General Information

Description Area

* The form will close at 5:00 PM ET on Wednesday, February 1, 2023, and no submissions will be accepted after that time.*In 1996, the South Carolina Legislature passed the Charter Schools Act, allowing citizens to apply to operate a public school. The focus of charter schools is to provide quality educational choices for parents and students. This application outlines the necessary components to propose, receive approval for, and implement a high-quality charter school.Based on the provided guidance and SCDE template, this application form must be used to develop a complete application for charter schools that plan to open for the 2024–25 school year or later. Applicants who do not use this form will not be eligible to apply for federal Planning and Implementation Grant funding under awards currently held by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE). All charter school applications must comply fully with the South Carolina Charter Schools Act, S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-10 et seq., and the Procedures and Standards for Review of Charter School Applications (2 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-601 (2013)).Application sections must be presented as outlined in this form and labeled accordingly with appropriate questions/headings. It is important to remember that each of the sections relates to one another. For instance, educational program components should align with the proposed budget. Thus, a completed application should readily reflect that all of its sections, irrespective of their individual focus, link together to form a comprehensive and viable plan to open and sustain a high-quality charter school.The application form has multiple pages (9) broken into: Application Cover Page, Executive Summary, Educational Plan and Capacity (part 1 and 2), Organizational Plan and Capacity (part 1 and 2), Business Plan and Capacity, Appendices, and Signature Certification Page.You may begin working on the form, save and return to the form at a later time using the unique link generated at the time the form is saved.Please use the Submission Guide to help you navigate the application.

Application Cover Page

Proposed Sponsor	Charter Institute at Erskine

Applicant Information

Name of Proposed Charter School	Ascent Classical Academy of Irmo/Chapin (TBD)
Name of Applicant Group	Ascent Classical Academies
Street Address for Proposed Charter School (if known)	NA
City and Zip Code for Proposed Charter School	Irmo 29063
FEIN	921843033

Contact Information

Name of Committee Chair	Mark Shuler
Title/Position	Chair
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Additional Information about Proposed Charter School

Is the proposed school a virtual charter school?	No
Does the proposed school intend to partner with a charter and/or education management organization (CMO/EMO)?	Yes

Proposed Grade Levels

Kindergarten = First Year of Operation, Full Matriculation
First Grade = First Year of Operation, Full Matriculation
Second Grade = First Year of Operation, Full Matriculation
Third Grade = First Year of Operation, Full Matriculation
Fourth Grade = First Year of Operation, Full Matriculation
Fifth Grade = First Year of Operation, Full Matriculation
Sixth Grade = First Year of Operation, Full Matriculation
Seventh Grade = First Year of Operation, Full Matriculation
Eighth Grade = First Year of Operation, Full Matriculation
Ninth Grade = Full Matriculation
Tenth Grade = Full Matriculation
Eleventh Grade = Full Matriculation
Twelfth Grade = Full Matriculation

Executive Summary

Executive Summary Upload	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272480

Educational Plan and Capacity

Response to Evidence of Need and Support

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools of South Carolina is proposing a K-12 classical school between Irmo and Chapin in the School District Five of Lexington & Richland Counties. This area is rapidly growing and, as the District Five Superintendent told the Ascent Classical Academy team in a meeting, the school district welcomes a charter school like Ascent Classical to help alleviate the demand for more seats and to expand options for families.

There is not a K-12, tuition-free classical school option available along the I-26 corridor in the north Columba metro area. While more parents are exercising educational choice in general, the classical education model is in high demand.

An Ascent Classical Academy campus in this area would meet the purpose of the South Carolina Charter Schools Act by improving student learning, increasing learning opportunities for students, encouraging the use of a variety of teaching methods, using a different form of accountability, creating new professional opportunities for teachers, assisting South Carolina in reaching academic excellence, providing additional ways to education children within the public education systems, with a goal of closing achievement gaps, specifically by increasing achievement for all, not by neglecting higher performing students.

The school proposes to open with 448 students in grades K-8. To date, the parents of 186 children have completed expressions of interest to attend this school. These expressions are solid numbers with names attached and are specifically interested in our classical program. A breakdown of this interest by grade is available to review since a table cannot be uploaded with the application.

Given the "velocity" of these expressions and the increased pace in which they are being submitted, the school is confident there is sufficient community interest in this option. A rule of thumb from the Colorado League of Charter Schools, a charter support organization in another state, suggests 50% of opening enrollment interested 12 months out is a good practice. Ascent is well on track to surpass this given it is weeks away from the 50% threshold almost 18 months out. From Ascent's experience, these numbers go up significantly when: 1) a charter contract is finalized; 2) a location is announced (we have a parcel under contract but this has not yet been made public); and 3) a school leader is announced.

The school will continue student recruitment and marketing with a goal of reaching a diverse segment of the community, to ensure there is equal access to information about the school to any interested families.

Information Meetings

The school has held numerous public parent information meetings online as well as physically throughout the Irmo, White Rock, and Chapin area.

These meetings will continue through the opening of the school. These events are promoted by word of mouth, online, and in local media.

Online Platforms (Paid and Organic)

Ascent Classical Academy of South Carolina has a website, a public Facebook page, and a local Facebook group where updates, events, and general information about classical education are shared. Families completing the online Expression of Interest form are added to the email list for updates. The school is also running paid advertisements online regarding information about the campus and events.

Local Marketing

Parents and members of the local volunteer committee have been distributing flyers to area businesses, churches, libraries, and community organizations.

Media

The school is sending out press releases and information about events to local community media to include The Lexington Chronicle, The Post and Courier, and The State newspapers.

Local Outreach

Members of the local committee and Ascent Classical Academies will continue reaching out to local organizations, like the Chambers of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, the Boys and Girls Club of the Midlands, Richland First Steps, economic development offices, churches, and school choice advocacy groups to promote the school and to widen awareness about this opportunity. The school will have a presence at community events and festivals up through school opening and beyond.

This school has public support from local parents, business and community leaders, elected officials, and education choice advocates. Please see Appendix C for letters of support from members of the community. Many of these supporters have been key volunteers and involved in helping promote the school in the community.

Unlike many district-operated public schools that have a defined geographic feeder area, charter schools like Ascent Classical have a wide geographic draw and must create their own sense of community. One of the foundational philosophies of Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools is the commitment to the right and responsibility of parents to direct the education and upbringing of their children. Our schools are partners in those efforts. While this school will be a part of a larger network of South Carolina classical schools, it is an asset and belongs to the local community with its own culture and traditions.

To develop the desired school culture and community, the school is open to and welcomes parents, both as volunteers and visitors. Studies demonstrate children whose parents are involved in their schools have greater achievement. While volunteering is not required, it is strongly encouraged. Volunteering may be done in many different ways, to include helping in the office, acting as a playground/recess/lunch monitor, or coaching.

School events will take place throughout the year, to include activities like a winter festival, school nights at area restaurants, parent-child dances, and other more social activities. Ascent Classical will conduct curriculum nights and host lectures or a speaker series for parents.

To develop a student community, the school will implement a house system, connecting children across grades, to help develop relationships with students of different ages. This system provides younger students with role models and also allows older students to become role models. In addition to a vigorous academic experience, the school also offers extracurricular activities and athletics to encourage the practice of the virtues discussed in classes as well as to develop comradery and an esprit de corps.

