reside in Littleton, CO.

**Allen Fuller:** Mr. Fuller is the Secretary of the Board of Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools. Mr. Fuller is a seasoned entrepreneur who has spent 20 years weaving emerging technology with advocacy for the principles he believes in. During his career he has served as a legislative staffer in the US Senate and a communications director in the US House, staffed numerous campaigns, advised Fortune 50 companies, led a think tank, and founded Flat Creek. Mr. Fuller holds a master's degree in eCommerce from The University of Alabama. He resides in Boulder County, Colorado with his wife and three children.

**Rick Gillan:** Mr. Gillan is a Director of the Board of Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools. Since joining Huwa Enterprises in 2012 Mr. Gillan and the company owners have grown the reclamation operations from \$20MM to well over \$100 MM in gross revenue and now serve 36 of the United States. He managed the effort to build teams and systems for operations, safety, human resources, accounting, project management, equipment management and marketing. He also led the addition of services including soil science and environmental consulting that set Huwa's reclamation companies far above the competition. In the last two decades of the 20th century, Mr. Gillan and his partners grew an engineering and surveying business out of the basement into a 70-person regional leader in specialized land development, forensic engineering, and repair design. international distribution on 6 continents before selling the company a decade after founding it.

**Steven Peck:** Mr. Peck is a Director of the Board of Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools. He served 9 years in the United States Navy. In 2016, Mr. Peck joined the Douglas County School Board. He has 14 years of healthcare experience in operations management and sales in both the for-profit and non-profit settings. Today, Mr. Peck works as an Associate Account Executive on Stryker's robotic sales team to bring disruptive technology to joint replacement surgery. He lives with his wife Sarah and his children in Highlands Ranch.

As noted, Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools already has an established governing board. Ascent Classical Academy of Durango is being developed by a steering committee of local Durango-area residents and experienced staff and educators from Ascent Classical Academies. The steering committee members will continue being involved to implement the program to ensure the success of the school. Because of this, the steering committee will not be transitioning to a governing board.

Members of the steering committee include:

**Lyn O'Brien:** Mrs. O'Brien is the parent of twin 6<sup>th</sup> graders whose education is her top priority. Mrs. O'Brien's children attend a private K-8 school, and since enrolling them in kindergarten, has been searching for classical education that would take them through their high school years to prepare them for a bright future. Mrs. O'Brien has been a nurse for the past 20 years and holds a master's degree in Nursing Education. As a college educator, Mrs. O'Brien recognizes that a quality of one's K-12 education influences college success and the ability to accomplish life goals. As a member of the steering committee to bring Ascent Classical Academy to the Durango Area, Mrs. O'Brien has spoken with dozens of parents on Ascent's Expression of Interest list and is passionate about bringing this traditional education model to the community.

**Jean Hamilton:** Mrs. Hamilton is a recently retired Director of Peri-Operative Services for Mercy Regional Medical Center in Durango. As a manager of nurses for more than 20 years, she values high-quality educational options. Originally from New Jersey, Mrs. Hamilton has lived in Southwest Colorado for

decades and along with her husband, raised her two adult children seeking the best education they could find in their small country community. Mrs. Hamilton is now a proud grandparent of two young grandsons whose education is equally paramount. As their frequent caregiver and tutor, Mrs. Hamilton is keenly aware of how the traditional basics of classical education can benefit the students of Durango and surrounding communities. Mrs. Hamilton has been on the steering committee for Ascent Classical Academy Durango since its inception and is proud to be working toward its opening in 2023 for not only her grandsons, but for the hundreds of families in the Durango area who desire a classical approach to education.

**Karen Midkiff:** Mrs. Midkiff was the President and Chief Development Officer for the Mercy Health Foundation for 20 years. She retired in 2020, having served the healthcare community in Durango for more than 40 years. At the Mercy Health Foundation, Mrs. Midkiff was the Major Gift Fundraiser and interacted with hundreds of members of the Durango community over the years. Mrs. Midkiff believes that education is a common point of conversation among community members, hearing a continual call for more choice in education and traditional options for K-12 families. Mrs. Midkiff joined the steering committee for Ascent Classical Academy Durango after her retirement, knowing the Durango community well and recognizing that classical education is a missing piece of the current educational landscape. Mrs. Midkiff is excited to be a part of this effort and believes there are hundreds of families who will champion this school for their children and/or grandchildren.

**Christy Foreman:** Mrs. Foreman's passion for education began early in high school where she worked with at-risk youth and with the special education department. She recognized quickly that touching lives through education was her calling. Mrs. Foreman attended Oregon State University where she earned her master's degree in Education and an Oregon teaching License. Upon moving back to Durango, Mrs. Foreman started her own event coordinating business, Elevated Events while also staying involved in their family business, Oscars Café, a Durango restaurant which has been in business for 42 years. When Mrs. Foreman and her husband started a family, she found herself extra focused on the education environment available in the Durango community. She is devoted to public education and advocates for access to high quality opportunities to encourage a love of learning and self-accountability. The Foremans currently homeschools their oldest son, Hudson (8), where he is thriving and developing a genuine excitement for learning. She is passionate about classical education and the importance of instilling accountability, diligence and dedication in learners.

**Derec Shuler:** Mr. Shuler is the Executive Director for Ascent Classical Academies. He is the founder of Golden View Classical Academy. He is an entrepreneur with a background in business, real estate, technology and project management. He was an officer and special agent in the United States Army Reserves. Mr. Shuler has been involved in education as a member of A+, Stand for Children, Colorado Succeeds, KIPP Colorado, is an education policy fellow with the Centennial Institute, and a member of the Leadership Network of the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). He has worked with several other charter schools, including as a member of the steering committee of a charter startup in Denver Public Schools. Mr. Shuler has public elected board experience dealing with public funds, administration and governance. Mr. Shuler and his wife have two children, who attend a classical charter school.

**Kim Gilmartin:** Mrs. Gilmartin is the Director of New School Development and Outreach for Ascent Classical Academies. She is also a founding family and served on the Board of Directors for Golden View Classical Academy from 2015 to 2020, where her three children attend. Mrs. Gilmartin is passionate about

education reform and education policy and became actively involved in the Colorado charter school movement in 2014. Before starting her career in education reform, Mrs. Gilmartin was the co-founder of an Internet marketing company for several years. Prior to that, she spent 10 years as an executive with various cable and video providers including Comcast, AT&T Broadband, TCI, and WSNNet. Mrs. Gilmartin is a part of the American Enterprise Institute Leadership Network. Mrs. Gilmartin resides in Littleton, CO with her husband and three children.

**Jacob Clay:** Mr. Clay is an Assistant Headmaster and Director of Student Services and at Ascent Classical Academy of Douglas County, where he manages programs to support the education of students, to include special education and other accommodates. He comes from a lineage of longtime Colorado natives who have been here for multiple generations. When 9/11 happened, Mr. Clay answered the call by serving in the United States Coast Guard and Dept. of Homeland Security in multiple capacities including counter terrorism, drug interdiction, and continuity of government operations. After his service, his love of lifelong learning led him to become an educator and later a school administrator over the course of 13 years in high achievement school districts located in Texas and Colorado. Seeing the positive and beneficial impact that an American classical liberal arts education has on children, Mr. Clay joined the Ascent Classical leadership team two years ago to further the mission to bring a classical and virtue-centered education to more children. Mr. Clay earned his B.S. in History and Business from Colorado State University and his M.S. in Educational Leadership from WGU. He also currently sits on multiple state and federal advisory committees for such agencies as the Dept. of Homeland Security, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and leads regional private sector safety/security coalitions. Mr. Clay lives in Castle Rock, Colorado with his wife and three children who attend Ascent Classical Academy of Douglas County.

**Mark McAfee:** Mr. McAfee is the Headmaster of Ascent Classical Academy of Douglas County and is in his 25th year as an educator. He holds a master's degree in Educational Leadership as well as an undergraduate degree in Social Studies and a minor in Liberal Arts. Mr. McAfee taught literature, U.S. history, government, and economics to junior high and high school students for 12 years before transitioning into administration. After four years as an elementary school principal, in 2013 Mr. McAfee became the founding Headmaster of a classical, liberal arts secondary school in Queen Creek, Arizona. While there, he helped develop their classical curriculum and is known for his focus on working with and developing the teaching staff.

**Justin Kasten:** Mr. Kasten is the Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Ascent Classical Academies. Mr. Kasten provides leadership and vision in the ongoing planning, development, evaluation, and implementation of ACA's curriculum. He will work to ensure that Ascent's classical academic program is aligned to the standards and instructional practices that yield the greatest student achievement, intellectual growth, and character development. This includes maintaining grammar school curriculum maps and the upper school course catalog, aligning curricula across campuses, developing and delivering training, supporting teachers and headmasters with program implementation (via program documentation, teacher observations, and coaching), and maintaining instructional resources for all campuses and teaching faculty.

Leaders and staff within the current Ascent Classical Academies (ACA) network are assisting in the planning and implementation of ACAD. As a school that is part of the ACACS network, ACAD will work closely with both Ascent Classical Academy of Douglas County and Ascent Classical Academy of Northern Colorado, to access the experience, processes and procedures these charter schools have developed, to

include areas like student information systems (SIS) and providing additional supports to students. The school will hire a headmaster to begin work as soon as possible, and earlier should the school receive a federal grant under the Charter School Program (CSP).

The ACA network includes partnerships with our business operations team and other staff and teachers to assist in the implementation, to include teacher professional development and other operational support.

Key activities in the successful development of the school include family and community outreach and engagement, student enrollment, securing facilities, hiring a highly-qualified school leader, evaluating student services case load and hiring, hiring staff, ordering curriculum, equipment and material necessary to operate the school, and initial training.

Board member resumes are included in **Appendix 17**.

#### Board Orientation and Development

The governing board takes its commitment to professional development and meeting its legal obligation to the citizens of Colorado seriously. This commitment to develop the capacity of the board is even more essential since this board oversees multiple charter schools in Colorado.

When a new member is added to the board, that new director receives an initial orientation that includes legal obligations of a Colorado public board. A new director also receives a Board Agreement packet they are required to review and sign that they have read and agree to follow. The Board Agreement includes information on the mission and vision of Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools, important reference material on the organization, to include charter and ESP management agreements, by-laws, and other governing documents, legal and ethical expectations of board members, and descriptions of individual director and officer responsibilities and duties.

Most of the members of the board have served through at least three different awards of the Colorado Charter Schools Program (CCSP) grant, a federal grant that the Colorado Department of Education administers that requires extensive board development and technical assistance. An example of training required by the CCSP that the board has already completed is found in the table below.

### Governing Board Support in Planning Year

1. Charter School Board Training Modules: Complete modules 1-6, 8-11, 14, 17, 23, and 25 - Required
2. Board Fundamentals (2 events) - 1 Required
3. Specialized Governing Board Training (scheduled individually) - Encouraged
4. Topic Based Webinars (4 to 6 offered annually) - Encouraged
5. Colorado or National Charter Schools Conference Breakout Sessions (schedule individually) - encouraged
6. Performance Management Training: UIP training - Encouraged
7. Performance Management Training: Data Dashboard training - Required

### Governing Board Support in Year 1 Implementation

1. Charter School Board Training Modules: Complete modules 7, 12, 13, 15, 16, 19-22, 24, and 26,30 - Required
2. Board Fundamentals (2 events) - Encouraged
3. Specialized Governing Board Training (scheduled individually) - Encouraged
4. Topic Based Webinars (4 to 6 offered annually) - Encouraged
5. Colorado or National Charter Schools Conference Breakout Sessions (schedule individually) - encouraged
6. Performance Management Training: UIP training - Required

### Governing Board Support in Year 2 Implementation

1. Board Fundamentals (2 events) - Encouraged
2. Specialized Governing Board Training (scheduled individually) - Encouraged
3. Topic Based Webinars (4 to 6 offered annually) - Encouraged
4. Performance Management Training: Board Self-Assessment - Required
5. Performance Management Training: Strategic Planning Training - Required

These training requirements are available from the Colorado Department of Education at <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/tarequirementsgoverningboard>.

Table 2. CCSP Board Technical Assistance Requirements

The governing board receives annual training on basic requirements of a public board and institution, to include the Colorado Open Records Act (CORA), Colorado Open Meetings law (COML), and non-discrimination.

In addition to the board development required by the CCSP and normal annual training, the board and the staff of the ESP discuss focus areas for other, and more advanced areas of development annually to develop a board training plan, that includes a governance topic at least quarterly, in addition to other training. These topics have included how to read financial statements, strategic planning, governance vs management, the Colorado charter authorizing environment, reviews and discussions on various contracts and agreements, especially with the ESP, and conflicts of interest.



The board also accesses other board development resources, opportunities, and expertise, to include those provided by the Colorado Department of Education, the Colorado League of Charter Schools, the Colorado Charter School Institute, the Barney Charter School Initiative, Ascent Classical Academies, and Dr. Brian Carpenter, a nationally recognized author and expert in charter school governance.

Overall development and training for the governing board exceeds the “two half-day trainings per year” recommended by the Colorado League of Charter Schools.

#### School Accountability Committee

The School Accountability Committee (SAC) is an all-volunteer committee responsible for monitoring the academic progress, school safety, and appropriate resource allocation of the school. The SAC will fulfill its function by administering school surveys, regularly reporting to the headmaster, and making recommendations on the unified improvement plan (UIP) and budget priorities to the headmaster. The SAC provides a report on the annual parent survey to the governing board. The school will expand the expectations of the SAC to allow it to serve as a mechanism for additional parent and community input to the school.

The SAC initially will be composed of the headmaster, two ACAD teachers, four ACAD parents, and one Durango community member. The headmaster will appoint the SAC. Parent representatives will always be the majority block and the chairman will be a parent, selected from among the committee. The organization and responsibilities of the SAC will comply with C.R.S. §22-11-401 *et seq.*

In the event the school is placed on a priority improvement or turnaround plan, the SAC will hold a public hearing to obtain public input concerning possible strategies for improvement.

#### Board Subcommittees

Advisory committees may be created to assist with policy setting and operation of the school. Policy-setting committees will report to the board. Committees created by the board may be filled through appointment by the board chairman or by majority vote of the board, depending on the committee. The board shall determine how committee members will be selected when it first creates the committee. Board committees shall be composed of at least one director and other persons selected by the board to serve on that committee. The ACA executive director and board chairman, or his designee, shall be ex-officio, non-voting members of all board committees. The board has a standing finance committee.

All board actions and decisions made prior to authorization of this campus will be done in a public meeting in accordance with the governing boards current practices.

## **2. Legal Status and Governing Documents**

#### Bylaws

The Bylaws of Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools were developed in consultation with legal counsel and are included in **Appendix 18**. Key provisions of the bylaws are summarized below:



**Number of Directors** – The board will have at least five directors. The board may vote to increase the number of voting directors, not to exceed nine, with a 2/3 majority vote.

**Director Qualifications** – Candidates to the board must support the stated mission and curriculum of the school and profess a strong desire to be involved in the governance of the school in terms of the stated mission, vision and philosophy of the school.

**Terms of Voting Directors** – Directors will serve three-year terms. Board seats are designated as “A,” “B,” or “C” class seats which indicate when the terms expire. Board terms are staggered.

**Appointment** - The ACACS Governing Board will be self-perpetuating. New directors will be selected by the existing directors. Appointments will take place in May, and newly appointed directors will begin their terms in July.

**Meetings and Attendance Expectations** - The board shall meet at least once per month when school is in session and all meetings shall be open to the public. Special meetings of the board may be called by the ACA executive director or the board chairman. A notice and agenda for every meeting shall be publicly posted no later than 24 hours prior to a meeting. Meeting minutes shall be drafted; draft minutes will be approved by majority vote of the directors, and approved minutes will be publicly posted. Colorado Open Meetings Law will govern executive sessions. The board will adopt the board meeting dates at the beginning of the fiscal year and locations at which meeting notices and agendas will be posted, which will always include the website of the school.

The board shall comply with these and other requirements of the Colorado Open Meetings Law, any amendments to it, and any successor to the law. Directors are expected to attend all meetings, unless excused; unexcused absences from two or more of the Board meetings in any year shall be grounds for removal of a Director.

**Quorum and Voting** - A quorum at all meetings of the board shall consist of a majority of the voting directors. Directors present by telephone shall be deemed to be present “in person”, provided such persons can simultaneously hear and speak to all other persons present. Each director shall have one vote; Directors may not vote by proxy. Unless otherwise specified in the Bylaws, the act of a majority of the directors present at a meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the act of the Board.

**Vacancies** – In the event of a vacancy (or vacancies) on the board, it shall be the duty of the remaining, voting directors to appoint new director(s) to fill those vacancies, to achieve a minimum of five, voting directors. A new director appointed to fill a vacancy shall fill the unexpired portion of that term.

**Resignation** - A director may resign at any time by giving written notice of resignation to any member of the board. The resignation is effective when the notice is received, unless the notice specifies a later effective date.

**Removal** - Any member of the board may be removed by the affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the voting directors. The agenda produced for that meeting must state that there will be a vote to remove a director, and the subject of the vote must be named in the agenda. A director may be removed for violating board policies, the board agreement, or when no longer meeting the qualifications for director, including a failure to support the state mission and philosophy of the school.

**Officers of the Board** - The officers of the board shall consist of the chair, vice-chair, secretary and treasurer. Any member of the board is eligible to hold one of these positions. The board shall appoint its officers at the annual meeting (May).