Local partnerships are important to being a good neighbor and being a part of the local community fabric. While Ascent Classical considers what it offers to be an elite education, it is by no means intended to be elitist. The message that this education is open to any child and family is tied to our involvement and outreach in the community. Some of these partnerships and associations will be established organically as the school grows. The school will support groups advocating for more school choice for families. The school also welcomes partnerships like the opportunity to partner with The Heritage at Lowman, where retired members of the community can come read to our younger children and our students can also visit these residents.

Ascent Classical Academies intends to develop partnerships with universities and colleges across the state and region that have summer programming that aligns with our classical program and as places to hire classically minded teachers in the future. These include the Belmont Abbey Honors College, the South Carolina Honors College at the University of South Carolina, and the Lyceum Program at Clemson University.

In summary, Ascent Classical is excited that this community is able to support and welcome this school and it looks forward to the opportunity to be a member of the community, serving students and families with a high-quality, tuition-free classical education.

Response to Instructional Model

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools of South Carolina ("ACACS" or "School") will execute an American classical instructional model which incorporates tried and true curriculum and a direct instructional approach. Certain aspects of this curriculum and instructional model that are provided include: a K-12 school, the Core Knowledge Sequence, Singapore Math, explicit phonics, cursive writing, and elements of an American classical education.

Core Knowledge Sequence

Students in grades K through eight will follow the Core Knowledge Sequence. All students in grades K through six will remain in self-contained classrooms so the Core Knowledge Instructional Model can be leveraged to gain the highest possible depth of knowledge. The high school will use curricula that have been proven over the course time and lend themselves to rigor and teacher directed or Socratic instruction as appropriate. The curriculum aligns with the mission of the School to train the minds and improve the hearts by sequential learning of subjects that spiral upon each other and create a tapestry of knowledge. Student learning will improve as they are exposed to content in each grade and then again in following grades, for a deeper understanding and application. The distinct learning techniques are teacher directed.

The School implements this approach as it is much more effective to provide students with a structured learning environment where they know what the expectations are and how to gain knowledge that is useful and permanent. Classical education has proven itself over time, as well as the Core Knowledge Curriculum and Singapore Math. In alignment with its mission and vision, the School seeks to educate children to be wholly knowledgeable, and as such, will not exclude any portions of provable history or science, while also providing students with the skills needed to think critically and analyze information as it comes into view. The study of Latin, Logic, and Rhetoric along with the Constitution and American Government are mandatory and integral parts of the American Classical Educational Model.

The population served by ACACSSC will most likely not have been exposed to classical education and will need some orientation to the structure of the day and the necessity of building literacy and numeracy in the lower grades. Students who are taught self-disciplinary techniques while reading, writing, and studying will perform to a higher level than others. The schoolwide institution of study skills at all levels will serve every student to be better organized and prepared to learn.

Singapore Math

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. The School will use Singapore Dimensions Math for grades K through eight.

Explicit Phonics/Grammar/Composition

Beginning in kindergarten students will be taught the essentials of reading through the Literacy Essentials, explicit phonics program. Literacy Essentials features day-by-day organization of instructional information. The curriculum covers the areas of phonemic awareness, the alphabetic code which includes 72 common English spelling patterns or phonograms (first Basic Code then advanced code), orthography, vocabulary, writing and grammar, reading from accuracy to automaticity, and reading comprehension. All fourth through eighth grade students will engage in the Institute for Excellence in Writing (IEW) program that will guide students through the vocabulary building and composition phase.

Cursive Writing

In accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 59-29-15 cursive will be integrated in every classroom, not solely taught in grammar school through grade five. All students will also write in, and be able to read, cursive in order to read original source documents, including those about the American founding, and build brain matter. Students struggling with focus and concentration will be well served by learning cursive as it will stretch their ability to focus on a task.

An American Classical Education

Along with the classical curriculum ACACSSC offers an American Classical Education having the following characteristics:

• The flag is honored: starting each day with the Pledge of Allegiance and the Pledge is recited before school events and board meetings
• We honor our service men and women for their sacrifice to our country
• The founding of the country is emphasized in curriculum
• Graduates can read/discuss/understand the founding documents and Federalist Papers
• Events surround and focus on the Constitution Day
• Students participate in the Constitution Bee
• Assembly guests are those who support the constitution and motivate students to love their country
• Schools are present at 4th of July celebrations in their communities
• Students must pass an American Civics Test upon graduation

Research and Data Driven Curriculum

Classical education is time proven with a history of over 2,500 years in the West. It began in ancient Greece, was adopted wholesale by the Romans, faltered after the fall of Rome, made a slow but steady recovery during the Middle Ages, and was revived in the Renaissance. The classical inheritance passed to England and from England to America through colonial settlement. At the time of this nation's founding, classical education was thriving. Jefferson heartily recommended Greek and Latin as the languages of study for early adolescence. Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans was often recommended by men like Jefferson and Franklin, and Hamilton seems to have given it special attention during his military encampment at Valley Forge. Eighteenth-century Americans venerated and trusted George Washington in large part because he reminded them of the Roman patriot Cincinnatus. So important has classical education been in the history of the West that it would only be a slight exaggeration to say that the march of civilization has paralleled the vibrancy of classical schools. Such a long tradition of education continues to be relevant today.

Classical education, from a research base, is most closely aligned with Cognitivist learning theories. These theories postulate that children generate knowledge and meaning through sequential development of an individual's cognitive abilities, such as the mental processes of recognize, recall, analyze, reflect, apply, create, understand, and evaluate. The Cognitivists' (e.g., Piaget, Bruner, Vygotsky) learning process is adaptive learning of techniques, procedures, organization, and structure to develop internal cognitive structure that strengthens synapses in the brain. The learner requires assistance to develop prior knowledge and integrate new knowledge. The purpose in education is to develop conceptual knowledge, techniques, procedures, and algorithmic problem-solving using Verbal/Linguistic and Logical/Mathematical intelligences. The learner requires scaffolding to develop schema and adopt knowledge from both people and the environment. The educators' role is pedagogical in that the instructor must develop conceptual knowledge by managing the content of learning activities.

But a classical education is more than simply a pattern of learning. Classical education is language-focused; learning is accomplished through words, written and spoken, rather than through images (pictures, videos, and television). This is important to understand because language learning and image-learning require very different habits of thought. Language requires the mind to work harder; in reading, the brain is forced to translate a symbol (words on the page) into a concept. Images, such as those on videos and television, allow the mind to be passive. In front of a video screen, the brain can "sit back" and relax; faced with the written page, the mind is required to roll its sleeves up and get back to work. A classical education, then, has two important aspects. It is language-focused, and it follows a specific three-part pattern: the mind must be first supplied with facts and images, then given the logical tools for the organization of facts, and finally equipped to express conclusions. Literacy Essentials is an Orton

based, brain-based approach with multisensory instruction that addresses all learning styles.

Singapore Math emerged in 1981 by the Curriculum Planning and Development Institute of Singapore. Educators in the United States witnessed its success and began implementing Singapore Math in 2000. This curriculum is taught to a mastery level with detail and consistency, and the textbooks are designed to build a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts as opposed to offering simple definitions and formulas. Professional development accompanies Singapore programs so teachers are better prepared to facilitate lessons. Further, Singapore Math has a consistent emphasis on problem solving and model drawing. Its focus is on in-depth understanding of the essential math skills recommended in the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Curriculum Focal Points, and the National Mathematics Advisory Panel. Students using Singapore Math learn math concepts thoroughly, but they also master essential math skills more quickly. It has been reported that by the end of sixth grade, students have mastered multiplication and division of fractions and are able to complete difficult multi-step word problems comfortably, ensuring they are well prepared to complete Algebra 1 in middle school.

For grades K-7, math will be taught using the U.S. edition of Singapore Math, an English equivalent to the national mathematics curriculum used in Singapore. Singapore is the world leader in mathematics achievement, according to at least two major longitudinal studies. According to the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), an international comparative study designed to measure achievement at the fourth and eighth grades, Singapore ranked in the top three countries in both 4th and 8th grades in every year the study was conducted (1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), a triennial international survey that evaluates OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old-students, has also consistently ranked Singapore highest in mathematics. The PISA survey has ranked Singapore in the top two countries for mathematics in 2009, 2012, and 2015.

Additionally, the School will utilize The Core Knowledge Sequence that was first published in 1988 and has been successfully employed and tested in thousands of schools throughout the United States. A documented study completed in Oklahoma City in the summer of 2000, researched carefully controlled and independent studies on the effects of Core Knowledge in public schools within their district. The results revealed students who were taught using Core Knowledge scored significantly higher in reading comprehension, vocabulary, science, math concepts, and social studies. Another study was completed in April of 2004, the study The Effects of Core Knowledge on State Test Achievement in North Carolina by Herbert Walberg and Joseph Meyer was published. This research concluded that

schools instructing in Core Knowledge excelled academically in eight of the ten comparisons over the traditional public school. While studies continue to be completed, evidence of success only continues to be documented regarding Core Knowledge.

Continuing to reinforce the critical elements of a classical education, ACACSSC will require all students to complete courses in Latin. In grades 4 and 5, students will learn Latin and Greek roots of English words. In 6th grade, students begin learning formal Latin and will continue with Latin through 8th grade. Studies show that students who learn Latin tend to score higher on college entrance exams that will help with the college admissions preparations. In a study conducted by the Education Testing Service, Latin students scored an average of 2.5% higher on SAT exams than any other language learned. The same study also concluded a 12% increase in GPA performance in college freshmen who were taught Latin in their foundational years. The School also understands that learning Latin allows students to read vocabulary words they may not have encountered but can understand their meaning based on having learned Latin roots. This distinctive ability to problem solve a word also produces a higher cognitive ability which naturally raises a student's ability to succeed in complex situations.

Instructional Model

Through the foundations of classical education, Core Knowledge, Singapore Math, Latin, etc. the School's curriculum ensures the educational and developmental needs of its students are fulfilled. Developed throughout the curriculum, the Western tradition is central in the study of history, literature, philosophy, and the fine arts. Ingraining in students the rich and recurring examination of the American literary, moral, philosophical, political, and historical traditions. Additionally, the school provides a liberal arts curriculum, receiving explicit instruction in grammar, logic, and rhetoric (the trivium), which leads to the study of arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy (the quadrivium). These liberal arts guidelines of the K-12 curriculum follow stages of learning appropriate to students' development and a spiraling structure that allows for recurrent examination of subjects throughout a student's career. This structure ultimately produces the culmination of the synthesis of history, literature, music, art, and science with one another.

Within its history curriculum, ACACSSC focuses on history, rather than social studies. Social studies will have a focus on groups of people rather than individuals and assumes there is a scientific or semi-scientific explanation for human behavior. History is the story of human beings individually and in society. Classical education history explores the effect important people and important events had. This allows students to see that the past is full of things to admire and things to condemn, and that the future is not necessarily better than the past. History is taught as the narrative created by human thought and action. There is a focus on

biography, and the lessons include geography, timelines, images, and primary sources. Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-29-55 the school will also ensure the instruction of South Carolina history and its early inhabitants in grades one through six.

Further, the teaching of American history and government is robust and serious. There is explicit and meaningful instruction on the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and The Federalist Papers, through which students learn the importance of limited government, natural rights, and equality as expressed in the American founding. Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-29-120 (A), the course in American Government will include a study of the United States Constitution, Declaration of Independence, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Federalist Papers. High school students will also be required to pass the Civics Test in accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 59-29-240 (B). Consequently, the study of American history is integral to all students' education and will be a part of a regular course each year from kindergarten through grade six. In grades 7-12, students study history as a full-year core requirement each year with high school courses in Ancient History, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, American History, and Modern History. High school students will also take a course in American Government.

In coordination with the liberal arts, the School desires to produce well rounded, knowledgeable students in all areas of study and therefore also places a high priority on science and mathematics. ACACSSC's science instruction shows that scientific knowledge is valued for its own sake. Science is taught through the stories of scientific advancement and processes within the natural and physical world. The classical science curriculum begins in the elementary grades with a content-rich program covering important ideas in the natural sciences in a coherent and orderly way. In the high school years, students study chemistry, biology, and physics, and they take an additional advanced science course.

Additionally, mathematical instruction progresses from concrete to pictorial to abstract. Students are taught to understand mathematical concepts and processes. When shortcuts and memorized drills are employed, students can explain how and why an answer is correct. Classical mathematics instruction leads to precise and critical thought. The recommended curriculum for grades K through seven is Singapore Dimensions Math or Singapore Primary Math (U.S. Edition).   Building upon their elementary courses, the upper grade students study Euclid's Elements. High school students study mathematics for four years, gaining proficiency through Calculus. Additionally, in alignment with S.C. Code Ann. § 59-29-15 (2) the school will ensure that students have successfully memorized their multiplication tables.

The School's literature structure are texts that are time- tested and include the best stories of the Western tradition. Through them, instructors teach students to think deeply about human nature and the human experience.

Literature is not merely raw material on which to develop reading fluency; rather, the students' study of literature cultivates the moral imagination. ACACSSC makes it a focus that, when possible, students should encounter texts in their unabridged form. Literature courses will also have students memorize and recite poetry throughout the grade levels. A highlight of younger grades, students may interact with literature through listening to the teacher read aloud.

Phonics and grammar are key elements to the students' course of education. The School understands that explicit phonics instruction leads students to reading fluency and comprehension. Therefore, the school teaches reading using phonics rather than whole language instruction. Explicit phonics instruction is synthetic and systematic which is directly aligned with classical education. ACACSSC will have a focus on Literacy Essentials from Access Literacy. The School agrees that explicit grammar instruction leads students to a thorough understanding of the English language. Thus, students will receive explicit grammar instruction, including sentence diagramming, up through grade eight. Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-29-15(1), the school will also ensure that students have been taught and can create readable documents using cursive handwriting.

As previously identified, Latin is a fundamental element to classical education. ACACSSC requires all students to participate in Latin courses because Latin is taught for the sake of students' understanding of English and appreciation of the classical world. Teachers will be trained to employ a grammar and translation approach to the teaching of Latin. Students will also learn Latin by memorizing paradigms and vocabulary, studying grammar, and translating. ACACSSC's students study Latin for a minimum of three years in order to gain a thorough understanding of Latin grammar and a basic proficiency in translation.

Intertwined with the liberal arts, science and math, the fine arts are a significant part of students' aesthetic, cultural, and creative development. The study of fine arts points students to what is true, good, and beautiful. The art and music courses include study of the history of art and music, exposure to outstanding works of art and music, and the opportunity for students to produce original works of art and perform music. Students take fine arts courses in both art and music in grades kindergarten through eight and as elective courses in high school. All students take at least one fine arts course in high school.