**Amendments** - The bylaws may be amended with the approval of two-thirds (2/3) of the board of directors.

#### Articles of Incorporation

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools is a Colorado non-profit corporation and has current Articles of Incorporation filed with the Colorado Secretary of State. Ascent Classical Academy of Durango is a filed tradename under ACACS. The charter contract will be between the Durango 9-R School District and Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools for the campus known as Ascent Classical Academy of Durango.

It is ACACS's obligation to operate with transparency in the oversight and operations of the school. ACACS embraces the responsibility of the board's financial stewardship of public tax dollars. The articles of incorporation as a non-member corporation are included as **Appendix 18**.

#### 501(C)3 Status

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools is recognized as a non-profit organization under Internal Revenue Service Code 501(c)3. The IRS designation letter is included in **Appendix 19**.

#### Legal Compliance and School Policies

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools are non-sectarian, non-religious public schools, and in all respects, shall operate as such.

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools shall comply with all applicable federal and state laws, rules and regulations related to non-discrimination. ACACS will comply with the Colorado Open Meetings Law (see C.R.S. § 24-6-401) ("OML") and Colorado Open Records Act (see C.R.S. § 24-72-204) ("CORA"), and any successors thereto. As described in detail above, the governing board will post its agenda and run its meetings in accord with the OML. Similarly, ACACS will comply with the Open Records Act and has an adopted CORA policy and webpage for CORA submissions.

With assistance and guidance from legal counsel, the board has all necessary policies and procedures already in place, including those related to discipline, student records, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Open Meetings Act, the Colorado Public Records Act, the Colorado Sunshine Law, special education, English language learners, student identification and related services, emergency procedures, and fiscal operations. School leadership, in conjunction with ACA, will develop and recommend school policies to the board. The board will review and adopt or revise policies consistent with

the mission and vision of the school and any legal requirements. The board has also worked with the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI) in the development of many policies to ensure compliance with any applicable laws and regulations.

The Family Handbook, that includes most ACACS policies, is included in **Appendix 16**.

### Conflicts of Interest

The board will govern the school with respect, dignity, and the utmost consideration for ethical behavior and processes. Pursuant to the bylaws and conflict of interest policy, a board member shall inform the board of any direct or indirect conflict of interest with regard to any transaction contemplated by the board. Conflicts of interest include transactions in which a member of the board has a material financial interest, or with which the member is presently serving as a director, officer, or general partner of another party. The transaction may be approved only by a vote of the majority of board members who have no conflict of interest. The adopted Conflict of Interest Policy can be found in **Appendix 20**.

The board will consult independent legal counsel should any real or apparent conflict of interest arise.

### Board Member Agreement

The governing board has adopted a comprehensive board member agreement. In addition to agreeing to uphold the mission of ACACS and act in the best interests of the schools and non-profit corporation, as outlined in the bylaws, all members of the governing board are required to submit to annual conflict of interest and sign the board member agreement. Attached is a copy of the agreement as **Appendix 21** of this application. Lastly, all members of the board shall complete a criminal background check.

### Parent and Community Member Grievances

Parents and guardians are partners in the education of their children, and addressing and responding to the concerns of parents or guardians will be a priority for the school. School leaders and teachers will actively work to engage in open dialogue with parents about any questions or concerns they have about the school or their children. The family handbook (**Appendix 16**) will be distributed to each family at orientation before school opening and will include a presentation of the parent- and community member-grievance process. The process will also be featured on the website of the school. The board has also included its policy addressing grievances in **Appendix 22**. This policy may be further amended in consultation with legal counsel.

### *Parent Concerns/Grievances Process*

Classroom teachers will be the first line of communication for parents and guardians to address concerns. Teachers will respond to parent inquiries promptly, respectfully, and in accordance with the school's guidelines for handling parent grievances. If parents are unsatisfied with the response from their student's classroom teacher (or if the nature of the complaint does not involve a classroom teacher), parents should contact the headmaster for academic and assistant headmaster for non-academic matters, to arrange a meeting to discuss the concerns. The school leadership will make every reasonable attempt to respond appropriately to parent concerns in such a way that resolves the issue satisfactorily.

On the rare occasion when speaking directly with the teacher or the school leadership team does not resolve the concern, parents or guardians may bring the unresolved concern to the full-time staff at ACA for a more prompt review. If this step does not satisfy the parents or guardians may advance their grievance to the governing board. The board may decide to let a previous decision stand, have the concern addressed by a committee of the board, or direct a grievance to the entire board. Parent concerns directly relating to a board policy or decision, an alleged violation of state law, charter, or other applicable laws, or concerns about the school management or operations, will be advised to be brought directly to ACA. Concerns brought to the board must be presented in writing.

### Community Concerns and Input

The school intends to be a good neighbor – students, parents, and staff live in and around the community, and the school will strive to be a successful contributor to the community’s economic, social, and cultural success. Community residents wanting to express concerns, share ideas, or make requests of the school will be welcomed at regularly scheduled public board meetings. Time will be allotted on the agenda for each regular meeting for public comment.

## **3. Oversight of Operations**

### Board Oversight of Operations

As outlined earlier in this section, it is the board’s responsibility to ensure the school fulfills its mission. The governing board is already operating, so a transition plan does not apply for this school.

The board will make sure the school has the needed systems, personnel, and resources in place to create an environment conducive to scholarly learning and designed to meet the academic and operational goals. The board will perform the functions essential to governance, including ensuring that students are learning, that funds are appropriately managed, and that the school complies with all charter, state, and federal requirements. If needed, the board will create smaller committees to further address specific topics, such as a finance committee, that will meet and report back to the ACACS governing board as a whole. Independent legal counsel will assist in reviewing policies and carrying out the board’s duties to govern the school.

Annually the board will contract with an independent auditor to ensure fiscal propriety, and may contract with a third-party evaluator of the educational program as necessary for an independent perspective on the performance of our school.

More specifically, board roles and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Articulating, maintaining, and driving the mission throughout the school community.
- Holding ACA, the education service provider, accountable for the efficient and effective operation of the school and for the achievement of academic goals.
- Establishing priorities for the allocation of school resources.
- Reviewing and approving the school’s annual budgets and ensuring that proper financial procedures are in place and effectively implemented.

- Reviewing, approving, and monitoring progress toward academic, financial, and operational goals.
- Reviewing and approving school policies.
- Appointing officers and committees as needed.
- Adopting, amending, and repealing bylaws as needed.
- Developing and maintaining effective relations with the authorizer and necessary state departments.
- Ensuring that meetings are conducted in accordance with the Open Records Act and the Colorado Sunshine Law.

#### *Partnership with Ascent Classical Academies (ACA)*

The ACACS governing board has contracted with Ascent Classical Academies for the operation of the school and to implement the program described in this charter application. The ACA team has experience opening and operating classical charter schools in Colorado, more specifically those using the academic program recommended by the Barney Charter School Initiative (BCSI). The school will be better served by ACA's experience and involvement in this school and the school being a part of the ACACS network.

ACA was selected as the management partner based on the organization's expertise, resources, experience, productive interactions with the ACACS governing board, and expressed commitment to the community. ACA is uniquely positioned and unquestionably qualified to deliver the educational program envisioned for the school, and offers the comprehensive array of school management services desired.

With the financial and operational resources and expertise ACA brings to this effort and with the ACACS governing board's diverse professional backgrounds, ACAD and ACA will form a strong partnership that provides a new, excellent educational choice to families in the greater La Plata County community.

The ACA partnership offers a comprehensive educational program including curriculum, professional development, and staffing, as well as addition facility options for the school – that aligns with the mission. Given ACA's commitment to excellence in the charter school sector, ACAD and ACA will create a strong team to launch, operate, and succeed with the school.

Importantly, the services agreement with ACA also outlines in detail the organization's operational responsibilities. These responsibilities include comprehensive educational and administrative services. Subject to the oversight of the board, ACA will be required to implement operational practices and procedures that are consistent with board policy, the school's charter agreement, and applicable law. Such practices and procedures include:

- Student recruitment and student admissions.
- Student assessments, including testing, promotion, and retention.
- The acquisition of instructional materials, equipment and supplies, and the administration of all extra-curricular and co-curricular activities and programs included in the budget.
- Employment of personnel working at the school and management of all personnel functions.
- All aspects of the school's business administration.
- All aspects of the school's accounting operation, including general ledger management, financial reporting, payroll, employee benefits and payroll tax compliance.
- All aspects of facilities administration and maintenance.

- Student behavior management and discipline.

This well-defined division of responsibility is a core benefit of this plan. The ACACS governing board and ACA have already clearly established the lines of governance and operations, which benefit school operations, student achievement, and ultimately, achievement of our school's mission and vision.

If granted a charter, there will be no points of tension or concern as authority transitions from a founding committee to a governing board. The ACAD governing board will remain in its governance role and ACA will continue to execute the plan described throughout this application.

### Board Oversight of Academics

In order for the ACACS governing board to measure progress, it will need and require regular reports on student performance and assessments. The board will use this information to assess the school's progress toward the goals specified in our charter. These reports also will include operational information pertinent to student performance such as student count numbers, attrition percentages, student attendance, student discipline, at-risk population, percent of students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and more. School leadership, in conjunction with ACA as appropriate, will provide the board with the information needed to assess all aspects of the school's performance, including:

- Absolute and comparative student performance on internal diagnostic and interim assessments.
- Growth in student learning.
- Current status under state and federal accountability systems.
- College readiness status.
- Vital statistics on the student population, including demographics, enrollment count, and IEP count, as well as the corresponding achievement levels of these subgroups.
- Parent satisfaction and other stakeholder information.

When necessary, the board may also contract for a third-party evaluation of ACA to ensure that ACA and school leaders are meeting and exceeding expectations.

### Board Oversight of Finances

The board has the fiduciary responsibility for the school. It will be the board's job to closely monitor the school's finances. The ACACS board must ensure that the school remains financially viable and operates with sound fiscal practices. The services agreement with ACA to operate the school day-to-day and to provide all necessary services and supports, requires that ACA recommend an operating budget to the board for its review and approval before each school year. This operating budget will set forth in detail the anticipated revenue and expenses of the school in compliance with the charter and applicable law. The board will review and approve the budget, and will ensure that it is balanced and appropriate to meet the requirements set forth in the charter agreement and state statute.

The board will approve the annual budget by June 30 each year. This budget will contain the best estimates of student enrollment and specific student characteristics that may drive the budget (such as the number of students needing intervention support or special education services), with an acknowledgement that once

enrolled for the school year, factors such as these that influence the budget may differ somewhat from the adopted projected budget. Similarly, the budget included in this application contains best assumptions about the student population and other factors, and may require modification when actual components are known. In the fall, when the school is enrolled and the specific student population and needs are determined, an amended budget will be adopted.

The board will provide regular oversight and feedback on the budget throughout the school year. The board will review financial statements each quarter that tells how the school is doing against the budget in detailed categories, and will request adjustments to the budget and more information as needed.

Through both the services agreement and board oversight, ACA will be obligated to manage and operate the school in accordance with the budget approved by the board. Expenditures during the academic year shall not deviate materially from the provisions of the approved budget, in accordance with the ACACS financial policies. If necessary, the board will review and approve amended budgets based on student need.

### *Identifying Needs to Inform Budget Process*

Identification of the school's needs – to further the pursuit of the mission – will be the first step in the budgeting process. The board, school leadership, and the School Accountability Committee will evaluate the needs of the school and the students after careful review of the investment in the educational program and school operations in comparison with budgeted amounts. Together, the board and school leadership will collaborate to develop a plan to address any unmet needs, including the reallocation of existing financial resources or the allocation of new resources.

As ACA is the day-to-day operator of the school and is contractually obligated to deliver high quality academics, ACA will present the board with a draft budget for their review and action. The draft service agreement with ACA requires ACA to provide all necessary accounting, financial, and business administration services. ACA's development of the draft annual budget for the school will be generated in large part based on the experience in school operations, and will include reasonable and reliable estimates and assumptions (as well as known costs) for the services, resources, and staff required to operate a quality educational program and to effectively implement the school model chosen by the board. The ACACS board will have final authority over the budget, and will approve the annual operating budget each year (in addition to approving any amendments to the budget throughout the year).

At a minimum, quarterly financial statements will be presented for the board. ACA will present to and discuss these statements with the board. The ACACS finance committee will review school financials more frequently and in greater depth. The board also will contract annually for an independent audit of the school's finances and financial procedures. This audit will serve as an additional measure of the school's fiscal soundness.

### *Timeline*

The budgeting process will begin in late winter of the preceding school year, when the board begins to receive information to aid in clearly identifying students' needs. As outlined above, the board will use this



information to provide feedback to ACA and the school leadership will, in turn, prepare a preliminary budget for presentation to the board in April or May for the upcoming school year.

The board will ask for clarification or adopt the budget before June 30. Upon approval of the preliminary budget, the board recognizes it will not have definitive enrollment figures and associated costs, and will still be analyzing student information results from the current school year. As such, the board anticipates reviewing an amended budget in the fall of the upcoming school year, which includes more definitive information. The board will review quarterly financial statements to ensure ACA is executing in accordance with the board-approved budgets. The board will require the management partner to present any potential significant variances from the board approved budget and approve subsequent budget amendments as necessary for the appropriate fiscal oversight of ACAD.

### *Initial Budget*

The first-year budget for ACAD has been developed based on expected local and state funding. Also, importantly, the board and ACA have paid specific attention to staffing and other intervention resources that will be necessary to meet students at their respective learning levels. More detail on the first-year budget is included later in this section.

### *Future Budgets*

For budgets in the second school year and beyond, the board envisions beginning with an assessment of need. Through the school improvement planning efforts, school evaluations, and the board's monitoring of academics and finances, there will be a robust amount of information to help establish budget priorities. As a conservative measure, and because there are not yet have any guarantee of the level of federal funding such as the Colorado Charter Schools Program (CCSP) Start-up Grant, none has been included in the five-year budget.

### *Budget Team*

The board has a finance committee, headed by the treasurer, that provides the first layer of appropriate governance and oversight of school finances. Under the services agreement with ACA, the school will have a wide variety of highly qualified specialists, with experience assisting schools in Colorado, dedicated to managing the business aspects of ACAD. This team includes a business analyst who will work with the headmaster on staffing decisions, budget management, compliance with all federal, state, district and authorizer reporting requirements, as well as day-to-day operational issues. ACA also will play a role in working with the board and school leadership to ensure that all educational programming resource needs are being fully met in a way that provides the appropriate financial foundation for the academic success of the school.

As outlined above, the board will also provide direction and feedback to ACA and school leadership based on the results of internal audits and assessments. The board will provide feedback to ACA and the school leadership team, who will work with the business analyst to develop an annual operational budget for presentation to the board for review and approval.



### *Budget Assumptions*

All major budget assumptions – including things such as anticipated student count, number of classrooms necessary for those students, the number of teachers, paraprofessionals and support staff needed, costs for textbooks and other learning supplies, and more – will be discussed with school leadership and the board. During each year’s budgeting process, the board will review these assumptions and estimates for reasonableness and completeness, collaboratively resolving any differences with ACA. The budget approved by the board each spring prior to the start of the next school year will contain the best estimates of student enrollment and specific student characteristics that may drive the budget (such as the number of students needing intervention support or special education services), with an acknowledgement that once enrolled for the school year, factors such as these that influence the budget may differ somewhat from the adopted budget. Similarly, the budget included in this application contains the best assumptions about the student population and other factors, and may require modification when actual components are known. Each fall, when the school is enrolled and the specific student population and needs are determined, an amended budget will be adopted.

The board will monitor actual costs in comparison to budgeted amounts, and in concert with an assessment of planned versus actual enrollment, student progress, and the school’s academic and operational needs, may amend the budget after consultation with ACA and planning for additional resources to meet the school’s needs if necessary.

### *Financial Audits*

Each year, the board contracts with an independent certified public accountant licensed in Colorado to perform a financial audit of the school.

The audit includes a review of the adequacy of the system of internal controls in place at the school to ensure that financial statements are being accurately presented and are in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB). Compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, grant agreements, and other matters also will be tested as part of the annual financial review. If the school expends \$750,000 or more in federal funds during any fiscal year, the independent auditor performs a Federal Single Audit as required by federal regulation.

ACACS maintains the highest standards of fiscal responsibility and accountability. An allocation sufficient to cover the audit expense is included in each network school’s budget, and the board will ensure that each annual budget allocates sufficient funds for this purpose. Audit results, including any management letter comments, are reviewed by the board each year.

ACACS has already completed three audits due to its current operations and has received unqualified opinions, meeting all legal obligations, on each one to date.

### Board Oversight of Leadership

The headmaster will be an employee of ACA, and along with ACA will be accountable to the ACACS governing board for the operation of our school. The board will collaborate with ACA in hiring, evaluating,

and overseeing the school headmaster. ACA offers an experienced and expert school leadership recruitment team that identifies and evaluates school leaders for their skills, experience, and personal attributes. The ACA team is experienced in evaluating both internal and external applicants. The board and ACA will leverage their recruitment networks to identify qualified external and internal candidates to lead the school. The ACA team will present headmaster candidates to lead the school to the ACACS board. The ACACS is responsible for approving the headmaster. The ACACS board retains the authority to terminate the headmaster at any time.

### *Recruitment and Hiring of School Leader*

ACA has already begun the process to recruit but has not yet hired a school leader. Below is the general process used to recruit and hire a school leader.