Finally, the School's physical education courses will include appropriate instruction in health and safety topics. Physical education is a significant feature of students' development, both in body and in mind. Physical education is not merely physical activity, but an opportunity to cultivate strength of character, learn to care for the body, and develop specific physical skills. Physical activity beyond physical education classes is part of the daily routine. In accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 59-29-80 (A), the School will ensure all standards are met for physical education.

Learning Supports

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

The School is committed to educating all students, including gifted and talented students, educationally disadvantaged or "at risk" students, English Language Learners (ELLs), and students with IEPs or 504 Plans. The framework ACACSSC will use to identify student learning deficiencies, develop hypotheses, formulate a plan, monitor progress, and analyze results will follow the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) model. The school will set up systems and methodologies to address student needs that may include data-based goals, reflection and review of instruction and methodology, differentiation of the instruction and other targeted interventions, as well as formative and summative assessments. MTSS seeks to prevent academic failure through early intervention, frequent progress measurement, and increasingly intensive research-based instructional interventions for students who continue to have difficulty.

Beginning of year benchmark testing and historical performance will guide the initial placement of a student into the appropriate grade and supportive structures required. Students whose student portfolios require 504 or IEP plans will have many supports already built into their school day. Their formal, written education and accommodations plans will guide their initial placement and level of service. Other students though, will have been promoted with their peers from grade to grade and performed adequately on formative and summative assessments along the way. They will arrive in their classroom at the beginning of the year ready to learn. Students will face challenging material from well-trained teachers. ACACSSC students will be encouraged in their efforts, supported in their understanding, and assessed regularly for comprehension as they progress through the years' curriculum. These encouragements, support, and assessments personalize each student's classroom experience.

Some students will do very well, performing well above the benchmark levels for their age and grade. Others will demonstrate nominal understanding of the subject areas, perform well within the normal ranges, and progress through the year without difficulty. Still other students may fall behind in one or more areas. These students may need some additional assistance or may need significant interventions, in order to achieve and progress, behaviorally and academically, with their peers. The School will use MTSS to make sure it has appropriate and timely identification of students who are performing either above or below expectations, and that ACACSSC provides the support together with the learning experiences they need, to demonstrate continuous growth and to thrive at school. The formal framework of MTSS exists in a three-tiered format, described below.

The MTSS Model

• Tier 1 (core instruction and universal support available to all students): Tier 1 consists of the general academic and behavioral instruction and support that is designed and differentiated for all students in all settings. School wide progress monitoring and screenings are used to ensure that core instruction is effective and to identify students who may need additional support in order to be successful.

• Tier 2 (supplemental instruction or intervention provided to targeted groups of students): Tier 2 consists of more focused, targeted instruction or intervention and supplemental supports in addition to and aligned with the core instruction provided through Tier 1. For instance, an additional 30 minutes per day may be devoted to reading in a small group (3-6 students), with a focus on building accurate and automatic recognition of words in text. Adjustments can be made within Tier 2 to increase time on task or decrease student/teacher ratio.

• Tier 3 (intensive individualized intervention and supports provided to individual students): Tier 3 consists of the most intense (increased time, narrowed focus, very small group or individual) instruction and intervention based upon individual student need. Tier 3 supports are provided in addition to and aligned with the core (Tier 1) and supplemental (Tier 2) academic and behavioral instruction, interventions, and supports.

The tiers are not a "set" series of interventions or activities that all students move through. Rather, they are fluid and flexible; students may move from a lower to a higher tier and back again, based on documented need. A student may be successful with Tier 1 supports for behavior and mathematics, require supplemental Tier 2 instruction for reading, and need intensive Tier 3 interventions for writing. As the student progresses and the performance gap with grade level and classroom peers closes, the student may no longer need anything beyond Tier 1.

The MTSS framework is designed for all students, including general education students and students with IEPs or EPs. "All students" includes those who struggle, those who excel and demonstrate needs beyond the core, and those who are English language learners. If the School's MTSS team determines that a student is not making adequate progress after the provision of effective Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 intervention and supports for an appropriate amount of time, or that the services are effective but may require substantial and sustained effort that may include special education and related services in order to maintain progress, the team will refer the student for evaluation for exceptional student education.

The School will automatically provide differentiated instruction in at least two main areas, with the possibility of providing differentiated instruction in other areas on a case-by-case basis. In math, the first of these areas, the school will group students by ability in grades K-6 for part of the math content of the day. There will be a minimum of two math sessions, one for the math lesson with all students in a classroom, and then one other session where students are ability grouped for practice. Students will be assessed after several weeks of math instruction, and this assessment will

provide teachers with both a baseline of student learning and a significant metric for placing students into ability groups. Ability grouping is a significant complement to the Singapore Math program and helps to ensure that students receive the foundation in math that is necessary for understanding upper-level math.

The School will also provide some differentiated instruction in its literacy and reading curriculum. The Literacy Essentials program alongside Lindamood-Bell programs and Yoshimoto OG programs provide remediation for struggling readers. By using the Literacy Essentials program with all students, ACACSSC will expect to meet many student literacy problems before they develop. And students who are reading and writing at a slower pace than their grade cohort will be automatically trained in the language of instruction used in reading remediation-and they will receive remediation as problems are identified. ACACSSC will develop a program to provide struggling students with additional literacy instruction, likely through flexible scheduling blocks or classroom push-in support. Additionally, students will receive differentiated instruction in the course of reading practice, wherein students will be grouped by ability and/or led through a reading practice regimen designed to meet each student at his or her ability level as one of the literacy portions throughout the day.

Outside of mathematics and literacy, the School will use differentiated instruction on a case-by-case basis. The Core Knowledge Sequence allows for a significant amount of latitude with regard to particular topics and works of literature. Students who are capable of work above their grade level may be given the option to read additional works of literature, read adapted works in an original or longer form, or study history and science content in a more comprehensive form (e.g., by reading upper-level texts) Students who are behind their grade cohort will receive whatever instructional aids are called for by an Individualized Education Program. Students with or without an IEP may also receive various instructional helps identified by the teacher, administrator, and student services such as adapted reading assignments, additional tutoring, oral exams, etc. In all cases where differentiated instruction is offered to students performing below grade level, the intent of the differentiated instruction will be to bring student performance up to grade level standards. Highly effective teachers will intentionally use all these strategies to engage students including those performing below grade level in maximizing their benefit from the curriculum.

ACACSSC will provide extended learning opportunities to help students improve academic performance, which may include:

• Summer school
• After-school instruction (small group)
• Academic Tutoring (individual)
• Mentoring
• Intensive skills development programs

• Through ability grouping, differentiated instruction, extended learning opportunities, and MTSS interventions, ACACSSC will provide support for all students to help them demonstrate proficiency for the South Carolina Performance Standards.

Least Restrictive Environment and MTSS

Most of the teaching and learning, even for atypical students, occurs in the classroom alongside other students, in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) possible, guided by requirements of the IDEA 2004.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

In situations where students have been identified with significant physical, developmental, or emotional challenges that present barriers to acquiring an appropriate education, they may be afforded an IEP. These plans are a requirement of the IDEA. Superseding all the legal requirements of IDEA are two important principles, 1) that all children, including those with disabilities, deserve a FAPE, and 2) that parents have a voice in their child's education, the implications of which are vast. IDEA requires schools to find and evaluate students suspected of having disabilities, at no cost to parents. Once students are identified as having a disability, schools must provide them with special education and related services to meet their unique needs. The goal is to help students make progress in school and to the maximum extent possible, with their grade-level peers.