#### Recruitment

There are several important criteria ACA's uses when vetting school leadership candidates. First, high-quality candidates will have a *proven record of building culture* through the creation of strong relationships and the modeling of a vision based on achievement, character, personal responsibility, and accountability. Second, the candidate is self-directed and has success as an *instructional leader*, with a strong intellect and knowledge of teaching and learning. Third, the candidate must demonstrate that he or she is a *leader and coach*, focused on the "service" of leadership, with a top priority being the development and success of others. Finally, the candidate must be a *systems thinker*, who has a demonstrated competence in developing priorities and ambitious goals focused on student achievement, and developing systems designed to achieve those goals.

The primary role of the headmaster is to ensure that the school meets the needs of students, families, and teachers, and will work to ensure that his or her team is equipped in a way that creates a culture of academic excellence throughout the school. Ultimately, the headmaster will be responsible for the overall quality of the school and will be fully accountable to the board, the community, and the school's management partner, ACA.

ACA offers an experienced and expert school leadership recruitment team that identifies and evaluates school leaders for the skills, experience, and personal attributes required for successfully leading ACA-partner schools. It is a goal to identify and hire the school leadership six months to a year before the school opens, a success measure also recognized by the Colorado League of Charter Schools. These recruitment specialists are experienced in evaluating both internal and external applicants. An internal candidate would bring to the school the advantage of experience specifically running an ACA-partner school and thus would be more likely to implement successfully the educational program from day one.

Promoting from within the ACACS school network also helps ensure that principals and leaders will be familiar with the instructional practices and administrative procedures desired in the school culture. Additionally, such promotions are a key element of attracting quality teachers who see the development of a deliberate advancement path for high-performing employees. Teachers and staff with strong skills and great potential to become excellent school headmaster are identified from across the ACA-partner school network and brought together during the school year to learn, train, and grow as educators and building

leaders. Select participants are interviewed for available leadership opportunities within the ACA-partner school network. ACA leadership development, in conjunction with the distributed leadership model, helps ensure that high-quality school leaders with experience in the ACA school model are being developed continuously. This serves as a ready resource for finding the right headmaster for the school.

Various candidate-sourcing strategies are used to identify educators with a proven record of leading a school to strong academic results. Such sourcing strategies will include:

- Partnerships with the Hillsdale College Barney Charter School Initiative, local colleges and universities.
- Online advertisements placed on ACA's websites, education forums, and association job pages.
- Working with other classical school recruitment organizations throughout the United States.
- Print advertisements placed in newsletters, journals, and local newspapers.
- Attendance and sponsorship of national education conferences.

Candidates for school leadership roles are evaluated based on professional positions held over the past 10 years, and on competencies in areas such as their own teaching ability, their ability to coach teachers, experience creating and maintaining a school culture to support the mission, vision, and philosophy of the school, reading and interpreting student achievement data, and creating constructive relationships with parents and the school community at large.

ACA has a defined process to help ensure the organization identifies high quality school leaders. It is critical that the school leader for ACAD has a significant and successful track record meeting the needs of diverse learners, leading a school or team, developing and sustaining community and parent relations, and distributing leadership among its faculty. The anticipated criteria and general steps in the school leader selection process are outlined below.

## [Hiring Process](#)

### *Step One: Sourcing and Screening*

6. Objective: Screen applicants to identify candidates who appear to meet experience, qualifications, and skill requirements. A draft job description can be found in Appendix 23 of this application.
7. Develop a robust candidate pool:
  - Leverage internal ACA school network.
  - Exercise traditional external sources (advertising, referrals, and networking).
  - Qualification Review Process:
    - Qualify leadership experience.
    - Phone screen.
    - Explore opportunities and fit.
    - Feedback from ACA.

### *Step Two: Evaluation*

8. Objective: Use informational, chronological, and competency technique to evaluate suitability of promotion or employment at ACA based on determine metrics.

- Initial Interview:  
Candidates submitted for review.  
Visit candidate's current school whenever possible.
- Headmaster Assessment Interview:  
Critical behavior interview.  
Organization culture alignment.  
Instructional knowledge competency.  
ACA school visit.

### *Step Three: Hiring Recommendation*

- Review interview feedback.
- Conduct reference check.
- Follow up interview (if necessary).
- Presentation to the ACACS board.

### *Step Four: Decision*

- Board affirmation.
- The board will consult with ACA on the headmaster selection. The headmaster is critical to the success of ACAFD and, in-turn, ACA's ability to deliver on its contractual obligations outlined in the services agreement.
- Position is offered to the headmaster candidate.

### *School Leadership Responsibilities*

As outlined throughout the application, ACAD will implement a distributed leadership model. The headmaster and assistant-headmaster will comprise the school leadership team, working with ACA.

The school leadership team will be responsible for the following:

- Implementing the academic program and creating a culture that fulfills the mission and vision of the school consistent with the board's classical philosophy.
- Establishing the headmaster as the master teacher of the school.
- Supervising and monitoring the educational program, including special education.
- Designing the school master schedule to ensure adequate time is spent on each content area.
- Implementing the assessment and record system that provides academic and anecdotal information on each student.
- Monitoring the achievement goals for the school and for each student.
- Implementing a school-wide tool for parent and community communication.
- Providing opportunities for parent participation.
- Reporting school activities and academic achievement to the board at regular board meetings.
- Establishing the plan to develop moral character and virtue into the academic program and communicating this program to staff, students, and parents.
- Working with ACA to implement school procedures and organizing systems that allow for student and staff safety and well-being.

- Conferring with teachers, students, and parents concerning educational and behavioral problems in school.
- Providing teachers with clear expectations for classroom management procedures.
- Monitoring classroom management plans for teachers to ensure consistency and alignment to the school-wide plan.
- Providing teachers and staff with an understanding of students' backgrounds through professional development.
- Providing in-service and outreach opportunities to support parents in communication, parenting styles, and educational support to students.
- Providing teacher involvement and development opportunities.
- Establishing specific staff expectations for conduct.
- Monitoring student enrollment, attendance, and engagement.
- Implementing a school-wide character development and academic honor program to recognize and motivate students for accomplishments.
- Implementing, communicating, and monitoring the school's discipline system to promote student responsibility and good conduct.
- Providing school activities that integrate curriculum content, such as field trips and assembly experiences.
- Providing oversight and planning for student interventions at classroom level.
- Implementing a school-wide vocabulary development program that aligns to the curriculum.

#### School Leadership Team Qualifications

Some of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required of the school leadership team members are noted below. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

- *Education and/or Experience:* Bachelor's degree required, master's degree preferred; three or more years related experience and/or training; or equivalent combination of education and experience.
- *Language Skills:* Ability to read, analyze, and interpret common scientific and technical journals, financial reports, and legal documents. Ability to respond to common inquiries or complaints from parents, regulatory agencies, or members of the business community. Ability to write speeches and articles for publication that conform to prescribed style and format. Ability to effectively present information to top management, public groups, and/or the governing board.
- *Mathematical Skills:* Ability to calculate figures and amounts such as discounts, interest, commissions, proportions, percentages, area, circumference, and volume. Ability to apply concepts of basic algebra and geometry.
- *Reasoning Ability:* Ability to define problems, collect data, establish facts, and draw valid conclusions. Ability to interpret an extensive variety of technical instructions in mathematical or diagram form and deal with several abstract and concrete variables.
- *Certificates, Licenses, Registrations:* Any teaching license and administrative certification as determined by state requirements.

#### Evaluation of School Leaders

The headmaster will be informally evaluated throughout the year. ACA will use the results of school evaluations to assess the effectiveness of the headmaster. In addition, the headmaster will also be formally

evaluated by the governing board each year. A specific description of the leadership evaluation process is included in [Section O - Employees](#).

ACA and the governing board will use the headmaster evaluation to inform professional development, compensation, retention, and, if necessary, recommendation of termination

## J. Evidence of Support

### Target Population

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango, (“ACAD”), is proposing to open in the Durango area of La Plata County. This area is being targeted based on early Expressions of Interest and feedback from public meetings and outreach. Locating in this area will make Ascent Classical Academy convenient to families in Durango, Animas Valley, Hesperus, Three Springs, Florida Mesa, Bayfield and other surrounding areas that are interested in a tuition-free classical school option.

Due to its unique implementation of the classical model, ACAD expects to be a destination school, attracting students from a wide geographic area. Based on the experience with similar schools, ACAD also expects to draw many students who are currently attending private schools or are being educated at home. Many parents choosing ACAD are also interested in the smaller, self-contained K-12 school, and want a school not allowing student technology in the classroom.

ACAD will strive to have a student body demographic similar to the area in which it is located. Once the Ascent Classical Academy of Durango location has been finalized, the school would like to partner with the Durango 9-R School District to help identify educationally disadvantaged children in the area, so that ACAD can direct marketing to those populations.

There is not a classical, Core Knowledge charter school in the entire southwest region of Colorado and ACAD expects to attract a significant number of families who intentionally desire this approach to the education and formation of their children. Many of these families have opted out of public education and this option would bring them into the district. The Durango 9-R School District can demonstrate its commitment to equity by ensuring these families have a high-quality option that meets their needs and expectations for the education of their children.

Since the school anticipates drawing a student population from a wide geographic area, student demographics are difficult to estimate. ACAD expects to have demographics similar to other schools in the area. The school intends to serve a diverse student population, targeting educationally disadvantaged children in its generous lottery weightings, and to support any student willing to work hard. We believe all children benefit from our robust classical education that aims to cultivate wisdom and virtue.

The below tables indicate demographic data for the 9-R school district, nearby schools and the ethnic breakdown.

School Name	2020-2021 Enrollment	2020-2021 FRL Eligible %	2020-2021 IEP %	2020-2021 ELL %
9-R School District	6,643	30.6%	10.5%	3.8%
Juniper Charter School	137	29.2%	9.5%	0.0%

School Name	2020-2021 Enrollment	2020-2021 FRL Eligible %	2020-2021 IEP %	2020-2021 ELL %
Mountain Middle School	253	12.6%	5.9%	1.6%
Riverview Elementary	404	14.9%	10.4%	4.0%
Miller Middle School	469	22.2%	11.9%	6.2%
Escalante Middle School	503	35.6%	16.3%	8.0%
Animas High School	198	22.2%	7.6%	0.0%
Durango High School	1,292	20.3%	12.0%	2.9%

Table 1. Student Demographics for Nearby Schools<sup>33</sup>.

Racial Identification	Percent
American Indian	7.6%
Asian	0.6%
Black	0.5%
Hispanic	9.5%
White	86.3%
Minority	4.5%

Table 2 - Ethnic Breakdown of Durango City, Colorado<sup>34</sup>.

## Parent Support and Interest for Ascent Classical Academy of Durango

The steering committee began forming in the fall of 2019, almost three years ago. Since that time the steering committee of ACAD has been hosting information meetings and meeting with community organizations and leaders in Durango, Animas Valley, Hesperus, Three Springs, Florida Mesa and Bayfield. The school has been accepting Expressions of Interest to obtain sufficient evidence of parent support as required by C.R.S. § 22-30.5-106(d).

As of January 31, 2022, the school has received over 500 Expressions of Interest. As a replication school with an experienced application team, this is an extremely high level of interest at this point in the application cycle. The Colorado League of Charter Schools recommends obtaining 50% of projected opening enrollment when the charter application is submitted, a milestone surpassed by ACAD.

<sup>33</sup> Durango 9-R School District. "District and School Dashboard." Colorado Department of Education. Accessed January 29, 2022. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/district-school-dashboard>.

<sup>34</sup> United States Census Bureau. "Quickfacts: Durango City Colorado." Accessed July 1, 2021. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/durangocitycolorado/PST045221>.



Grade Level	Student Count
Kindergarten	31
1	24
2	55
3	51
4	47
5	29
6	63
7	54
8	54
9	33
10	29
11	21
12	9
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>500</b>

Table 3 - Expressions of Interest by Grade Level.

## Market Research

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango has conducted due diligence on demand for a classical K-12 charter school in the area. Currently, there are no classical public schools available in La Plata county. ACAD has reviewed its Expression of Interest data and has wide interest coming from homeschools, private schools, online schools and neighboring school districts. A majority of applicants are not attending 9-R schools, so ACAD is bringing new students into the district.

ACAD offered to submit an application to the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI), a statewide authorizer, whereby 9-R taxpayers would not be required to financially support out of district children as they would receive state funding instead. 9-R board declined the offer and insisted ACAD charter through 9-R. Given that, ACAD is committed to being a partner in the Durango community.

## Community Support

### Letters of Support

Letters of support from prospective parents and community members are included in Appendix 24.

### Partnerships

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango will be a licensed user of the Hillsdale College K-12 curriculum. Hillsdale College is a national leader in classical education and a key partner to Ascent Classical Academy of Durango developing a high-quality, liberal arts program positioned to serve all students.

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango has also engaged Ascent Classical Academies (“ACA”), an education service provider responsible for implementing the program and managing the school and business operations. The ACA team has experience starting and operating classical charter schools in Colorado.

Once ACAD finalizes a campus location, the school will work to develop other partnerships with local organizations and businesses.

## Outreach

The ACAD team has and will continue promoting the school through a variety of channels and efforts to reach a broad and diverse community of parents and students. The team is actively promoting the school through:

- word of mouth advertising,
- public community meetings,
- flyers at local businesses,
- radio appearances,
- active promotion on social media,
- partnerships with other fully enrolled schools of choice,
- posters,
- participation in community events and festivals,
- media advertising,
- and other mediums.

The Ascent Classical Academy team has been holding public information meetings throughout the community. Our first community meeting was held at the Durango Community Recreation Center in June of 2021. The ACAD team has held numerous additional community meetings at venues like the Durango Public Library, the La Plata County Fairgrounds, the Bayfield Pine River Library, and Hesperus. The Ascent Classical Academy team will continue to hold community meetings throughout the coming 18 months until the school opens in the Fall of 2023.

The Ascent Classical Academy team has been delivering flyers (including flyers translated in Spanish) and connecting with:

- Neighborhood Afterschool Programs
- Area Preschools and Area Child Care Organizations
- Area Grocery Stores
- Local Libraries
- Local Churches
- Rent-controlled or low-income housing units

The Ascent Classical Academy team has reached out to community organizations in order to create awareness of our academic programs and opportunities for children in the community. These organizations include:

- La Plata Family Coalition Center
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Colorado

- Boys and Girls Club
- Tri-County Head Start
- Companeros
- Durango Community Shelter
- Community Connections

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango has been running paid advertising campaigns on social media, including Facebook, connecting with a culturally diverse group of individuals. These campaigns have been very effective in exposing new families to the school. Prospective parents have also been posting on more localized platforms like Nextdoor.com, another effective source of Expressions of Interest.

The school will continue sending press releases to local and community media to include in local newspaper and community-based websites.

The ACAD team has been awarded a planning grant from the Daniels Fund and will pursue additional outreach activities based on this grant being awarded.

Parents who have completed an Expression of Interest for their children or have signed up are receiving email newsletters providing information on upcoming events, updates on the school's efforts, invitations to share ACAD with their friends and family, and information on Founding Family status.

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango is actively seeking to encourage families of at-risk students to apply, confident that the explicit phonics program and ordered curriculum will help instill a firm foundation in literacy and increase student performance. ACAD is offering a 4:1 weighted preference in its lottery for enrollment, as is communicating this preference in its outreach efforts.

## K. Parent and Community Involvement

### Parental Involvement

The Ascent Classical Academy of Durango, (“ACAD”), team strongly believes parental engagement and involvement are critical for student success and a key factor for a high-achieving school<sup>35</sup>. ACAD will create simple and meaningful opportunities for parents to be involved in the School and their child’s education.

With the evidence that parental involvement leads to increased student success, ACAD expects parents to participate and volunteer in the school as members of the Ascent Classical community. Two-parent households will be asked to volunteer 30 hours per year and single-parent households should volunteer 15 hours per year. While recommended and expected to retain a culture of community ownership, there will not be consequences for families who do not meet this requirement.

The Donnell-Kay Foundation describes parent engagement in high-performing charter schools on a Continuum of the Individual, School, and System levels. ACAD will engage parents and provide opportunities across the levels in this continuum. The levels are briefly described:

- Individual – Setting the standard for raised expectation, based on strong relationships and open communication.

Examples of parental engagement at this level include parents and teachers having open lines of communication, with staff working to get to know the parents of their students. Teachers will openly make themselves available and welcome contact with parents to help invest them in their child’s academic goals. Teachers will also work to engage “hard-to-reach” parents to let them know their support is critical for the success of their child and the culture of Ascent Classical Academy of Durango. This level of engagement is the most effective level to connect with families of at-risk and underserved students. The desired outcomes of this engagement level are raised expectations and strong relationships with families.

- School – Creating a school framework for engagement and supporting parents as active participants in the school community.

This is the level where parents are involved in building a school community. ACAD will encourage parents to be involved as classroom or office volunteers, organizing and staffing events, being involved on school committees, and donating or providing goods and services needed by the school. Volunteer opportunities will be available during both traditional and non-traditional times. These opportunities will allow parents to witness the high-quality instruction and experiences of their child and to create greater support networks among parents. The desired outcomes from this level of engagement are creating a strong community and

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<sup>35</sup> Kisner, Rebecca. “The Parent Engagement Continuum in High-Performing Charter Schools: A Guide for Schools.” Donnell-Kay Foundation. May, 2013. <http://dkfoundation.org/assets/files/2013-Parent-Engagement-Continuum.pdf>

school culture of parental ownership in the School's mission and vision and retention of students and families.

- System – Empowering parent leaders to support other parents in their engagement and mobilize as advocates for high-quality schools.