There are three reasons why a school student may have an IEP or need evaluation. The student may enroll in school having already been properly evaluated, following specific procedures established by the IDEA. Secondly, throughout the school year, the School's professional staff may provide an increasing level of services, beginning with the least restrictive, and find that a student is not making the appropriate academic or behavioral gains necessary to keep them achieving with their grade-level peers. Finally, a student's parents may ask for their child to be evaluated for an IEP.

The IEP Process

IDEA provides specific guidance for a school and parents to help predictably navigate the IEP process. ACACSSC's approach to complying with its responsibilities and ensuring parents and students receive all of the services required will rely on close cooperation with the parents. The headmaster will attend the appropriate training during Year zero. Subject to ongoing legal and policy modification, and the procedures dictated by the District and/or Authorizer, the following plan represents our approach to IEP readiness.

The Student Services Team (SST) will be primarily responsible for the administration of ACACSSC IEP processes for all students, starting with those who enroll in the school with a plan already in place.

Students may not realize academic or behavioral achievement or growth despite classroom level or other tiered interventions. In these cases, the SST will meet with the headmaster, who will work in coordination with the Ascent Classical Academies Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, and classroom teachers to review prior interventions, accommodations, and modifications. Upon a parent's request for a special education assessment, the SST will review and discuss the request in light of student records, acquired data, and student performance to agree or deny the request for assessment. If the SST determines that assessment for special education eligibility is not warranted, prior written notice must be given to the parent with a clear rationale for such refusal within 15 days of the request. Procedural safeguards, which are specifically identified in the IDEA, will be reviewed with parents during each convening or communication with parents regarding the IEP process.

Initial referrals for evaluation for special education services will be informed by interventions using the MTSS model approach and documented through progress monitoring. If it is in the best interest of the student, and when required by law, the school may form an IEP team individualized to the student. The IEP team will include a parent or guardian, classroom teacher, designated interventionists, the special education coordinator, school psychologist and a school administrator with decision-making authority. The SST will oversee the process by making sure all timelines and paperwork are documented and collected according to federal and state standards. All components of an initial assessment will follow mandates as required by IDEA and state regulations.

The IEP team will develop an assessment plan describing the types of standardized assessments used to determine the eligibility of students for special education instruction. A variety of standardized assessments will be conducted, within IDEA federal timelines, after receiving the parents' written consent. For identification purposes, initial evaluations will be comprehensive, using validated, standardized assessments to prevent misidentification and include evaluation of many areas (cognitive, academic, behavioral, health and development, adaptive, and emotional) as determined by the SST or mandated by law for the eligibility area. All assessments will be given or overseen by a licensed school psychologist.

Following an initial evaluation, the IEP team will meet, ensuring the required team members are present, to discuss results, determine eligibility, and (if the student is eligible) make decisions regarding special education services, related services, goals, accommodations, and placement as part of the IEP program. Once eligibility has been determined, the IEP team will develop a formal IEP document, following a specific and predictable format, that will become the formal record of the evaluation process, the diagnosis of a disability that is preventing access to educational progress, the stated goals of intervention, the interventions, and the ongoing progress monitoring notes.

Even when a student is eligible for a formal IEP, the School will endeavor to provide the student with the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) possible while providing the most effective accommodations. The IEP continuum of services begins with services provided in the classroom and ends with the maximum amount of time away from the classroom required. LRE includes special education staff providing services in the classroom environment. The SST or an instructional aide under the SST's guidance may provide small group or individualized instruction based on student's IEP goals. Providing services in the LRE will afford the student access to the curriculum with typical peers and academic interventions within the general education setting. If a student fails to progress academically, more interventions may be provided outside of the classroom.

An electronic IEP program will be utilized, and information will be consistently entered by special education staff. ACACSSC will maintain all required special education documentation including Prior Written Notices, standardized assessments, and curriculum-based measures, and will participate in the required assurance processes for special education (i.e., verification reviews, coordinated compliance self-reviews, complaints monitoring, procedural safeguards, and the local plan.)

The School will require classroom teachers and other persons who provide services and accommodations to students with disabilities to be knowledgeable of the content of the students' IEPs. Discipline procedures will include positive behavioral interventions. All personnel who provide required special education services to students with disabilities will meet licensure, certification or under-supervision-of requirements. If necessary, the school will contract appropriately certified and licensed interventionists. Where applicable, the headmaster and special education coordinator will oversee and manage contracted personnel.

IEP teams meet annually to review and revise the IEP and triennially to reevaluate the student's eligibility for special education. Additionally, IEP meetings can be held as requested by an IEP team member following all federal and state regulations. Parents have the right to revoke special education services according to IDEA mandates.

504 Plans

The School will comply with the requirements of Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Section 504 is an anti-discrimination, civil rights statute that requires schools to provide students with and without disabilities equal access to FAPE. Any child that has a "mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more of the person's major life activities," has a record of that impairment, or is regarded as having that impairment, may qualify for a 504 plan. A 504 plan will provide accommodations to allow access to the general education learning environment. A 504 process aligns with the IEP process, beginning with

Prior Written Notice for the parent to meet, explanation of Procedural Safeguards, review of medical records, parental concerns, and the disability basis of a 504. When required, the 504 Plan is written by the SST and includes input from the parent, classroom teacher, and special education coordinator. The plan will include information about the disability and the accommodations, services, and supports required. The 504 plan will be reviewed and updated at least once annually. Copies of all 504 plans are provided to the classroom teachers, who will be responsible for implementing accommodations specified in the plan. The SST will supervise the implementation of the 504 with classroom teachers.

At-Risk Students

The School's curriculum was selected specifically to meet the needs of all students within the enrollment zone and expects a population of students from diverse backgrounds and with diverse learning abilities. ACACSSC's curriculum is time-tested and research-based, and has been successfully implemented for students from academically, socially, and economically varied backgrounds.

Core Knowledge, Literacy Essentials, and Singapore Math were selected because these programs are designed to build foundations of knowledge in the elementary years. Because children learn by building on what they already know, this curriculum will benefit students with varying learning abilities. Emphasizing foundational skills and rich content, teachers can not only effectively bring students with academic problems up to grade level but also strengthen the knowledge base and challenge the academic potential of every student at or above grade level.

In 2011, the Mayo Clinic released a study of almost 6,000 students on the incidence of learning disabilities in students. The study concluded that over 80% of children identified as having learning disabilities have their primary academic problem in reading. The World Federation of Neurology defines reading disability as a disorder manifested by difficulty in learning to read despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence, and sociocultural opportunity. The actual incidence of reading disability representative of the total population is estimated to be at 5.3% to 11.8%, depending on the definition used to establish it, and more common in boys than girls. "These data demonstrate that reading disability is common among children and should be included among the differential diagnoses considered in children having problems with learning."