This is the level of engagement where parents are empowered and become leaders in their child's education. Parents will be encouraged to be advocates for the school, be leaders in supporting other parents as they begin their engagement, and spread the word in their communities to connect other families with high-quality education options. Outcomes from this level of engagement are recruiting more families to the school and protection and replication of high-performing schools.

As a school of choice, ACAD will be focused on delivering the best education for students to remain a desirable choice for parents. While the school will primarily consider the academic needs of students in any decision-making, ACAD will conduct an annual survey of parents for constructive feedback. The headmaster is responsible for ensuring a meaningful survey is conducted and may delegate this responsibility to the School Accountability Committee (SAC).

School administrators will consider the results of the survey and take steps to address parent feedback in a timely manner.

### **Community Involvement**

In addition to being a school developing the minds and hearts of its students, Ascent Classical Academy of Durango aims to be a valuable part of the community, both to its parents and the community in general.

Within the school community, ACAD may have a book club for parents. Many parents did not have an opportunity to read and study the books students at Ascent Classical Academy will encounter. ACAD would like to select a book a semester and have a faculty member guide a parent group through a series of discussions. The benefits of this effort will be two-fold, it will connect parents with what their kids are learning in the classroom and it will further develop the school community.

Traditionally underserved and bilingual families may not understand the concept and value of a classical, liberal arts, and Core Knowledge education. To connect with these families, the school will also emphasize that in addition to developing the intellect of students, ACAD also believes strongly in developing good character and virtues. These are more universal ideas and core principles of ACAD to which these parents may also relate.

In addition to Ascent Classical Academy of Durango being a future resource and offering value to the community, the steering committee has been engaging community organizations to leverage partnerships to strengthen the program and add value to others.

The Ascent Classical Academy team has and will continue engaging civic and community organizations such as:

- La Plata Family Coalition Center
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Colorado
- Boys and Girls Club
- Tri-County Head Start
- Companeros
- Durango Community Shelter
- Community Connections

## **L. Finance and Budget**

### **1. Budget Narrative**

The budget for Ascent Classical Academy of Durango, (“ACAD” or “School”), has been carefully prepared to support the delivery of a high-quality educational program to students and the achievement of the ACAD mission and vision. The management partner, Ascent Classical Academies, (“ACA”), supports the school’s mission to institute its complete educational program from day one. ACA’s experience in partnering with two other fiscally sound schools in Colorado has allowed the team to review budgets for existing charter schools that would operate similarly to ACAD and has helped ensure this budget is based on historically supported assumptions.

ACAD has created a financial model including a 5-Year budget primarily driven by student enrollment. See Appendix 26 (5-Year Budget). Ascent Classical Academies will take a conservative approach to financial and budget planning, knowing that financial insolvency is a key factor in the failure of charter schools.

In addition to working with ACA, ACAD will also work with Hillsdale College’s Barney Charter School Initiative, (“BCSI”), staff to review and provide oversight of financial and budget data. The BCSI is familiar with baseline operational spending for schools similar to ACAD and will be able to provide additional insight and perspective on the school’s operations.

#### **Budget Guidance and Assumptions**

ACAD intends to open in fall of 2023 with 410 students in grades K-9, adding a grade a year and increasing to two full sections per year. After Year 7, the school will be prepared to enroll at least 684 students in K-12, and up to 832 students, the maximum size of the school.

ACAD also intends to enroll approximately 40 students in a Homeschool Enrichment program in the fall of 2023, and increasing as capacity and interest grows.

The Durango School District 9-R (9-R) provided the ACAD team with guidance to reference the charter agreement of the most recently approved charter school (The Juniper School) to determine financial assumptions and told the ACAD team that the 3% administrative fee would include transportation and Special Education purchased services. The ACAD budget includes this 3% fee, though ACAD will provide most of its own Special Education services and will need limited support from 9-R. The budget model is included in Appendix 26.

The financial model is built using FY22 actuals as conservative FY24 assumptions for per pupil revenue (PPR) (\$8,723) and mill levy override (MLO) (\$1,100), using numbers from CDE’s School Finance web page and guidance from 9-R staff. Further conservative strategies include assuming year-over-year PPR increases of only 1%, a contingency of 1% of revenue. These conservative factors still result in an overall increase in ending fund balance across the opening 5 year period.

ACAD will apply for the Colorado Charter School Program (CCSP) start-up grant, included in the budget. ACA will be applying for private implementation grants on behalf of ACAD to cover the initial cash required for the start-up grant, a reimbursable grant requiring the funds to cover initial expenditures. ACACS schools have been awarded this grant three times and members of the ACA team have been CCSP reviewers in the past, so the school is hopeful it will also be awarded this grant.

ACAD is expecting to enroll 60 students per grade in the grammar school, though the budget is built on 56 per grammar school grade.

The most significant expenses running a school are the staff costs. ACAD has conducted a compensation survey of other charter schools in Colorado and referred to the Colorado Department of Education 2019 State of Charter Schools<sup>96</sup> to determine staff salary levels. Salaries are comparable to other ACA schools and Golden View Classical Academy.

ACAD expects to lease initially a building. ACA and the project funders will work with ACAD to create a lease schedule with flexible terms and structure their financial deal accordingly.

The facility lease estimate is targeted at 22% of the total revenue. While this benchmark exceeds best practices, the school current facilities and construction market are expensive at the current time. The included budget model, to be conservative, shows a 5 year financially sustainable school model where total facility expenses are estimated at 25% of revenue. The management partner, ACA, will be developing a campus with a goal of keeping total facility costs near this benchmark while being flexible on payments over the first several years.

ACA includes business operations, human resources, payroll, professional development, some legal, and marketing in its fee. ACAD also has access to shared special professional services through ACA.

Staff insurance costs are based on health plans options provided by an insurance broker, tailored to the specific size and staffing plan of the school.

The ACAD and ACA financial team have conducted a sensitivity analysis and developed contingency budgets based on changes in enrollment and student funding.

ACAD will meet authorizer budget reporting requirements, comply with the Financial Transparency Act by posting financial documents on its website, comply with TABOR, and will finalize a budget by June 30 of each year.

ACAD may negotiate other services with the authorizer.

The proposed budget will allow the school to achieve its mission and vision.

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<sup>96</sup> Colorado Department of Education. "2019 State of Charter Schools Triennial Report," p. 47. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/2019charterschooltriennialreport>.



## **2. 5 Year Budget**

The detailed ACAD 5-Year Budget is included in Appendix 26.

The assumptions and guidance for the budget are included in the previous section.

ACAD has a base budget and has also developed several alternative scenarios reflecting under-enrollment. In the base scenario (as well as the alternatives), the staffing and facilities have been budgeted to ensure the school is able to adjust to unfavorable conditions, remain solvent, and still provide a high-quality education to students. See the cash flow forecast in Appendix 26.

## **3. Systems and Procedures**

### Reporting

The school will comply with all state and authorizer reporting requirements. The school will prepare quarterly financial reports in accordance with the Financial Transparency Act, the CDE chart of accounts, and authorizer policies. Each year, the budget will be finalized by the June 30 deadline.

### Annual Audit and GASB Compliance

Each year, the school's board will enlist the services of a state-licensed independent public accounting firm with experience in the K-12 education sector to perform the financial statement audit for the school. The financial statements will be accurately presented in accordance with both generally accepted accounting principles and the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB). An audit report will also be issued on the auditor's considerations of internal control over financial reporting, and on compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts and grant agreements, and other matters in accordance with Government Auditing Standards. Audit procedures will include testing the effectiveness of internal controls over financial reporting as well. This report will be disseminated to the school district, public, and required state agencies.

In the event the school spends \$750,000 or more in federal funds during a fiscal year, the independent auditor will also perform a federally required A-133 Federal Single Audit. A report will be issued on compliance with requirements that could have a direct and material effect on each major program and on internal control over compliance in accordance with OMB Circular A-133. Audit fieldwork will be completed in a timely manner to ensure that the audit report is completed and issued by authorizer and state entities' specified deadlines. The projected audit expense is included in the financial plan in this application and will be a component of each annual board-approved budget.

Each audit will demonstrate ACAD's fiscal solvency, adherence to generally accepted accounting practices, and have no material breaches. ACAD will work with ACA to quickly address any management letter concerns and will share the results of the audit with all required stakeholders.

### Management of School Finances

The Services Agreement with ACA ensures that the school is provided with a full suite of operations services, including administrative financial services such as accounting, purchasing, and payroll. A draft Services Agreement has been included as Appendix 27. Additionally, the school will have a business manager who serves as the manager of the school's finances.

The school's business manager, supported by ACA's Director of Finance, will regularly provide the headmaster with detailed income statements and reconciliation of funds. On a quarterly basis, the business manager will work with ACA to prepare financial statements for the board, which will include both an income statement and a balance sheet. ACA will also ensure that all reporting requirements are met, including but not limited to: grant expenditure reports; quarterly reports; annual audited financial statements; 990 forms, and authorizer-required financial status reports. A system of financial controls will be established to ensure that all purchases made with federal, state, and private revenues – including the proposed capital construction funds – are controlled and monitored.

There will be many controls surrounding financial processes, including that:

- Purchase requests are recorded inside the accounting system with programmed security settings so that review/approvals are transparently recorded
- Disbursements are recorded with above mentioned security settings
- Any requested staff changes require the approval of both the school headmaster and an official at ACA.
- An integrated computerized system manages all purchasing, general ledger, grant accounting, fixed assets accounting, and cash disbursements activities.

ACA also has formal written policies for purchasing, accounts payable, the use of corporate credit cards, board discretionary funds, principal discretionary funds, school money handling, deposits, and a security policy. These adopted practices and procedures are included as Appendix 28 (Financial Policies and Procedures).

The board's annual budget process is described in detail in Section H – Governance and in Appendix 28 (Financial Policies and Procedures).

### Bank Account Reconciliation

Bank reconciliations will be performed monthly. All cash receipts and transfers to the bank accounts will be posted individually, and ACA's accounting department will ensure a proper segregation of duties.

### Financial Systems and Processes

As part of its comprehensive scope of services, ACA will provide the school with accounting, purchasing, payroll, and other administrative financial services. The board of ACAD will contract annually with an independent, certified accounting firm to perform an audit of the school's finances. ACA also will ensure

that the school consistently maintains compliance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and generally accepted standards of fiscal management.

Vigorous board oversight and the management partner's systems and controls will ensure that the school complies with the highest standards of fiscal responsibility and accountability. Regarding policies, the board of the network charter school has ultimate fiduciary responsibility over all matters relating to school finance. The policies are aligned with state statute and 2 CFR Part 200 so that the school always remains in fiscal compliance regarding budgeting, procurement, reporting, and audit.

### Internal Controls

ACA will provide business administration services to the school. ACA will utilize a fund-accounting software system to process all accounting transactions. The school's financial records are maintained on a modified accrual basis of accounting in accordance with GAAP.

ACA will account for payroll, purchasing, general ledger, grant accounting, fixed-assets accounting, cash receipts and disbursements, budgeting and other financial activities. ACA has formalized written policies for purchasing (grant and non-grant), accounts payable, corporate credit cards, board discretionary funds, principal discretionary funds, processes for handling school money, deposits, security, and fixed asset inventories that will be used at ACAD (see Appendix 28 (Financial Policies and Procedures)).

For contracted staffing services, staff will enter their employee hours into the payroll system. The respective staff supervisor will approve and release all time entered before it can be utilized to generate the payroll for the contracted staff. The hours worked will be reviewed by ACA's payroll department for reasonability. An external service provider, Paylocity, will process payroll. Any pay rate changes will be initiated in the payroll system by the employee's supervisor and approved by ACA payroll team.

### Purchasing

General purchases will begin with a purchase request. The purchase request will be submitted directly into the accounting software by the respective staff, then reviewed and approved by the Business manager and the headmaster. As items are received, the school office (or receiving team at ACA) will enter the receipt into the accounting system and deliver the order to the purchaser as listed on the purchase request. When an invoice is entered, the accounting system performs a three-way match against the purchase order and the receipt prior to processing a payment. Once the invoice has been properly matched, it will be entered for review by the headmaster, then processed for payment. Invoices that are received without a related purchase order will be sent for approval by the appropriate department/school manager/supervisor. Expense approval authority levels will be established based on employee level (manager, director, principal, etc.). The system will automatically check for duplicate invoice numbers to prevent the same invoice from being entered twice.

### Financial Statements and Reports

Bank reconciliations will be prepared on a monthly basis by the ACA accounting team and will be reviewed/approved as assigned. On a monthly basis, school financial statements (balance sheet and income statement) will be prepared and reviewed. The review will include comparison of current spending year to

date to prior year spending and the current budget. Any discrepancies will be investigated to ensure revenue and expenses are accurate.

On an annual basis, a school audit report will be prepared by an independent auditor and will include all required financial statements and back up documentation in accordance with GAAP and GASB. The school audit report will be submitted to the ACAD board for review and approval. Upon approval, the report will be submitted to all required parties.

#### Alignment to Mission and Vision

The financial policies and procedures included here are aligned with the mission and vision. ACAD will have a governing Board and contract with ACA for the operation of the school. The policies and procedures described above give the school all decision making power over the use of finances but ensure that the school has a highly competent financial support team to implement the school's direction on a day-to-day basis.

## M. Facilities

### Land and Facilities Plan

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango, (“ACAD”) is frankly faced with a challenging facility issue to get the school prepared for an opening in the Fall of 2023. Due to Covid, the construction industry is in upheaval, with supply chains putting basic building materials months behind and contractors more difficult schedule. Additionally, permitting is taking longer. Ascent Classical Academies (“ACA”) is able to mitigate some of these factors through its experience developing a range of facilities for charter schools, to include converting office space to school use and building new buildings from the ground up. ACA has expressed its concern on timing for planning and developing a school meeting code requirements and adequate for serving children to the Durango 9-R School District as justification for needing an early contract. While the District is aware of these challenges to its own projects<sup>37</sup>, it has not shared Ascent Classical’s concern on needing a contract as early as possible in order to move forward with a facility to open in the Fall of 2023.

While ACAD is still 18 months out from school opening, not having a charter contract presents a challenge since it is a requirement to be able to commit to real estate that may be available for lease today, or to begin planning on new construction. However, ACAD has a strong real estate team and will continue working on a solution that meets the needs of the school.

ACAD’s primary focus area is southeast of downtown Durango, along the Highway 160 corridor, toward Three Springs. The area is most convenient based on our outreach and the location of many of the families that have completed expressions of interest for their children to attend the charter school.

Ascent Classical Academies is providing the school with expert real estate assistance, to include a local real estate broker, owner’s representative, and a development partner to assist in any required tenant improvements or construction and financing.

The ACA team will continue working to develop a real estate plan to have a location in which to open the school. The team will work to make reasonable commitments before a contract is finalized to be able to move forward quickly.

Upon execution of the charter contract, ACAD will enter into a lease or purchase for its campus. ACA has been working on facility options that can be designed, permitted, and built for use as a school within the short window between contract execution and the opening of school.

For the new school, ACA development partners will be responsible for construction and construction-related costs. The school does not pay anything up front. The school’s facility, privately financed and with no taxpayer money, will be built to house the planned K-12 academic program. The final build out to accommodate the full enrollment of the school will likely be completed over multiple phases. The academic program described throughout this application will be met in the facility as described below. This description serves as the facility needs assessment.

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<sup>37</sup> Durango 9-R School District, Citizens’ Bond Oversight Committee. *BOE Quarterly Update 1.25.2022*. Slide 7, January 25, 2022. [https://go.boarddocs.com/co/dsd/Board.nsf/files/CAVSJT6F8F53/\\$file/BOE%20Quarterly%20Update%201.25.2022.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/co/dsd/Board.nsf/files/CAVSJT6F8F53/$file/BOE%20Quarterly%20Update%201.25.2022.pdf).

Due to uncertainty on the school location and a negotiated deal, the school has included a significant cost of 25% of revenue in its budget, to ensure its planning is conservative. Because of the sensitive nature of real estate negotiations and unknown timing to execute the charter contract, specific information is not included in this application but can be made available in discussions.

The school's ability to access lower cost financing is also dependent on the length of the charter contract. The longer the charter contract term, the more likely investors are to make capital financing available for any facility purchases.

## Facility Description

Ascent Classical Academies and its team are experienced in making its program work based on the facilities available. In the early years of a new school, the spaces may not be ideal and the school may have to deal with the inconveniences of not enough spaces dedicated to specific purposes. For examples, art and music may have to take place in other classrooms when the space does not allow dedicated art and music spaces. A new charter school may also need to combine uses for lunch, physical education, and performances into a multi-purpose space. Available space also drives the school's opening configuration, grade levels, and enrollment. ACA has experience adjusting enrollments and budgets based on these factors and will do so in the Durango community as well. The plan described below is based on reasonable assumptions.

When the school is at full capacity, the total square footage of the building will be approximately 55,000 to 76,000 square feet (the minimum is based on 75 sq ft/student) and will provide sufficient space for a play area and adequate parking and traffic circulation. The facility will be safe, clean, conducive to student learning, and meet all codes. The school will be accessible and will accommodate all students. The school building will include:

- Classrooms (30)
- Student support rooms (7)
- Faculty prep room
- Front office
- Art room
- Music room
- Administrative spaces (7)

ACAD's space needs assessment is based on 75 square feet per student with a budgeted cost of \$21.50, that will include base rents and any tenant improvement (TI) costs. TI costs are likely to be high for a leased facility to allow for upgrades to "E" occupancy, required for schools. These upgrades are typically to install sprinkler systems and to upgrade fire alarms. The school expects to amortize its TI costs over 5-10 years and may structure payments to make the facility more affordable in the beginning years of a lease.

ACAD's lease assumptions include a 3% lease escalation, to include base rents and common area maintenance charges. The proposed budget for the school has costs exceeding this in the budget model to err on the conservative side. While initially the school may have to handle total facility costs at 25% of revenue, the school will work to limit its facility costs to 18% of its budget once the school builds out its full enrollment. Twenty-five percent of revenue is a high number but unfortunately a market rate for a growing school given inflation in construction costs and school revenue not keeping pace with this inflation. The total facility cost as a percentage of revenue includes lease payments, utilities, and maintenance.

Over 4 years, the square footage and cost (includes base rents, common area maintenance charges, and amortized tenant improvements) for a facility to meet the mission of the school are:

	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
Target Enrollment	410	462	514	566

	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
Desired Square Feet	30,750	34,650	38,550	42,450
Cost/SqFt	\$21.50	\$22.15	\$22.81	\$23.49

## Construction Process

Once the lease has been finalized, ACA will manage the school facility construction process and report to the Ascent Classical Academy Charter School (ACACS) board frequently on progress toward an on-time school opening. The facility will be constructed and equipped to comply with all health, building code, and safety requirements, as well as meet all regulations as outlined by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Given the ACA team's knowledge of and experience with site acquisition and construction timelines, the school is hopeful to complete a facility build with sufficient time for an August or September 2023 opening as long as the authorizer and ACAD execute a contract without delay.

A project timeline is included at the end of this section.

## Obtaining a Certificate of Occupancy

During design, the architect and design team will ensure the plans meet all code requirements. The team will work with the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control and local jurisdictions to determine all required approvals for any new construction and renovations. The school will receive any required certificates of occupancy prior to occupancy. ACAD will also have adequate insurance coverage on the building.

## Contingency Plan

In order to ensure the school's facility plans stay on track, a number of properties that will suit the construction of a new facility or will allow the renovation of an existing facility will be identified. If there are unforeseen hurdles with the preferred property that cannot be overcome in a reasonable timeframe or at reasonable expense, the school will be prepared to adjust for other options, which may impact opening enrollment and grade configurations.

## ACA Real Estate and Development Team

Among the partners ACA is working with on the facility development project is Kurt Connolly of Anser Advisory, an experienced owner's representative on Colorado charter school projects. ACA has also engaged a local real estate broker to assist developing real estate options. Due to the short time frame available to prepare a property, ACA will approach this as a design/build and will likely work with a team it has engaged on previous projects.





## N. Transportation and Food Service

### 1. Transportation

The Durango 9-R School District has indicated that it provides transportation as part of its administrative fee charged to the school.

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango (ACAD) also intends to purchase one or more busses, as allowed under the Colorado Charter Schools Program (CCSP) grant. Any busses or transportation purchased by the school will meet the requirements of the Colorado Department of Education.

Ascent Classical Academy will also encourage parents to establish carpools to minimize traffic and to increase access to the school.

### 3. Food Service

Ascent Classical Academy does not participate in the National School Lunch Program. The school staff may distribute and collect *Economic Data Surveys* from families instead of Free and Reduced Lunch Applications for purposes of other funding.

The school does intend to contract with a private food provider and to provide assistance to those students identified through the *Economic Data Survey* as meeting the requirements for free or reduced lunch.

If a student forgets his lunch, the school may provide him or her with a solid nutritional meal.

## O. Employees

### 1. Staff Recruiting and Hiring

Hiring and retaining the highest quality staff is a top priority at Ascent Classical Academy of Durango, (“ACAD”). The educational program and culture attract the finest educators to teach at Ascent Classical Academies, but employment policies, as well as how they are administered, must create an environment that makes working at the school a joy. Ascent Classical Academies (“ACA”) employment policies, as summarized below and explained in detail in the Employee Handbook in Appendix 29, strive to strike the correct balance between, on the one hand, rigid guidance and, on the other hand, flexibility to respond appropriately to any situation.

As a part of the services agreements with ACA, all staff at ACAD are employed by ACA and assigned to work at this campus. Any references to employment and policies are made in regards to ACA, a private employer. ACA ensures staff assigned to work at ACAD and other Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools (“ACACS”) meet all federal and state requirements to work in a public school. Other ACACS charter schools are already operating with this staffing arrangement.

ACA approves its personnel according to its own policies and procedures. ACA complies with all federal and state rules and regulations, including, without limitation, requirements related to conducting proper background and criminal checks and non-discriminatory hiring and employment practices. Ascent Classical Academies has its own written policies, in compliance with federal and state law, concerning recruitment, promotion, discipline and termination of personnel; methods for evaluating performance; and a plan for resolving employee-related problems, including complaint and grievance procedures.

#### Recruiting

ACAD will rely primarily on the strong candidate network and teacher recruitment capabilities of our management partner Ascent Classical Academies, (“ACA” or “Network”). Well-documented research underscores the importance of hiring and retaining highly-qualified and committed teachers. This is especially true in an educational program as rigorous as ACAD’s. The school will aggressively recruit excellent teachers at the local, state, and national level. Recruiting strategies to be used include:

- *Traditional Recruiting:* ACA is constantly seeking and screening potential candidates through traditional and digital marketing strategies, including job fairs, university career fairs, social media, advertising, and direct referrals. ACA advertises online, in select local markets, and throughout the ACA network of charter schools. ACA posts job openings on its website at <https://www.ascentclassical.org/careers/>.
- *Campus Relationships:* On behalf of ACAD, ACA will leverage its relationships with colleges and universities to include Hillsdale College, St. John’s, Grove City College, Claremont Graduate University, and others, to tap pipelines of teacher candidates. This will give the school prime access to the best teacher candidates and the ability to hire new high-quality graduates as soon as possible.
- *Referral Networks:* Recognizing that most teachers find teaching positions through referrals, ACA will actively pursue new teacher candidates through referrals from ACA-partner schools in Colorado and classical schools across the country.

- *Career Fairs and Conferences:* Recruiters and ambassadors will actively participate in local, regional, and national career fairs and conferences. This will allow direct contact with both new graduates and current teachers who are in the market for new employment opportunities.
- *Workforce and Talent Pipeline Planning:* ACAs workforce planning function is designed to assist ACACS schools in understanding the current local labor supply and demand in the area, helping prepare for current and future hiring needs.

Ascent Classical Academy will identify a headmaster for ACAD and hire teachers by late spring of 2023.

### *Salary and Benefits*

To compete in the marketplace for qualified teaching staff, ACA has established a salary schedule that takes into account the market at traditional and other charter schools, salary levels at area private schools, and the uniqueness and benefits of the school. ACA will utilize job descriptions found in Appendix 23 for each faculty and staff position in order both to guide the discretion of the headmaster and to inform applicants what is expected at each position.

### *At-Will Employment*

All faculty and staff are “at-will” employees and will be notified of this status throughout the interview process. Absent special circumstances, all employees will serve the school on an at-will basis, i.e., they may end employment at any time for any reason or no reason, and likewise ACA may end an employee’s employment at any time for any reason – subject, of course, to state and federal legal requirements. To provide continuity and avoid disruption, ACA requests, but does not require, that teachers provide at least thirty days’ notice prior to resigning employment. Likewise, the school will provide as much notice as possible under the circumstances to an employee prior to any separation of employment. When a formal job offer is extended, the offer letter will include the statement that the offer is for an “at-will” position. ACA will be clear that all employees will be employed by ACA and are not employees of the authorizer. All decisions regarding discipline or termination are made by the school or ACA, and not the authorizer. ACA will also provide an employee handbook that details the employment agreement and additional details for staff.

### Hiring

ACA takes great care to recruit high-quality educators for its students and superb leaders for the administrative team.

Candidates passing an initial screening will progress to a phone interview. They may then be invited to ACAD or other ACA-affiliated school for an on-site meeting. Teacher candidates may be requested to conduct a mock or demonstration lesson for the headmaster and anyone else involved in hiring.

ACA screens all faculty and staff and conducts full criminal background checks conducted by the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in accordance state statute, which meets or exceeds any authorizer policies.

Prior to hiring, ACA checks an applicant's references carefully and thoroughly. ACA checks both the references an applicant lists on an application as well as supervisors not named on the application or resume when possible.

### *Staff Positions and Qualifications*

#### **Headmaster**

The position of headmaster is the most important hire made by the school. Establishing the culture of ACAD, aligned with the school's vision, mission, and philosophy, will be critical to the long-term success of the school.

ACA will locate, screen, and help the ACACS governing board select a highly-qualified and effective headmaster.

The most significant characteristics of the school leader candidate include demonstrable leadership ability; the caliber of intellect and extent of knowledge needed to create and foster a climate of learning within the school and to project learning outward; and a firm understanding of and loyalty to classical education and the tradition it represents.

The leadership philosophy of Ascent Classical is that the headmaster must be the academic leader, or master teacher, of the school. In this role, the headmaster is expected to teach at least one class and be a mentor for the rest of the faculty. This approach of making the instructional leader the head of the school—the individual who leads from the front—is successfully working in other schools affiliated with Ascent Classical Academies and other classical schools throughout the state and nation.

The headmaster is responsible for developing and distributing leadership among the faculty. A job description for a headmaster is located in Appendix 23.

The headmaster will be experienced and responsible for hiring teachers, implementing a classical liberal arts and civic-minded curriculum, establishing a studious and decorous school culture, maintaining a healthy enrollment, and ensuring financial integrity. These leadership responsibilities are essential to helping the school achieve its mission, vision, and philosophy, develop and sustain a community of learners, and build a strong network of parents.

Ascent Classical also prefers a headmaster have a master's degree, teaching experience at the K-12 or college level, a record of leadership, and demonstrated abilities in speaking and writing.

Ascent Classical Academies has developed a school leader fellowship program to assist in identifying and training school leaders<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> "School Leader Fellowship." Ascent Classical Academies. Accessed Jan 31, 2022. <https://www.ascentclassical.org/careers/classical-school-leader-fellowship/>

## Teaching Staff

To be hired, teachers must possess at least a four-year degree, be able to show competence in the core academic areas in which they teach, demonstrate a love for educating children, and explain why they want to work in our unique program. Once hired, teachers receive extensive and ongoing professional development from ACA's own internal programs, and other quality training offered both locally, statewide, and nationally.

To be successful at the school, teachers must:

- Be committed to the mission, vision, and objectives of the school as set forth in this charter application and as more fully described through faculty training and day-to-day life at the school.
- Be highly-qualified in their field.
- Make decisions that serve the best interests of the education and formation of the students.
- Develop an expectation of success and excellence for the individual student and the school as a whole.
- Conduct his/her duties in a professional manner.
- Have a "can-do" attitude about any job that needs to be done.
- Realize that a teacher's expectations of a child often become self-fulfilling.

An Ascent Classical teacher should be intellectually curious and display the same sense of wonder about the world that the school expects of its students. Consequently, teachers should be self-motivated to continue to develop professionally, as they also participate in the professional development offered by the school.

The school will request a waiver from the Colorado requirement regarding licensed staff so that the school may cast a wider net and attract highly-qualified personnel who do not necessarily have a Colorado teaching license. For instance, many retired college-level instructors live in the immediate area and may be interested in teaching at ACAD but do not have teaching certificates.

The headmaster of ACAD will assess the qualifications of any non-licensed staff using the clear standards presented by the Colorado Department of Education and the Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA)<sup>39</sup>. Teachers may take the PRAXIS exam for endorsements in given areas.

Special Education teachers will be licensed as waivers are not available for staff in these positions.

Other position descriptions may be found in Appendix 23.

## 4. Management and Evaluation

School leadership and instructional staff will use external assessment results like the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) to obtain information on student learning, achievement gaps, and instruction, and to access and use data systems to efficiently manage,

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<sup>39</sup> "Educator Qualification Under ESSA." Colorado Department of Education. Accessed January 30, 2022. [http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/tii/a\\_hqt.asp](http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/tii/a_hqt.asp).

disaggregate, display, and report multiple types and sources of data. Data will be used to adjust or change instruction and professional development focus areas.

As a school focused on high achievement, the leadership of ACAD is dedicated to having the best teachers and maintaining a culture of continuous improvement. The school will develop, refine, and improve a manageable yet comprehensive, consistent evaluation plan in alignment with the school's mission, goals, educational program as well as student achievement goals, assessment, and academic expectations. These evaluations will be used to shape further faculty and staff development.

The school will work with ACA and sister schools to develop this plan using proven best practices that best apply to ACAD.

Full-time ACAD staff will be formally evaluated at least once annually. New teachers will be given an initial evaluation in the first semester followed by a more formative (summative) evaluation in the second semester. The headmaster will evaluate teachers and other staff. The governing board will evaluate the headmaster. Teachers will be evaluated against criteria described in their job description, curriculum guides, past performance, classroom observations, work with master teachers, and indicators of academic performance, including the test scores achieved by each teacher's class or classes. Prior to, and in preparation for, a formal evaluation, teachers will complete a self-evaluation form (a sample is attached as Appendix 30).

In addition to the annual formal evaluation, ACAD will use frequent, informal evaluations, particularly in the case of staff new to the school. Headmasters and other academic leads will frequently visit classrooms for informal observations to provide feedback to teachers. These informal evaluations will be conducted in a give-and-take manner: staff will be invited to be a genuine part of the conversation towards improvement.

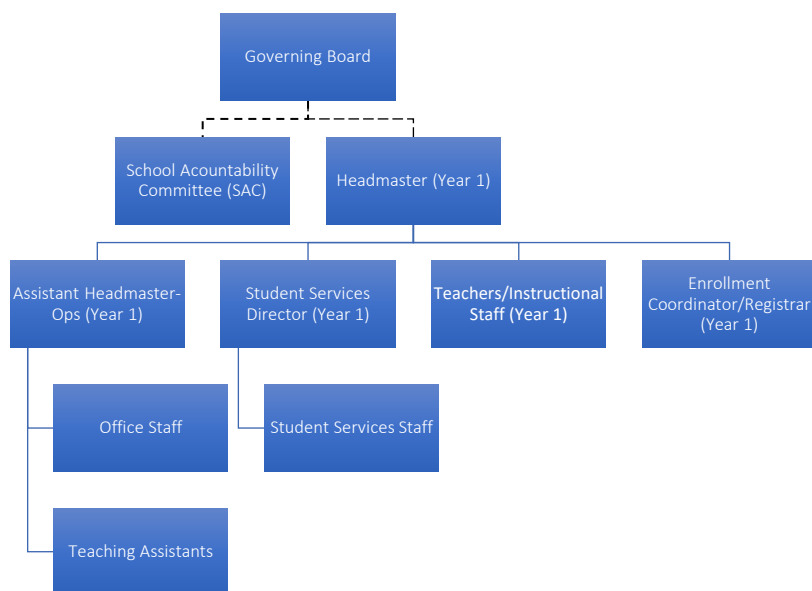
By engaging in regular performance evaluations, ACAD is assessing how well teachers are doing with respect to their curricular and non-curricular responsibilities. Regular evaluations should give rise to individualized performance goals for each teacher. This entire process is one part, but an important one, of a larger system of performance management that includes training and professional development.

The training ACAD provides – developed internally through ACA, or in conjunction with other organizations, like the Colorado League of Charter Schools – constitutes part of the continuing, professional development of faculty members. ACAD will also actively facilitate the development of teachers by supporting them in pursuing independent studies, college coursework, seminars, conferences/workshops, and scholarly or creative projects—all either connected to the general development of the mind or to the specific development of expertise in areas they are teaching at ACAD.

faculty

## 5. School Structure, Policies, and Procedures

### Organization Chart



### Staff Roster

The staffing plan for ACAD is included in the **Appendix 31**.

Staffing increases will follow the staffing plan as enrollment and funding allow.

### Succession Planning

The ACACS governing board will work with ACA and the headmaster to develop a succession plan. Having this plan in place is an expected part of the risk management and the strategic planning responsibility of the board and will proactively prepare faculty, staff, and the board to respond to an unexpected or expected departure of the school leader in order to minimize the impact on school operations.

This planning will include an emergency leadership replacement plan and an expected leadership succession plan.<sup>40</sup>

### Policies and Procedures

ACAD's leadership, faculty, and staff will be at-will employees of ACA as set forth in the draft services agreement included here as **Appendix 27**. School leadership will determine staff structuring based on skill and performance to best serve the needs of students.

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<sup>40</sup> Christine Campbell, "You're Leaving? Succession and Sustainability in Charter School," accessed Jan 3, 2017, [http://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/pub\\_ICS\\_Succession\\_Nov10\\_web\\_0.pdf](http://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/pub_ICS_Succession_Nov10_web_0.pdf).

Applications for faculty and staff positions will be accepted from all qualified candidates. Applicant screening, interviews, and selection will comply with all employment non-discrimination laws and policies.

Once a candidate is selected by the school leadership, the appropriate staff member at ACA will help to facilitate final referencing and criminal background checks. The headmaster will offer regular hiring updates to the governing board, particularly during the spring of each academic year. ACAD will benefit from an efficient fingerprinting process to ensure that the criminal records of candidates are examined before teachers or staff ever have contact with students. This practice meets or exceeds the standards required by law and will help ensure the safety of students and staff.

Selected candidates will be offered a letter of appointment, confirming their start date and pay rate. The purpose of the letter is to define and clarify circumstances under which employment will occur.