Students presenting academic difficulty need programs that address remediation directly and target specific deficiencies. The time-tested, multi-sensory, brain-based approach that addresses multiple student learning styles, the Orton-Gillingham method, Literacy Essentials, is appropriate for teaching all students the explicit phonics, reading, and language arts they must learn in order to succeed. Literacy Essentials provides a strong foundation for students who exhibit academic progress

and will be an effective remedial program for students with academic challenges. ELL students will also benefit because Literacy Essentials provides limited concepts at a given time and is practiced until students achieve mastery. We believe one of the best forms of remediation is through a solid phonics program. The School will have at least a 90-minute morning period in kindergarten through 5th grades focusing on the various aspects of English language study: phonics, reading, vocabulary, study of Latin roots, spelling, grammar, handwriting, and composition, with differentiated instruction for specific student learning needs, timely and specific feedback, and high student engagement to ensure the greatest impact. This morning period will be supplemented with brief periods of punctuated practice throughout the day.

Low performing students will also be identified through the use of ACACSSC's assessment and diagnostic tools. Students who score below grade level will be given extra support to reach grade level within the classroom, such as small group setting and differentiated instruction, as well as pull out instruction.

Homework and classwork help will be offered during specific study hall hours throughout the week to assist students in need of extra practice. Teachers will make themselves available during a time that is outside of the instructional block. This additional contact with the student can help provide structured practice and further feedback. When learning gains are not progressing at an appropriate rate, we will provide for tutoring. These sessions are programmed within our operating budget and will be applied to those students requiring extra intervention to bring them up to grade level expectations.

A 2007 longitudinal study led by Dr. Greg Duncan of Northwestern University concluded that early literacy and math skill acquisition is the greatest predictor of later learning. By choosing sound research-based programs like Literacy Essentials, and Singapore math, coupled with a classical curriculum that, by definition, is a literacy-focused curriculum, we propose to provide students with these skills early on to ensure a successful academic future.

The School's curriculum allows for those students who may be at risk of dropping out or not completing their grade levels, to receive individualized educational plans that will help them achieve their goals. With smaller classroom sizes, teachers are more connected with their students and have a greater ability to detect struggles individual students may be having. Frequent assessment evaluations will allow for teachers and administrators to detect at risk students quickly and provide learning supports to equip the student for success. In addition, the School's focus on early literacy and family engagement are two important elements that have been shown to reduce drop-out. After-school tutoring is offered daily at no charge to families. ACACSSC will also partner with institutions offering credit recovery if needed to ensure that all students have the ability to make up

credit lost during the school year. Moreover, the School's graduation requirements do not pre-suppose that every student desires to achieve scores meriting entrance into elite institutions of higher education. Options include a satisfactory score on the AFQT (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude) Battery for those entering military service, and a math capstone that can substitute for a lower SAT math score. ACACSSC will strive to ensure that every student's educational needs are met to achieve the celebration of high school graduation.

English Language Learners

The School will adhere to all applicable provisions of Federal law relating to students with Limited English Proficiency, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974.

ACACSSC will identify the primary language of students upon enrollment. The process is as follows:

• Students who do not speak English as their first language are provided a Home Language Survey (HLS) as part of the enrollment and registration process.
• ACACSSC will obtain records of students who were tested in the previous school year for English proficiency. If a cumulative file is available for the student and an HLS was already completed, the HLS will be reviewed.
• Based on the answers provided to the questions in the HLS, ACACSSC will identify students who need language proficiency screening.
• For students who do not have cumulative files or when previous records are not available, the School will administer the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment's (WIDA) Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State for English Language Learners (ACCESS).
• The school will utilize the score report to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of each student.
• Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires schools to assess the English proficiency and notify the parent or guardian of any student pending assessment within 30 calendar days from the beginning of the school year. Students enrolling after the start of the school year must be tested within 10 days, and parents or guardians must be notified within 15 days of assessment.
• For students who are identified as Non-English or Limited English Proficient as a result of the initial assessment, the following steps will be completed within the mandated timelines:
• Classify students who are eligible for ELL services as Non-English or Limited English Proficient.
• Prepare a Parent Notification Letter if a student qualifies for ELL services. Once the parent receives the letter, they may choose to receive ELL instructional services. If the parent or guardian refuses ELL instructional services, the School will meet with the parent or guardian so the parent or guardian understands what is being waived. Parents or guardians may

elect to waive only ELL instructional services and cannot waive testing. ACACSSC will document the parent conference and place a copy of the waiver in the cumulative student folder.
• Maintain individual student records for ELL students.
• Once students are assessed, the headmaster will ensure that eligible students are provided appropriate ELL services. In addition, the headmaster or designee will ensure that ELL students and their parents or guardians are aware of school activities and other opportunities at the School in a language they understand. Students who are eligible for ELL services will receive these services until it is determined, through revaluation, that they possess adequate English language and academic skills to allow them to perform satisfactorily in general education classes without special instructional considerations.

TEAM - ESL Instruction Model

The TEAM Instructional Model is an integrated content language approach. The goal of the Sheltered Content-Based Instructional Model is for ELL students to develop English language skills in content classes. Secondary ELL students have a limited time to become academically proficient in English. Therefore, ELL students must learn both English and academic content as quickly as possible. English is taught through content areas by including a strong language development component.

The purpose of the language development component is to teach English language learners to communicate (listen, speak, read, and write) in English. This component considers the ELL student's current English language proficiency level and guides the teacher in providing the appropriate instruction for each level. This model is implemented in an integrated classroom. An integrated classroom consists of students who need ELL services and native English speakers. Emphasis is on cooperative learning, hands-on activities, visuals, demonstrations, modeling, and sheltered vocabulary.

In order to ensure that all students have access to ACACSSC's rigorous curriculum, administrators will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of strategies by the classroom teachers. Evidence can be observed during classroom visits, through lesson plans, using materials and audiovisuals, and through grade book notations. All ELL Teachers document the ESOL strategies used for each lesson in their lesson plans.

All ELLs participate in South Carolina ACCESS assessments - and appropriate accommodations are provided in accordance with State and district mandates and guidelines.

Exit Procedures

The School will administer the WIDA each spring to all current ELL students to measure proficiency and gains in reading, writing, listening, and

speaking as follows:

- Student must be assessed with WIDA on grade level
- Student must achieve scores at or above the Proficient Level on WIDA Aural/Oral
- Student must achieve scores at or above the Proficient Level on WIDA Writing

Promotion and Retention/ Promotion/Retention Team

After beginning of the year benchmark testing, students who are in need of MTSS services will be provided those services with monthly parent communications regarding student progress. Throughout the year, the headmaster, SpEd Director, and Academic Leadership Team (Promotion/Retention Team) will communicate with the parents whether their student is progressing towards promotion into the next grade level, or will need to be retained in their current grade level.

The decision to retain a student in their current grade level will be agreed upon by the School's administration and the parent/guardian of the student.

Gifted and Talented Students

A student who is gifted and talented is eligible for special services and programs of instruction when the student demonstrates remarkable intellectual ability or aptitude. When this giftedness becomes apparent, instruction will be provided that challenges and engages the student.

ACACSSC will follow state policies for identifying gifted and talented students and providing appropriate services. Students are referred for testing by teachers, parents, and administrators after reviewing a provided list of characteristics often seen amongst gifted and talented learners. Referred students will be provided the state-recommended assessment. To screen for Dimension A, students are given a CogAT, Dimension B is measured through MAP, IA, or SC Ready Reading and Math, and Dimension C is determined by GPA for grades 6-10 or SC Performance Tasks Assessment (SC PTA). Students must meet criteria in two dimensions or score at or above the 96th percentile on the composite to be determined Gifted and Talented.