Employment with ACA is on an at-will basis; policies and procedures have also been defined to handle unacceptable leadership or employee performance. In the event that performance is unacceptable, and depending on the particular circumstances, discipline may occur. Discipline may include a warning, coaching, performance improvement plan, or suspension/administrative leave. If the employee does not meet performance expectations or there is a significant violation of policies or procedures, they may be terminated.

The ability to pursue the mission and implement the programs described in this application requires ACAD to attract and retain highly effective leaders, teachers, and staff. The school's partnership with ACA will provide the school leadership with access to well-established and fully developed talent recruiting channels. School leadership will determine staff structuring based on skill and performance to best serve the needs of students.

Appendix 29 includes ACA policies. ACA continues to review and update employee policies, in consultation with the Employer Resource Council, to implement best practices.



## **P. Insurance Coverage**

Ascent Classical Academy Charter School currently carries a wide variety of insurances that will extend to Ascent Classical Academy of Durango. Coverages include but are not limited to liability, abuse & molestation, worker's compensation, errors and omissions, property (building, if appropriate, and contents), student accident, and catastrophic student accident insurance. The school will provide a certificate of such insurance to the authorizer no later than September 1st of each year, as required in the charter agreement. The school will obtain competitive quotes from insurers before purchasing insurance. A quote from EPIC Charter School Insurance Group is reflected in the budget and includes the following coverages for all campuses:

Liability policies at \$1,000,000 per occurrence/\$3,000,000 aggregate covering the following: bodily injury; property damage; abuse and molestation; educators' legal or teachers' professional (errors and omissions); employee benefits; employment practices; directors and officers; student accident, and automobile. All policies also have an additional \$1,000,000 in coverage provided by Ascent Classical Academy Charter School's umbrella policy.

A summary of the total insurance structure follows.

Coverage	2022/23
<b>Commercial Property</b>	
Business Personal Property	\$1,055,600
Business Income Incl Extra Exp	\$500,000
<b>Total Annual Premium</b>	<b>\$2,239.00</b>
<b>General Liability</b>	
General Aggregate Limit	3,000,000
Each Occurrence	1,000,000
Medical Expense	10,000
Abuse/Molestation	1,000,000
<b>Total Annual Premium</b>	<b>\$25,163.00</b>
<b>Commercial Auto</b>	
Bodily Injury/Property Damage	1,000,000
Uninsured/Underinsured Motorist	50,000
Auto Medical	5,000
Personal Injury Protection	5,000
Hired/Non-Owned Liability	1,000,000
<b>Total Annual Premium</b>	<b>\$6,415.00</b>
<b>Workers Compensation</b>	<b>State Statutory</b>
<b>Total Annual Premium</b>	<b>\$19,898.00</b>
<b>Commercial Umbrella</b>	
Aggregate Limit	1,000,000
Covered Policies	All
<b>Total Annual Premium</b>	<b>\$3,205.00</b>
<b>Management Liability</b>	
Aggregate - All Lines	3,000,000
Directors & Officers	1,000,000
Educators Legal Liability (E&O)	1,000,000
Employment Practices Liability	1,000,000
<b>Total Annual Premium</b>	<b>\$10,214.00</b>
<b>Student Accident A2</b>	
Accidental Death Benefit	\$15,000
Accidental Dismemberment Benefit	\$30,000
Accident Medical Expense Benefit	\$25,000
Felonious Assault Benefit	\$75,000
<b>Total Annual Premium</b>	<b>\$4,100.00</b>
<b>Catastrophic Student Accident</b>	
Accident Medical	\$6,000,000
<b>Total Annual Premium</b>	<b>\$1,100.00</b>
<b>TOTAL PROGRAM PREMIUM</b>	<b>\$72,334.00</b>

## **Q. Dispute Resolution Process**

In the case of disputes between Ascent Classical Academy of Durango (“ACAD”) and the authorizer concerning governing policy provisions of the charter contract, the school will comply with the statutory requirements of C.R.S. §22-30.5-107.5, Dispute Resolution.

The school or authorizer may initiate a resolution to any dispute concerning a governing policy provision of the school’s charter contract by providing reasonable written notice to the other party of intent to invoke the statutory dispute resolution process. This notice shall include, at a minimum, a brief description of the matter in dispute and the scope of the disagreement between the parties.

Within 30 days after receipt of the written notice, the School and Authorizer shall agree to use any form of alternate dispute resolution as described in C.R.S. §13-22-3. Any form chosen shall result in final written findings by a neutral third party within one hundred twenty days after receipt of the written notice.

The parties may agree to be bound by the written findings resulting from the dispute resolution, in which case, the findings shall be final and not subject to appeal except to the State Board of Education.

If the parties do not agree, an appeal may be made to the State Board of Education in accordance with and subject to the provisions as defined in C.R.S. §22-30.5-107.5.

A decision by the State Board of Education shall be final unless the State Board did not consider specific legal and precedents in rendering a decision, as required by statute.

## R. Waivers

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango (“ACAD”) will comply with all state and federal statutes that are not waived.

On behalf of the school, Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools (“ACACS”) requests the waivers below to allow the school to achieve its mission and vision, in partnership with Ascent Classical Academies (“ACA”), which is described throughout this application. The steering committee has worked with legal counsel to compile this list of waiver requests.

Pursuant to the Charter Schools Act, ACACS requests waivers of certain Colorado Revised Statutes or State Board of Education rules listed below. Each statute is identified and the reason for each request is provided as well as a replacement plan. The waivers will enable the school to better meet its mission, vision, goals and objectives, and implement its education program. Although a replacement plan is identified with each non-automatic waiver requested, additional replacement policies and refinement of the noted plans will occur prior to the start of school operations.

### Colorado State Waivers

#### Automatic State Statute Waivers

Pursuant to C.R.S. §22-30.5-103, ACAD will be granted the following automatic waivers, that do not require a Rationale and Replacement Plan, for the term of the charter contract<sup>41</sup>:

Charter School Automatic Waivers as of 6/2/2017	
Statutory Citation	Description
22-32-109(1)(f), C.R.S.	Local board duties concerning selection of staff and pay
22-32-109(1)(t), C.R.S.	Determine educational program and prescribe textbooks
22-32-110(1)(h), C.R.S.	Local board powers-Terminate employment of personnel
22-32-110(1)(i), C.R.S.	Local board duties-Reimburse employees for expenses
22-32-110(1)(j), C.R.S.	Local board powers-Procure life, health, or accident insurance
22-32-110(1)(k), C.R.S.	Local board powers-Policies relating the in-service training and official conduct
22-32-110(1)(ee), C.R.S.	Local board powers-Employ teachers’ aides and other non-certificated personnel
22-32-126, C.R.S.	Employment and authority of principals
22-33-104(4)	Compulsory school attendance-Attendance policies and excused absences
22-63-301, C.R.S.	Teacher Employment Act- Grounds for dismissal
22-63-302, C.R.S.	Teacher Employment Act-Procedures for dismissal of teachers

<sup>41</sup> Colorado Department of Education. “Charter School Waiver Request Guidance.” July 2019.  
<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/waiverguidanceforcharterschools>.

Charter School Automatic Waivers as of 6/2/2017	
22-63-401, C.R.S.	Teacher Employment Act-Teachers subject to adopted salary schedule
22-63-402, C.R.S.	Teacher Employment Act-Certificate required to pay teachers
22-63-403, C.R.S.	Teacher Employment Act-Describes payment of salaries
22-1-112, C.R.S	School Year-National Holidays

### Non-Automatic Waivers from State Statute and Rule

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango requests the following non-automatic waivers from state statute and rule. These waivers are important in supporting the autonomy of the school to achieve its mission and vision aligned with the philosophy and program proposed in this charter application. Where a waiver from statute is approved, it will be assumed any corresponding rules will also be waived.

Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan
<p><b><i>CRS § 22-9-106. Local Board of Education-Duties-Performance Evaluation System.</i></b></p> <p>Requires employee performance evaluations be performed by a person holding an administrative certificate (Type D).</p> <p><b><i>CRS § 22-2-112(1)(q). Requirements for the Educator Preparation Program Report.</i></b></p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> The ACAD headmaster or designated head of school must have the ability to perform the evaluation of all personnel. Should any other designated administrator not have a Type D certificate, this should not preclude him or her from administering the evaluations under the direction of the head of school. The ACACS governing board must also have the ability to perform the evaluation for the headmaster or designated head of school. Additionally, the school will not be required to report its teacher evaluation ratings as a part of the commissioner's report as required by C.R.S. § 22-2-112(1)(q)(I), but will still report on in-field/out-of-field.</p>
<p><b>Replacement Plan:</b> ACAD uses its own evaluation system as agreed to in the Charter School Agreement with the authorizer. ACAD's evaluation system will continue to meet the intent of the law as outlined in statute. Staff will be trained in this evaluation system and the methods used for Ascent Classical Academy of Durango's evaluation system includes quality standards that are clear and relevant to the administrators' and teachers' roles and responsibilities, and have the goal of improving student academic growth, and meet the intent of the quality standards established in SB 10-191. The school will not be required to report its teacher evaluation data through the TSDL collection; however, teacher performance data will be reviewed by the school and used to inform hiring practices and professional development. Core course level participation will continue to be reported pursuant to C.R.S. § 22-11-503.5, as this is a non-waivable statute.</p>
<p><b>Duration of Waivers:</b> The waiver will extend for the duration of the contract.</p>
<p><b>Financial Impact:</b> The school anticipates the requested waivers will have no financial impact on the authorizer or Ascent Classical Academy of Durango.</p>
<p><b>How the Impact of the Waivers will be Evaluated:</b> Since teacher performance has a critical impact on the performance of the entire school, the impact of this waiver will be measured by the same performance criteria and assessments that apply to the school, as set forth in this Charter School Agreement.</p>

#### Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan

**Expected Outcome:** With this waiver, the school will be able to implement its program and evaluate its teachers in accordance with its Performance Appraisal System, which is designed to produce greater accountability and be consistent with the school's goals and objectives. This will benefit staff members as well as students and the community.

#### Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan

##### *CRS § 22-32-109(1)(n)(I). Board of Education-Specific Duties.*

School Calendar.

##### *CRS § 22-32-109(1)(n)(II)(B). Board of Education-Specific Duties.*

Adoption of District Calendar.

**Rationale:** The number of days in the school year at Ascent Classical Academy of Durango will exceed the statutory requirement. ACAD will prescribe the actual details of its own school calendar to best meet the needs of its students. The local board will not set these policies and ACAD may have a calendar that differs from the rest of the schools within the district.

**Replacement Plan:** The final calendar and the school's daily schedule will be designed by ACAD, approved by the ACACS governing board, and will meet or exceed the expectations in state statute. In accordance with authorizer policy, the school will submit its calendar annually to the authorizer for review and will not make any material modifications to the calendar without prior approval by the authorizer. To the extent practicable, modifications will be requested at least 60 days prior to the proposed date of change.

**Duration of Waivers:** The waiver will extend for the duration of the contract.

**Financial Impact:** The school anticipates that the requested waivers will have no financial impact on the authorizer or Ascent Classical Academy of Durango.

**How the Impact of the Waiver Will be Evaluated:** The impact of this waiver will be measured by the performance criteria and assessments that apply to Ascent Classical Academy of Durango, as set forth in this Charter School Agreement.

**Expected Outcome:** As a result of these waivers, the school will be able to implement the necessary policies to increase student achievement.

#### Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan

##### *CRS § 22-32-109(1)(n)(II)(A). Board of Education-Specific Duties.*

Teacher Pupil Contact Hours

**Rationale:** Ascent Classical Academy of Durango will prescribe the actual details of teacher-pupil contact hours to best meet the needs of students. The local board will not set these policies.

**Replacement Plan:** ACAD will prescribe the actual details of teacher-pupil contact hours, which are subject to review by the authorizer to ensure minimum statutory requirements are met. Hours will meet or exceed the current requirements in statute.

**Duration of Waivers:** The waiver will extend for the duration of the contract.

Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan
<b>Financial Impact:</b> The school anticipates that the requested waivers will have no financial impact on the authorizer or Ascent Classical Academy of Durango.
<b>How the Impact of the Waiver Will be Evaluated:</b> The impact of this waiver will be measured by the performance criteria and assessments that apply to Ascent Classical Academy of Durango, as set forth in this Charter School Agreement.
<b>Expected Outcome:</b> As a result of these waivers, the school will be able to implement the necessary policies to increase student achievement.

Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan
<b><i>C.R.S. § 22-7-1014(2)(a). Preschool individualized readiness plans - school readiness - assessments.</i></b> Requires each district or school to administer the school readiness assessment to each kindergarten student.
<b>Rationale:</b> Ascent Classical Academy of Durango should have the authority to implement relevant curriculum and assessments that ensure students success in higher learning. The domains of physical well-being and motor development; social-emotional development; language and comprehension development; and cognition and general knowledge are assessed daily due to the current curriculum assessments. Support is readily available through numerous avenues based throughout the program.
<b>Replacement Plan:</b> Ascent Classical Academy of Durango has a Kindergarten program utilizing the Core Knowledge curriculum that aligns to the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS). <p>1. Physical Well-Being and Motor Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students participate weekly in a structured recess that encourages gross motor development. Students are assessed on motor-development skills acquired throughout the year by our elementary physical education teacher.</li> <li>Students participate weekly in art education meeting or exceeding state standards. Development of fine motor skills is achieved through drawing, painting, and creating projects. Students are assessed on fine motor skills acquired throughout the year.</li> <li>Students participate weekly in music education meeting or exceeding state standards. Students participate in a variety of movement and rhythm exercises. Students are assessed throughout the year.</li> <li>Students participate in daily writing exercise learning how to hold and manipulate a pencil and form their letters and numbers properly. Students are assessed throughout the year.</li> <li>Assessment information is gathered by observation protocols based on appropriate developmental guidelines and State Standards in the area of physical well-being and motor development within the first 60 calendar days of the school year.</li> </ul> <p>2. Social and Emotional Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are instructed in the positive behavior support system designed by the school. This includes classroom, cafeteria, recess, and hallway expectations. Students are rewarded for the positive behavior they demonstrate.</li> <li>Positive behavior in the classroom is reinforced with redirection and refocus, as well as individual behavior charts, and whole class rewards. This is to strengthen self-regulation and</li> </ul>

## Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan

executive-functions that help students pay attention, remember directions, and control their behavior.

- Instruction in good character and virtue is integrated in the curriculum on a daily basis. This helps students develop social-emotional skills such as making friends, managing emotions and solving problems to set them on the path for social success and academic readiness.
- Assessment information is gathered by observation protocols by the classroom teacher based on appropriate developmental guidelines and Colorado State Standards within the first 60 calendar days of the school year.

### 3. Language and Comprehension Development

- Students receive 65 minutes of instruction each day in the Literacy Essentials phonics language arts curriculum. This is a comprehensive program for writing, spelling, reading, listening, and speaking that builds vocabulary and knowledge. Students master the basic phonetic components of the English language in order to decode and encode fluently. Students are also taught vocabulary through daily reading, language arts skills that are essential for comprehension. Each skill is assessed weekly. An overall assessment of reading fluency is administered monthly.
- A READ Act compliant assessment is administered three times per year beginning within the first 60 calendar days of the school year. Any student who does not achieve benchmark is progress monitored every two to three weeks. Students not making benchmark progress are assessed to determine the literacy area most in need of improvement. If the student is far below benchmark on two consecutive assessment administrations, the student is placed on a READ plan and given an additional 30 minutes of small group instruction.

### 4. Cognition

- **School culture.** Students are immersed daily in a school culture that emphasizes learning for its own sake (rather than for a grade, for example). This school culture has resulted in a student body that collectively demonstrates positive approaches to learning, motivation, engagement, all evidenced by an extensive record of academic achievement.
- **Culture of leisure and play.** Students are afforded daily supervised play time in recess, as well as in-class leisure time. This provides frequent opportunities for students to engage in dramatic play, to explore and imagine and invent.
- **Core Knowledge science.** Students are regularly instructed in classification skills in the context of science class, specifically: classifying plants and animals, the parts of the human body, and types of weather.
- **Singapore Math.** Students have rigorous Singapore Math daily. This curriculum specifically teaches students to identify all possible strategies for solving a given problem.
- **Cognition assessment.** Within the first 60 calendar days of the school year, students are assessed on their cognitive development. Assessments are reflected in quarterly checklist evaluations and in lengthy narrative evaluations each semester.

### 5. General Knowledge - Math



## Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan

- Students receive 40 minutes of math instruction using the Singapore Math curriculum. This research-based curriculum is widely recognized for its success in teaching students number concepts and operations, spatial relationships, measurement, and patterns.
- Within the first 60 calendar days of the school year, students are assessed on their mathematics development, with the first administration taking place within the first 60 days of the year.. Students are assessed regularly on their progress in Singapore math. Students who fall behind are given additional time with a teacher aide.

### 6.General Knowledge – Literacy

- Students receive 65 minutes of instruction each day in the Literacy Essential phonics language arts curriculum. This is a comprehensive program for writing, spelling, reading, listening, and speaking that builds vocabulary and knowledge. Students master the basic phonetic components of the English language in order to decode and encode fluently. Students are also taught vocabulary through daily reading, language arts skills that are essential for comprehension. Each skill is assessed weekly. An overall assessment of reading fluency is administered monthly.
- A READ Act compliant assessment is administered three times per year beginning within the first 60 calendar days of the school year. Any student who does not achieve benchmark is progress monitored every two to three weeks. Students not making benchmark progress are assessed to determine the literacy area most in need of improvement. If the student is far below benchmark on two consecutive assessment administrations, the student is placed on a READ plan and given an additional 30 minutes of small group instruction.
- Any student not making adequate growth in any of the above areas receive intervention strategies in small groups or 1:1 instruction. Intervention plans are developed and review with our student services department quarterly. The information reviewed includes results of formal assessments, informal assessments, and developmental checklists. This information is housed in an internet based data management system of the school's choosing, to bring together achievement data from many sources, generate student and summary reports, and allow for distribution to appropriate personnel.
- If students do not respond with adequate growth following this intervention they may be referred to a Physical/Occupational Therapist; Psychologist; Speech/Language Therapist; Special Education Teacher; Counselor or Mental Health Therapist for further assessment. These assessments results are held in Enrich.
- Methods and assessments used are clear and relevant and have the goal of improving student academic growth and meet the intent of the quality standards established in C.R.S § 27-7-1014(2)(a).

**Duration of Waivers:** The waiver will extend for the duration of the contract.

**Financial Impact:** Ascent Classical Academy of Durango anticipates that the requested waiver will have no financial impact upon the authorizer or ACAD.

**How the Impact of the Waiver will be evaluated:** The impact of this waiver will be measured by the performance criteria and assessments that apply to Ascent Classical Academy of Durango's curriculum and overall program design.

#### Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan

**Expected Outcomes:** Ascent Classical Academy of Durango will continue to provide appropriate assessments and support in all academic content areas. This will ensure student success in higher levels of learning in all academic content areas.

#### Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan

##### *CRS § 22-32-120. Food Services.*

Provides rules and requirements for food service

##### *CRS § 22-30.5-517. Healthy Beverages.*

Prohibits the sale of beverages not meeting nutritional guidelines

**Rationale:** Ascent Classical Academy of Durango will be operating independently of other schools of the authorizer and should be delegated the authority to develop, adopt, and implement its own operational policies, rules and regulations, subject to the limitations in the Charter School Agreement. ACAD notes some of the assumptions behind these statutes are not agreed upon in the field of nutrition and are increasingly being questioned. ACACS currently holds waivers related to these topics.

**Replacement Plan:** The ACACS governing board will adopt policies and the headmaster or designated official will prescribe rules and regulations that ensure children have access to nutritious and healthy food options. ACAD recognizes these waivers will not apply should the school decide to participate in the nation school lunch program.

**Duration of Waivers:** The waiver will extend for the duration of the contract.

**Financial Impact:** The school anticipates that the requested waivers will have no financial impact on the authorizer or Ascent Classical Academy of Durango.

**How the Impact of the Waiver Will be Evaluated:** The impact of this waiver will be measured by the performance criteria and assessments that apply to Ascent Classical Academy of Durango, as set forth in this Charter School Agreement.

**Expected Outcome:** As a result of this waiver, ACAD will set its own policies in keeping with the philosophy and mission as stated in the Charter School Agreement.

#### Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan

##### *CRS § 22-63-201. Employment certificate required.*

Prohibits boards from entering into an employment contract with a person who does not hold a teacher's certificate or letter of authorization.

##### *CRS § 22-63-202. Teacher employment, contracts in writing-duration-damage provision*

**Rationale:** Ascent Classical Academy of Durango should be granted the authority to hire teachers and headmasters who will support the school's goals and objectives. The principal will not function as a traditional district school principal, but rather will be responsible for a wider range of tasks. The school will seek to attract principals and teachers from a wide variety of backgrounds, including, but not limited to teachers from out-of-state, teachers with a lapsed Colorado certificate, persons with several years of successful teaching experience in a setting not requiring a license, as well as persons with business or professional experience. All employees of ACAD will be employed on an at-will basis.

#### Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan

**Replacement Plan:** Ascent Classical Academy of Durango's intent is for all teachers to have, at minimum, a bachelor's degree and either 24 credit hours in the subject matter, or a passing score on a state-approved content examination in the relevant subject area. The school will encourage and explore ways to incentivize teachers to meet 36 or more credit hours in the subject matter per the Colorado state ESSA plan, and acknowledges that it will nevertheless have to report the number of teachers "in-field" and "out-of-field." The headmaster will develop a professional development program for any teacher with a bachelor's degree not meeting the minimum subject matter credit hours to prepare them to pass a state-approved content examination in the relevant subject area. Special Education Teachers will hold the requisite state license and endorsement. In addition, all employees of the school will meet applicable fingerprinting and background check requirements.

**Duration of Waivers:** The waiver will extend for the duration of the contract.

**Financial Impact:** The school anticipates that the requested waivers will have no financial impact on the authorizer or Ascent Classical Academy of Durango.

**How the Impact of the Waiver Will be Evaluated:** The impact of this waiver will be measured by the performance criteria and assessments that apply to Ascent Classical Academy of Durango, as set forth in this Charter School Agreement.

**Expected Outcome:** As a result of these waivers, the school will be able to employ professional staff possessing unique skills and/or background filling all staff needs.

#### Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan

##### *CRS § 22-63-203. Probationary Teachers - renewal and non-renewal of employment contract.*

Provides for contract with probationary teachers and allows for non-renewal and renewal of employment contract.

##### *CRS § 22-63-203.5. Nonprobationary portability*

##### *CRS § 22-63-205. Exchange of teachers - exchange educator interim authorization.*

##### *CRS § 22-63-206. Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act.*

Permits transfer of teachers between schools upon recommendation of district's chief administrative officer.

##### *CRS § 22-30.5-512. authorizer charter schools - employee retirement funds.*

**Rationale:** In order to manage its own personnel, the school must be granted the authority to select its own teaching staff, develop its own employment agreements and terms and conditions of employment. The school should have the authority to develop compensation plans that are most aligned with the interests of its teachers and staff. The school will be operating differently from other schools with a unique curriculum for which having the proper teaching staff is essential. No other school should have the authority to transfer its teachers into the school or transfer teachers from the school to any other schools.

**Replacement Plan:** All employees of the school will be employed on an at-will basis. The school has teacher agreements with the terms of non-renewal and renewal of employment agreements, and payment

Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan
of salaries upon termination of employment of a teacher. As a result of these waivers, the school will be able to employ professional staff possessing unique skills and/or background, filling all staff needs. The school will hire teachers on a best-qualified basis. There is no provision for transfers.
<b>Duration of Waivers:</b> The waiver will extend for the duration of the contract.
<b>Financial Impact:</b> The school anticipates that the requested waivers will have a positive financial impact on Ascent Classical Academy of Durango and no impact on the authorizer.
<b>How the Impact of the Waiver Will be Evaluated:</b> The impact of this waiver will be measured by the performance criteria and assessments that apply to Ascent Classical Academy of Durango, as set forth in this Charter School Agreement.
<b>Expected Outcome:</b> As a result of these waivers, the school will be able to employ professional staff possessing unique skills and/or background, filling all staff needs.

Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan
<i>CRS § 22-32-109(1)(b). Local Board duties concerning competitive bidding.</i>
<i>CRS § 22-32-110(1)(y). Local Board Powers.</i>
Accepting gifts, donations, and grants
<b>Rationale:</b> Ascent Classical Academy of Durango should be granted the authority to develop its operating policies, consistent with the Charter School Act. This policy has been an automatic waiver granted to all charter schools until recently.
<b>Replacement Plan:</b> The school will be responsible for determining whether or not to accept gifts, donations and grants. The school will ensure the process is an open process in compliance with all applicable rules and regulations. Additionally, the school is in the best position to know what goods and services are needed and which vendors and providers may be available. The school will be responsible for establishing procedures for competitive bidding, as required by applicable law, and for selecting successful bidders on projects/contracts. The school will ensure the process is open, transparent, and in compliance with all applicable rules and regulations.
<b>Duration of Waivers:</b> The waiver will extend for the duration of the contract.
<b>Financial Impact:</b> The school anticipates that the requested waivers will have no financial impact on the authorizer or Ascent Classical Academy of Durango.
<b>How the Impact of the Waiver Will be Evaluated:</b> The impact of this waiver will be measured by the performance criteria and assessments that apply to Ascent Classical Academy of Durango, as set forth in this Charter School Agreement.
<b>Expected Outcome:</b> As a result of these waivers, the school will be able to employ professional staff possessing unique skills and/or background, filling all staff needs.

Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan
<i><b>CRS § 22-63-204. Interest Prohibited.</b></i>
Receiving money from the sale of goods
<b>Rationale:</b> As provided for in the Charter School Agreement, all staff at Ascent Classical Academy of Durango are employees of the school and not of the authorizer. As a result, the authority of the employing board to provide written consent in these matters should be transferred to ACAD.
<b>Replacement Plan:</b> Ascent Classical Academy of Durango will follow its board policies and the Charter School Agreement as approved by the authorizer.
<b>Duration of Waivers:</b> The waiver will extend for the duration of the contract.
<b>Financial Impact:</b> The school anticipates that the requested waivers will have no financial impact on the authorizer or Ascent Classical Academy of Durango.
<b>How the Impact of the Waiver Will be Evaluated:</b> The impact of this waiver will be measured by the performance criteria and assessments that apply to Ascent Classical Academy of Durango, as set forth in this Charter School Agreement.
<b>Expected Outcome:</b> As a result of this waiver, ACAD will be able to administer the school program in keeping with the philosophy and mission as stated in the Charter School Agreement.

Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan
<i><b>CRS § 22-1-110. Effect of Use of Alcohol and Controlled Substances to be Taught</b></i>
Specifies how, when, and to what extent the effects of alcohol and controlled substances will be taught in all grade levels.
<b>Rationale:</b> Ascent Classical Academy has the authority to determine the educational program and curriculum for the school.
<b>Replacement Plan:</b> Ascent Classical Academy of Durango offers a broad curriculum that meets the Colorado Academic Standards for Comprehensive Health and Physical Education, to include the sub-standards: Physical and Personal Wellness, Emotional and Social Wellness, and Prevention and Risk Management, to which alcohol and controlled substance education apply.
<b>Duration of Waivers:</b> The waiver will extend for the duration of the contract.
<b>Financial Impact:</b> The requested waivers will have no financial impact on the authorizer or Ascent Classical Academy of Durango.
<b>How the Impact of the Waiver Will be Evaluated:</b> The impact of this waiver will be measured by the performance criteria and assessments that apply to Ascent Classical Academy of Durango, as set forth in the Charter School Agreement.
<b>Expected Outcome:</b> As a result of this waiver, Ascent Classical Academy of Durango will experience an enhanced educational program by being able to administer the school program keeping with the philosophy and mission as stated in the Charter School Agreement and executing the curricular autonomy it is guaranteed.

Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan
<p><i>CRS § 22-30.5-505(3)(f). authorizer Board – powers and duties – rules.</i></p> <p>Requires the school to assist with concurrent enrollment.</p> <p><i>CRS § 22-30.5-525. Individual career and academic plans.</i></p> <p><i>301-81, CCR. Rules Governing Individual Career and Academic Plans</i></p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Ascent Classical Academy of Durango is granted the authority to establish its own curriculum and academic program. It should be allowed the autonomy to help prepare its students for life after graduating the school. This statute requires a school to create a plan for its students that directs the students’ course selection and includes other requirements not aligned to the mission and vision of the school, affecting its autonomy and program.</p>
<p><b>Replacement Plan:</b> ACAD has a challenging and well-defined core course requirement for graduation. School staff will work with students and parents to help advise students on how to reach their goals for life after graduating ACAD, whether they chose college, career, or another path.</p> <p>The school will establish its own policies for what will be included in a student’s ICAP, that at a minimum will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and be reviewed with students annually;</li> <li>• Be captured in paper or electronic format to be saved with the student’s record;</li> <li>• Encompass individual/self-discovery, career exploration, and academic planning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Duration of Waivers:</b> The waiver will extend for the duration of the contract.</p>
<p><b>Financial Impact:</b> The school anticipates that the requested waivers will have no financial impact on the authorizer or Ascent Classical Academy of Durango.</p>
<p><b>How the Impact of the Waiver Will be Evaluated:</b> The impact of this waiver will be measured by the performance criteria and assessments that apply to Ascent Classical Academy of Durango, as set forth in this Charter School Agreement.</p>
<p><b>Expected Outcome:</b> The school expects as a result of this waiver it will be able to offer a more meaningful post-secondary education readiness program for its students, aligned to the school’s mission and vision, that meets the intent of these statutes and rules.</p>

Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan
<p><i>C.R.S. § 22-33-105(7)(b) Suspension, expulsion, and denial of admission</i></p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> As a charter school, the school must have the ability to determine procedures for suspension, expulsion, and denial of admission in accordance with state law and to hear the appeal of any such decisions.</p>
<p><b>Replacement Plan:</b> The charter contract delegates the authority to suspend, expel, and deny admission to students to the school administration, which is consistent with state law; however, as opposed to the authorizer carrying out the functions of a school district and its board, the governing board of the school will carry out those functions. To ensure that the school is meeting the intent of the law, the School will involve its legal counsel and the authorizer in any appeals to the governing board to ensure that students</p>

Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan
are being afforded appropriate due process. The school will develop a policy for carrying out the requirements of C.R.S. § 22-33-105 for review and approval by the authorizer. In addition, the school will report expulsion data pursuant to C.R.S. § 22-33-105(2.5).
<b>Duration of Waivers:</b> The waiver will extend for the duration of the contract.
<b>Financial Impact:</b> The School anticipates that the requested Waiver will have minimal financial impact on the school and no financial impact on the authorizer.
<b>How the Impact of the Waivers Will be Evaluated:</b> The school will be required to record all data involving suspensions and expulsions with access for review by both the authorizer and the school's governing board. In addition, the school's governing board will develop its policies and procedures for suspensions, expulsions, and denial of admission for review and approval by the authorizer.
<b>Expected Outcome:</b> The outcome will be a fair and supportive process for the school to make appropriate determinations regarding suspensions, expulsions, and denial of admissions at the local level, with administrative oversight by the authorizer.

## District Policy Waivers

Listed below are the waivers requested from the Durango 9-R School District policies. In some instances, waivers are requested not because of any substantive disagreement with the scope, intent or language of a policy, but rather because the subject policy specifies that the District Board of Education, the Superintendent or a school principal bears responsibility for performing a particular action or function; where in the ACAD model for governance/administration these functions would be performed by the ACACS Board, school administrator, and/or our management partner Ascent Classical Academies.

The application team was notified by Durango 9-R staff that the district recognizes automatic waivers from district policies, that align with the autonomy of a charter school and the state automatic waivers. ACAD has requested a listing of these specific policies several times but has not received a list or adequate response regarding automatic waivers from district policies. ACAD has compiled a list of waivers that it believes meet the spirit of automatic waivers based on the school's curricular, instructional, cultural, operational, and general autonomy, and due to the fact the school operates its own facilities. ACACS has already adopted a wide range of policies that apply to students, the academic program, school environment, and operations.

### Section D – Fiscal Management

All Fiscal Management policies should be automatically waived or agreed to be not applicable to the charter school. ACACS already has financial policies.

### Section E – Support Services

The following district policies should be automatically waived.

EBCE	School Closings and Cancellations
EC	Building/Grounds/Property Management
ECA	Security/Access to Buildings



## Section I – Instruction

The following district policies should be automatically waived.

IA	Instructional Program
IC/ICA	School Year/School Calendar/Instruction Time
IG	Curriculum Review and Development
IHA	Basic Instructional Program
IHAM	Health Education
IHAMA	Teaching about Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco
IHAMB	Family Life/Sex Education
IHBK	Preparation for Postsecondary and Workforce Success
IHCDA	Concurrent Enrollment
IJ	Instructional Resources and Materials
IJNDAB	Instruction through Online Courses
IJOA	Field Trips
IJOB	Community Resource Persons/Speakers
IJOC	School Volunteers

## Section J – Students

The following district policies should be automatically waived.

JEB	Entrance Age Requirements
JF	Admission and Denial of Admission
JFBA	Intra-District Choice/Open Enrollment
JFBB	Inter-District Choice/Open Enrollment
JFC	Student Withdrawal from School/Dropouts
JGA	Assignment of New Students to Classes and Grade Levels
JH	Student Absences and Excuses
JHB	Truancy
JIC	Student Conduct
JICA	Student Dress Code
JICC	Student Conduct in School Vehicles
JICDA	Code of Conduct
JICDD	Violent and Aggressive Behavior
JICDE	Bullying Prevention and Education
JICEA	School-Related Student Publications
JICJ	Student Use of Cell Phones and Other Personal Technology Devices
JJA-1	Student Organizations
JJA-2	Student Organizations - Open Forum



JJE	Student Fundraising Activities
JJF	Student Activities Funds
JJH	Student Travel
JJJ	Extracurricular Activity Eligibility
JK	Student Discipline
JK-2	Discipline of Students with Disabilities
JKA	Use of Physical Intervention and Restraint
JKB	Detention
JKBA	Disciplinary Removal from Classroom
JKD/JKE	Suspension/Expulsion of Students
JKG	Expulsion Prevention
JLCC	Communicable/Infectious Diseases
JLCD	Administering Medications to Students
JLIB	Student Dismissal Precautions
JN	Community Service
JS	Student Use of the Internet and Electronic Communications

#### Section K – School-Community-Home Relations

The following district policies should be automatically waived.

KCD	Public Gifts/Donations to Schools
KE	Public Concerns and Complaints
KEC	Public Concerns/Complaints about Instructional Resources
KEF	Public Concerns/Complaints about Teaching Methods, Activities, or Presentations
KF	Community Use of School Facilities
KHC	Distribution/Posting of Noncurricular Materials
KI	Visitors to the Schools

**Rationale:** Charter schools have unique status and are expected to be innovative in educational reform. In order for ACAD to be successful and operate in a manner consistent with its mission and vision as outlined in this charter application, it must be able to operate beyond certain policy limits of traditional educational approaches. The school requires the additional flexibility to support its autonomy in operations, governance, employment, student culture, academics, and other area. Durango 9-R has indicated it has automatic district policy waivers that align to the autonomy of charter schools but has not provided ACAD this list of waivers.