There are definite social benefits, particularly for gifted and talented students, to being in a high-quality, classical school community like Ascent. The National Association for Gifted Children recommends the following research-based methods which will be incorporated into ACACSSC educational practices:

- Identification: Identification is a critical component of gifted education programming.
- Grouping or placing students with similar abilities and/or performance

together for instruction at a deeper level, has been shown to positively impact student learning gains.

• Teacher Training: Teachers who know how gifted students learn and are well trained in gifted education strategies are critical to high-level gifted programs.

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Gifted students will have many opportunities to stretch their learning and work with peers at their readiness level. The Core Knowledge Sequence allows for a significant amount of latitude regarding particular topics and works of literature. Students who are capable of working above their grade level may be given the option to read additional works of literature, read adapted works in an original or longer form, or study history and science content in a more comprehensive form (e.g., by reading upper-level texts). Ability grouping allows students who have demonstrated mastery on prior concepts to work at an appropriately challenging level. When necessary, additional methods, such as small group learning, will be used to challenge these students with appropriate learning opportunities.

ACACSSC will offer differentiated educational programs to meet the needs of the gifted and talented student.

High School Grades & Graduation Requirements

The School intends to provide an education that exceeds the South Carolina state graduation requirements. Exceeding the state requirements, ACACSSC will require four credits of science, one credit of Government, and four credits of History which will include U.S. History and the Constitution. Appendix G includes the required subjects and credits necessary for a high school diploma from the School. All credits will be accounted for per semester, per year on a high school student's transcript.

All ACACSSC students are required to complete the core courses. If a student fails a course, the course must be retaken in lieu of an elective provided the total number of credits earned during the student's high school tenure does not fall below the state minimum credit requirement for graduation. Students are not allowed to take competency-based exams in lieu of the course requirements. At the discretion of the headmaster, a student may be required to complete remedial courses in order to graduate. The headmaster also has the authority to waive any graduation requirement except those meeting state requirements. Once enrolled full-time, a student will not receive any credit from any other institution without the prior approval of the headmaster. A special education diploma may be awarded to students with disabilities assigned to a special education program who have not met the state assessment requirements, or who have not completed all of the requirements for a high school diploma but who have completed their Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Mathematics

All students are required to follow the mathematics course sequence through Pre-Calculus. After successful completion of Pre-Calculus, students will be placed in Calculus or another advanced math course based on the recommendation of the Pre-Calculus teacher and by approval of the headmaster.

Electives

Electives will consist of those courses that are consistent with classical education. They may include modern languages, speech and debate, extended Socratic seminar, statistics, or any other extension course that the faculty is credentialed to teach. Extra fine arts and extended orchestral courses may also be offered as electives.

Senior Thesis

The senior thesis is the culmination of a student's classical education and a rite of passage to a life of virtue and self-government. The student's thesis may concentrate on books, events, or themes that draw upon any core courses and should serve as a capstone project, one which brings together the things a student has learned during his or her time at the school. Every senior will write, orally deliver, and defend a thesis on a topic of his or her choosing that emerges from the curriculum. Each student will adapt his or her paper into a speech which will be delivered publicly and then defended to a panel of faculty members. A satisfactory performance on the writing and presentation of the thesis is required for graduation.

Constitution Course and Civics Exam

The curriculum at the School will meet state standards for teaching the Constitution of the United States and will prepare students to pass a constitution examination. Students study American history as part of a regular course each year from kindergarten through grade six. In grades 7-12, students study history as a full-year core requirement each year with high school courses in Ancient History, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, American History, and Modern History. High school students take a year-long course in American Government.

Further, the teaching of American history and government is robust and serious. There is explicit and meaningful instruction on the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and The Federalist Papers, through which students learn the importance of limited government, natural rights, and equality as expressed in the American founding. Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-29-120 (A), the course in American Government will include a study of the United States Constitution, Declaration of Independence, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Federalist Papers. High school students will also be required to pass the Civics Test in accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 59-29-240 (B). Consequently, the study

of American history is integral to all students' education and will be a part of a regular course each year from kindergarten through grade six. In grades 7-12, students study history as a full-year core requirement each year with high school courses in Western Civilization, European History, American History, and Modern History. High school students will also take a year-long course in American Government.

The Civics Test will be administered as part of the End of Course assessments for American Government. Students will need to earn a score of 70% to pass. Students will be provided an opportunity to review material and retake the exam prior to graduation. All seniors will be required to pass the exam before receiving a diploma.

High School Grading System

Grades are not the be-all and end-all of education. Nonetheless, grades are a useful tool to evaluate and communicate a student's mastery of the curriculum. Teachers will assign grades in order to reflect accurately the range between true mastery and insufficient knowledge of a subject. To this end, the following letter grades have these meanings:

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

In addition to these general parameters, the School will use a 4.0 grading scale. The grading scale is found in Appendix G.

The grading scale as defined above is utilized for all students. Incompletes will only be given under special circumstances as determined by the headmaster. It is the responsibility of parents and students to remain informed of the student's progress.

Weighted GPA

ACACSSC does not inflate student grades, since doing so poorly prepares students to lead independent, responsible, and productive lives. Nevertheless, the larger academic world does not share the School's view and to ignore this would do a disservice to our students as they apply for some colleges and scholarships. Therefore, in order to maintain the integrity of the School's classrooms, while recognizing the pressures of the broader academic world, ACACSSC adopts the following weighted grading policy.

For purposes of official high school transcripts only, honors courses and courses that count for both high school and college credit will be weighted on a 5-point scale as indicated in Appendix G.

Report cards, retention and promotion decisions, club and athletic eligibility, honor roll designations, eligibility for in-school honors, and for all other purposes, the standard 4-point scale applies.

Educational Structure

Response to Educational Structure

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools of South Carolina ("ACACSSC" or "School") aspires to be intentional in a student's day and educational journey. It is important that while a student engages in their education, they "Learn the True. Do the Good. Love the Beautiful." Therefore, the school's culture and schedules are designed with the intention of producing not only well-educated citizens, but leaders of virtuous behavior and character.

The School will provide a content-rich classical education for the families of South Carolina. In order to achieve this goal, ACACSSC's maximum student capacity will not exceed 1,100 students. The classroom sizes will remain small and vary between 25-32 students, with the intent of having three classrooms per grade up to grade six. Each class will have a teacher as well as an aide to allow for a student ratio of 1:16 or smaller. Pending community support and letters of intent for enrollment, the School will serve at minimum full day kindergarten through grade eight in the 2024-2025 school year. The School would then add high school grades per necessity.

For the school calendar year, the School will have one hundred eighty (180) instructional days, directly aligning with S.C. Code Ann. §59-1-425(A). The start and end times for the lower and upper grades will vary slightly, as described below, but will meet the requirements of S.C. Code Ann. §59-1-425(E) to include no less than six hours of instruction. ACACSSC's proposed 2024-2025 calendar is attached as Appendix F, and details of the lower and upper grades' schedules are the following:

Kindergarten and grades 1 through 6 will participate in direct instruction in grade specific, self-contained classrooms with one head teacher (self-contained). These grades will begin their day at approximately 7:40 a.m. and end at 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. It will be expected that teachers engage students in a minimum 6 hours of academic instruction per day, typically 30 hours per week. Core subjects will be allotted appropriate time as per the daily class schedule included in Appendix F. Students will also be expected to participate in programs that develop the seven virtues (courage, moderation, justice, responsibility, prudence, friendship, wonder) of the School. This design is in alignment with the School's curriculum structure developed by ACA.