**Replacement Policies:** ACACS already has a significant set of policies available that align to the mission, vision, and culture of the school. Replacement policies are or will be developed to be consistent with the philosophies of the ACACS Board and meet the requirements of all local, state, and federal laws.

**Duration of the Waiver:** The school requests that these waivers be for the duration of its contract with the Durango 9-R School District.

**Financial Impact:** The school anticipates that the requested waivers will have no financial impact on the authorizer or Ascent Classical Academy of Durango.

**How the Impact of the Waiver Will be Evaluated:** The impact of these waivers will be measured by the performance criteria and assessments that apply to Ascent Classical Academy of Durango, as set forth in this Charter School Agreement.

**Expected Outcome:** As a result of these waivers, ACAD will be able to implement its program in a manner that supports its autonomy and is consistent with its Educational Philosophy, Mission, and Vision, of the school.



## **S. School Management Contracts**

### **Partnership with Ascent Classical Academies**

The Ascent Classical Academy Charter School (“ACACS”) Governing Board chose to partner with Ascent Classical Academies (“ACA”) on the establishment of operations of Ascent Classical Academy of Durango (“ACAD”) because the organization provides a comprehensive educational program that includes curriculum, program implementation, professional development, staffing, and other key services to operate a quality school. Moreover, the organization’s program and approach to education – including its virtues and school-wide and classroom frameworks – will serve the ACAD mission well.

ACA is a non-profit corporation established in Colorado. This charter management organization was founded by a team experienced in classical charter public schools in Colorado, with a mission to support this specific school model. By partnering with ACA as a charter management organization, ACAD will be able to share services with other ACACS schools, obtain business operations support, have access to a strong network of teacher and leader mentors, and improve the quality and delivery of its program.

### **Best Educational Interest**

Partnering with ACA is in the best educational interest of ACAD. The ACA team has demonstrated experience in implementing the academic program and creating the necessary culture for high-quality classical charter schools. The Colorado Department of Education has recognized ACA-affiliated charter schools as “high-quality.”

### **Performance in Colorado**

ACA was established by Colorado parents believing a tuition-free classical education should be available to any family desiring one. The founders of ACA also founded Golden View Classical Academy (“GVCA”), a charter school in Golden, Colorado. After founding GVCA, these parents have since founded two other charter schools as Ascent Classical Academies, one in Lone Tree, Colorado, in its fourth year, and another in Windsor, Colorado, in its second year.

Ascent Classical Academies has been investing significant resources into expanding its capacity to open and operate high-quality school over the past year. All ACA-affiliated charter schools are accredited as Performance schools using the Colorado Charter School Institute (“CSI”) annual rating, which takes into account academic performance using the Colorado School Performance Framework (SPF), finance, and operations.

### **Best Financial Interest**

The ACACS governing board appreciates the direct investment ACA has pledged to this school.

- Consistent with the draft Services Agreement, ACA will fund and deliver the educational program desired by the board even if public revenues come up short of our approved budget. In this way,

ACA assumes all financial risk, and the ACACS board is guaranteed in the ability to deliver the proposed educational program.

- ACA will be eligible for financial support for charter replication that will benefit ACAD.
- In building a new school, ACA typically leverages millions of dollars in private capital to create a new or renovated facility, investing in the community without taxing its residents.

The ACACS board and legal counsel have reviewed the draft Services Agreement with ACA and concluded that it provides a desired arrangement to achieve our mission and serve the community.

## **Network Capacity**

Ascent Classical Academy of Durango will be the third school and likely the fourth working with ACA in the 2023-2024 school year. ACA continues to develop more resources to provide member schools through expansion. Being a part of a group of similar classical schools will continue improving the service and value provided to all schools, both in the ability to establish and operate a great school that aligns with the mission and vision, and to continually look at ways to improve all aspects of network schools, both in teacher development, curriculum enhancement, governance development, and operations and processes.

Although well positioned, ACA is aware of, and actively managing risks to expansion. A discussion of these risks, as well as mitigation strategies, is included below.

### Key Risks to Growth

ACA is able to mitigate many risks faced by new schools through its comprehensive Services Agreement and long-term commitment to its partner schools. Once a charter is awarded, ACA commits to securing real estate to build or renovate a building. Due to ACA's demonstrated success in replicating classical charter schools, affiliated schools are able to access capital for facilities not available to most charter start-ups.

ACA does experience some of the same risks and challenges that many schools face, including: identifying excellent school leaders and teachers; creating a culture of high academic expectations and high care for students; and adapting to the needs of the specific student populations that enroll at ACA-partner schools and quickly accelerating their academic performance. Detailed below are plans to mitigate these risks.

*Identifying Excellent School Leaders and Teachers:* The availability of experienced and high-quality school leaders is essential to successfully establishing a new public charter school. There are several components to ACA's ongoing efforts to address this priority.

Headmasters of ACA-partner schools identify leaders and teachers whom they see potential for school leadership roles and recommend them to ACA for further leadership development opportunities.

In this role as "talent scout," headmaster benefit significantly from ACA's "distributed leadership" administrative model. In this model, the headmaster provides ongoing coaching and mentoring to every teacher.

ACA has developed a school leader fellowship program for candidates interested in serving in school leadership positions, to include headmasters, assistance headmaster, or directors of operations. This program allows fellows to serve a year in an Ascent Classical Academies affiliated school in a leadership role, where they are required to teach a class, learn how to develop and mentor teachers, receive a personalized development plan that includes coaching, learn the non-academic, operational side of leading a charter school, and other skills required to successfully lead a school.

ACA also has national partnerships to identify and develop other candidates for school leadership and classrooms. ACA is already working to identify candidates to lead ACAD and intends to have them start in the Fall of 2022, a year before opening. ACA also works with colleges across the country to recruit qualified classical school educators.

*Emphasis on experience:* ACA recognizes benefits in having school leaders and a small core of teachers come to a school with some previous experience with the ACA model. This kind of experience and seasoning helps ACA implement its model consistently and facilitates the sharing of best practices and experience from lessons learned under this model. ACA also has mentor teachers from other ACA campuses that will work with ACAD faculty.

*Commitment to competitive compensation:* ACA believes strongly that effective instruction comes from highly satisfied teachers. Highly satisfied teachers are a result of competitive compensation, a work culture that rewards high performance, and strong instructional leaders.

*Commitment to teacher development:* ACA strives to ensure newly recruited teaching staff evolve into excellent teachers in practice.

*The value of the ACA-partner school network:* ACA recognizes the value of operating in places that are near existing ACA-partner schools, from which teachers may transfer. As ACA expands, ACA's network of partner schools will aid the organization significantly in identifying individuals with potential leadership capabilities.

*Creating a Culture of High Academic Expectations and High Care for Students:* Teachers and school leaders need to spend their time focused on instruction, not classroom management or behavioral issues. ACA-partner schools utilize a positive behavioral intervention system and school-wide approach to promote good character and virtue leading to a strong school culture.

*Adapting to Meet the Educational Needs of Students:* ACA-schools have created a culture of continuous improvement that intensely monitors student academic progress and provides the structure and supports necessary to adapt instruction and services to meet the needs of all students, regardless of the specific student population. Professional development for teachers and school leadership is comprehensive and ongoing, and includes frequent classroom observations and feedback to teachers. The formative and diagnostic systems are robust, providing teachers with real-time information on how each student is progressing and allowing them to individualize instruction. Additional assistance is always available from the network's leaders and teacher mentors, who will be actively participating in the academic oversight of the school.

A robust, developed, and well-resourced intervention program established from day one of instruction is essential to the long-term success of students, staff, and the school. In cooperation with partner boards, ACA conducts a detailed needs assessment for each community it enters and modifies intervention programming to best meet the needs of students on the first day of instruction. ACA is also committed to modifying its intervention programming early and often – by investing supplemental financial resources if needed – to ensure that this intervention program evolves with the changing needs of its partner schools. New ACA schools benefit from existing schools, which have refined intervention programming to meet unique needs.

## Services and Support from ACA

ACAD will leverage the strength of ACA's human capital, financial resources, and experience starting schools – along with their professional expertise and community contacts – to successfully launch our school. The ACA office in Golden, Colorado, serves as a resource for partner schools in areas such as academic intervention support, accounting and payroll, marketing, construction and facilities maintenance, curriculum and instructional development, human resources, purchasing, special education, talent acquisition, governing board support, and technology support. Some of these services ACA will provide for our school are summarized below:

***Real Estate and Construction:*** When the charter contract is executed, the ACA will be prepared to identify and lease real estate with construction soon beginning. ACA's construction period for this school is expected to be 7-8 months. ACA has experienced development and financial partners with a successful history of building new facilities and renovating existing structures. The school facilities will contain space to house the first phase of the academic program. ACA will also assist in new construction when it is financially feasible.

***Recruitment, Staffing, and Human Resources Management:*** Excellent teaching in each classroom is key to academic achievement. ACA will support the school by conducting teacher and staff recruitment and overseeing the hiring process, advertising positions online and through internal ACA websites, and participating at college recruiting fairs throughout Colorado, and at other venues around the country. ACA has established relationships with high-quality schools of education to identify top talent, another source of support that will be tapped by the ACAD. ACA will manage recruitment, compensation, payroll, and compliance. The school will benefit significantly from this experience and support.

***Professional Development:*** Teachers and school leaders will have the opportunity to take advantage of professional development opportunities offered through ACA. ACA has a mentor teacher program for teachers across the ACA-network to interact and share practices.

***Curriculum:*** The classical curriculum and instructional program for the school is recommended by the Barney Charter School Initiative. The ACA Director of Curriculum and Instruction continues working with campus headmasters on improving the academic program.

***Back-Office Functions:*** The partnership with ACA provides the school with all back office functions, including standardized purchasing, accounting, business services, informational technology, data reporting, data warehousing, and payroll systems. This will allow school staff to better focus all effort on instruction and student learning. Items and materials purchased by ACA on behalf of the school will remain property of the school. The school will be billed for these items and materials at cost.

***Financial Support:*** Partnering with ACA provides the school with upfront financial investment that will ensure effective support and growth. ACA also has committed to ensuring that the school can start out serving grades K-9, and then grow slowly by one grade each year the school reaches capacity and serves grades K-12. ACA will identify sufficient start-up funding that will allow ACAD to provide a complete educational program and do so in a building suited for a K-10 configuration. ACA has already secured grant funding for the school.

## **Charter Board Authority**

The ACACS governing board exercises its statutory authority, contractual, and fiduciary responsibilities at all times. The board is independent of ACA and retains independent legal counsel to advise the board in its

duties. ACACD can sever the relationship with ACA for any of its campuses at any time, with or without cause with 90 days' written notice.

ACACS understands that ACA is making a significant investment in the school and while grateful, this does not beholden ACAD to ACA in any way. The services and any possible lease agreements, as described below, are separate. If ACAD chooses to terminate the services agreement, any lease agreements would remain, to allow the school to continue operating in its location. If desired, ACA is committed to continue to provide support for the remainder of the school year should the school sever the relationship during the year. ACA will provide directors and officers insurance and will not require ACAD to assert, waive, or not waive any governmental immunity. ACACS board members complete a conflict of interest disclosure annually and any potential conflicts are carefully managed in consultation with legal counsel.

### **Services Agreement with ACA**

ACACS and ACA have partnered on two charter schools to date and ACACS schools have been awarded the Colorado Charter Schools Program (CCSP) grant three times. As part of the Colorado Department of Education's due diligence on ACA, as a non-profit education service provider (ESP), the Department has thoroughly reviewed the ACA and ACACS partnership to ensure the service agreement meets best practices and federal guidelines. The services agreements were also developed using best practices recommended by the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI), who has also reviewed the relationship meets best practices.

The draft services agreement with ACA, attached as Appendix 27, clearly outlines the ACACS governing board's independence, as well as the responsibilities of both ACA and the board. ACACS recognizes that it holds the charter contract and is responsible for achieving its goals. ACA will be held accountable for the academic results of the school and helping the board meet the goals in the charter contract. Because ACA manages school operations, ACACS will also hold ACA accountable for the fiscal and operational soundness of ACAD. The services agreement term will not exceed to term of the charter contract and is subject to an annual appropriation of the governing board, as required under the Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR). Any renewals and terms are negotiated at arms-length with each party having access to independent legal counsel.

ACACS is partnering with ACA to deliver an educational program that the school is confident will have independent legal counsel that is consulted on matters regarding ACA.

Under the services agreement ACACS intends to enter into with ACA, the board may terminate the management arrangement prior to the end of the term, with or without cause, with 90 days' written notice. A termination will not result in a penalty to the school. The board also may terminate the contract if ACA fails to remedy a material breach of the agreement within 30 days' notice of such a breach. Examples of a material breach include: ACA failing to account for or make expenditures approved by the board in the annual budget; ACA failing to follow board-approved policies and procedures; the school or ACA receiving an unsatisfactory performance rating as reported by a state or independent evaluator; and, ACA taking or failing to take any action that places the charter in jeopardy of termination, suspension, or revocation.

If the board terminates the services agreement with ACA, state and federal charter school revenue will continue to flow to the school to fund its daily operations. The board expects the highest level of performance from ACA. If that mark of excellence is not met, ACA will surely know about it and will either fix it or ACACS will terminate the relationship. The goal is not to have a mediocre school - ACACS (and ACA) want to set a model of excellence for others. The envisioned arrangement provides substantial and sufficient autonomy for the board to ensure it can accomplish this goal.



The board will regularly receive reports on the school's academic and operational progress. ACACS will receive information on academic growth, comparative performance, accountability, and college-readiness to evaluate academic progress, and will use student attendance data, parent and staff satisfaction survey results, and a comprehensive review of the overall performance of ACA as operational measures of accountability. Financial viability will be measured by the school's annual financial audit and regular comprehensive financial reports.

### Evaluating the Performance of ACA

The governing board evaluates the performance of ACA and specifically will review data to ensure that ACAD is making progress toward the goals for the charter school.

Also, as outlined in Section I, the board will contract periodically with an outside third party that has experience and expertise in evaluating the performance of charter schools to evaluate ACAD. Included in such an assessment will be an evaluation of ACA's operation of the school and the services it is providing, and an evaluation of progress school leaders are making in meeting expectations for the school. This report is envisioned to serve as the foundation of an improvement action plan developed collaboratively with the board and ACA and implemented as soon after the report has been presented to and discussed by the board as practical.

The Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI) evaluates ACACS campuses on an annual basis. Using their operations and finance benchmarks, ACA has earned the schools a Performance rating. The Colorado Department of Education recently determined ACACS schools are "high-quality" schools for the purposes of obtaining a recent expansion grant, due to the success of the ACA-ACACS partnership.

### Authorization to do Business

ACA is authorized to do business in Colorado, as provided in Appendix 32.

### Compliance with Colorado State Statutes

ACA will operate the school in compliance with all state statutes, to include the Colorado Open Records Act. The Governing Board will comply with the Colorado Open Meetings Law and all other applicable requirements. All student, financial, and other records of the school remain property of the school and may be accessed by the governing board in accordance with the law.

### Fee Structure

The management partner supports the mission to institute the complete educational program from day one. This includes pledging the funds necessary to cover any operating expenses that might exceed revenues. Additionally, ACA will help ensure positive cash flow. Through our partnership, ACAD will have cash on hand to pay staff and cover expenditures from any unforeseen circumstances - even in advance of receiving our per pupil funding - which can adversely affect new charter schools. ACA is compensated for its work on a fee for service model that is expected to be 10% of revenue. This fee is in the lower range of similar agreements according to a national market analysis for the services provided.

### Finance

All public funds received by ACAD will be deposited into an account controlled by ACAD and ACACS. ACA will have access to these funds to conduct the business and operations of the school but these funds will not belong to ACA. Payments ACA makes on behalf of the school will be made in accordance with the



Financial Policies and Procedures adopted by the ACACS governing boards. Payments to ACA are approved by a member of the governing board. ACA will ensure ACAD complies with all laws on financial transparency required of charter schools.

#### Employment of Staff

As described in detail in Section O and defined in the services agreement with ACA, ACA will hire and employ all staff. This allows the ACACS board to focus on governance while ACA provides a high-quality employee compensation and benefit package. This also allows ACA staff from other schools to work more closely with and on the ACAD campus as needed.

The Executive Director of ACA reports to the ACACS governing board. ACA will nominate a headmaster candidate, that the board will approve or decline. Once approved, the headmaster will hire all faculty and staff to serve at the school. The headmaster will be evaluated annually by the governing board. The governing board may vote to remove a headmaster or any member of the staff.

#### Marketing and Development Costs

The school will only pay marketing and development costs what are for the specific benefit of the school.

#### Facility Lease Agreements

ACACS does not expect to have a facility lease with ACA. However, in the event there is, it will be independent of the services agreement. ACAD's access to its facility will not be contingent on the school continuing to work with ACA, allowing a flexibility that is a best practice.

If ACACS chooses to terminate the relationship with ACA for managing the school, any lease agreements may state that ACAD is entitled to remain in the building for the remainder of the school year as well as for the subsequent school year. After that, ACACS is free to purchase the building, negotiate a new lease agreement, or find another location. ACACS believes this arrangement serves the school well.

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