Grades 7-12 will follow a seven-period schedule with the school day beginning at approximately 7:40 a.m. and ending at 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. It will be expected that students receive a minimum of six hours of academic instruction each day, with each core subject receiving a minimum of one hour of time a day. Upper grades will also be expected to participate in programs and courses purposed to develop virtuous character and behavior. Some of the virtues that are difficult to practice in a classroom, will be developed on the field of competition and physical training. Beyond academics, students will be challenged to push to their limits, taught discipline, and encouraged to practice strength and virtue when they are tired, losing, or pushed beyond the comfort of a typical classroom.

Optimal Learning

Developed using proven classical pedagogy methods and intentional learning environments, the School offers an optimal learning atmosphere for students seeking a content-rich and character-enhancing education. ACACSSC understands that small class sizes allow for direct instruction and more personalized attention to students which increases the impact of learning. An average classroom may consist of 30 students and two adult educators, a teacher of record, and an aide, keeping the ratio of adult to student at 1:15. Students are known to their teachers by their names, personality, and unique educational learning styles. Additionally, the School's capacity is intentionally set to 1,100 students in order to preserve the educational personalization for the lifetime of the school. However, this structure not only supports students in their learning, but also encourages and assists teachers in the delivery of curriculum.

Because of the classical education structure, teachers are able to engage in thought provoking Socratic discussions, dive deep into content material, and provide instruction for every learning style. When content is delivered through direct instruction and reinforced through kinesthetic, reading and/writing, or visual modes, students are provided an opportunity to not only learn well, but establish trusting, respectful relationships with their teachers through validation of learning needs. Additionally, through the use of their curriculum maps, teachers have capabilities to engage in cross-curricular activities which allows for further mastery of content by the students. Vertical and horizontal alignment of coursework will allow students to better grasp the spiraling material and put it to use in practical ways.

The use of formative and summative assessment in class, as well as MAPS testing throughout the year will give educators a clear indication of how well students are succeeding in the curriculum.

It is through this combination of student success and teacher success methods that the School will be able to provide an education that trains the minds and improves the hearts of young people in classical education while instilling principles of moral character and civic virtue. Ascent Classical Academies have a proven track record of students and teachers thriving in a culture that fosters respect, encourages excellence, and provides individual supports. The same culture will be built for the families, teachers, staff and administration of the School in South Carolina.

Prospective Students

Prospective students and families interested in the School would be encouraged to engage with the school in at least one of three ways.

• Attend a Parent Informational Meeting - All meeting dates, times and

locations are published on the ACACSSC website, and prospective parents and/or guardians are encouraged to attend to learn more about the school. These meetings are led by the School's headmaster and provide detailed information regarding all aspects of the school and its structure.

• Take an Academy Tour - Academy tours are scheduled twice a month, and the dates and times are published on the ACACSSC website. Families are highly encouraged to come and walk through the school during school hours to observe and meet some of the faculty and staff.

• Schedule a Student Visiting Day - Families are encouraged to have their prospective student visit for a full day at the school. Prospective students will be paired with a student leader of their same educational demographic and have the opportunity to follow that student throughout their scheduled day. This unique opportunity allows for the prospective student to have a first-hand experience regarding the culture of ACACSSC.

Once a prospective family and their student(s) have participated in at least one of these activities, The School is confident a family would have the knowledge necessary to determine if ACACSSC is a proper educational fit for their student(s). Those students visiting from neighboring schools will notice immediately the emphasis placed on intensive classical academia, focusing on a virtuous character, and a culture founded in truth, beauty, and goodness. The School understands that its unique, classical educational model is not meant for all learners, but will support all students who choose to take the challenge of content-rich, rigorous, classical education. In a recent survey conducted, 91% of Ascent Classical Academies' parents were satisfied with the school, and 96.7% were satisfied with the academic growth experienced by their students.

Teacher Day & Planning

During the first year of operation, teachers will have intense training in curriculum and heavy support from the headmaster, assistant headmaster, literacy specialists, and the ACA DCIA. Each grade, kindergarten through six, will have concurrent planning time while students are in co-curricular classes. Each of the five days will be constructed in such a way that supports teachers. Planning time and Professional Development are built into the calendar. In a normal week, a teacher will have a total of five prep periods. During that period of time, there will be a determined assignment of time. An example would be:

• Monday: Planning time with the team (horizontal)
• Tuesday: Teacher Talk with the headmaster
• Wednesday: Department meeting (vertical) with grade leads
• Thursday: Grade-level common assessments, plans for leveled math and reading
• Friday: Planning/grading. Prior to the start of the school year teachers on grade level will be working together to plan common assessments according to their curriculum maps

Teachers will engage aides to help in the planning process when there are preparations to be made. Pacing guides provided with the curriculum will guide teachers and teams in pacing out lessons.

Prior to the beginning of the school year, grade level teams will deliver items to the administrative team to prepare for the first and second quarters to avoid last-minute copying or preparing of handouts. Each teacher may also prepare emergency lesson plans: week-long plans relating specifically to the curriculum map for that grade to be kept in the teacher's room and labeled in a red folder, to assist substitute teachers who may be called in to cover a teacher's emergency. Each teacher will have planning time prior to the start of the year to prepare these plans.

Teacher plans will follow a simple structure provided by the headmaster in a form that he or she will expect to see each week as teachers submit their plans for review. This simple template tool will allow teachers to plan together and pace their lessons as well as define days for common assessments. All plans will incorporate certain elements: objectives of the lesson (also posted in the classroom while the lesson is being taught), content to be covered, guided practice, and application (whether it is a creative piece or a practical application). Each teacher's schedule will be determined by grade level to include five to seven sections of literacy and two sections of math throughout the day.

Upper school (grades 7 - 12) will have departmental planning time (History and Literature) (Math and Science). They will also use the provided curriculum maps and pacing guides. Teachers will have teacher talk as departments once a week, and then have a vertical alignment meeting to be sure we are preparing students for the next level of content.

Response to Professional Development

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools of South Carolina ("ACACSSC" or "School") in coordination with the charter management organization ("CMO"), Ascent Classical Academies ("ACA") will provide the majority of professional development ("PD") for every teacher. Professional development will be research-based and focus on school improvement goals through the analysis of student assessment data and teacher observations. ACACSSC understands that in order to provide an excellent classical education, the learning environment for students and pedagogy of teachers must always be evaluated and improved. Therefore, the School will provide professional development for teachers based on the following criteria:

• Prior to the beginning of the year each teacher will meet with the headmaster and design a plan for a year of professional growth. This plan will give the teacher the opportunity to express his or her own growth goals. The teacher will have the opportunity to share what they desire for a career path and then goals will be set for the teacher to touch on throughout the academic year. Quarterly meetings will be held in order for the teacher to evaluate progress toward their goals.
• The headmaster and ACA instructional staff will work in coordination with the deans to regularly observe every teacher in their classrooms using a classically- focused assessment tool. This evaluation will be used to identify the need for teacher supports and provide documentation for yearly performance reviews. Every teacher will have the opportunity to read and discuss their evaluations with the headmaster and/or ACA instructional staff.
• Professional development will also be designed to differentiate instruction or address the instructional needs in each classroom. This training will take into account each student's assessment benchmarks and through-year testing conducted by the Northwest Evaluation Association ("NWEA"), and regular course assessments to determine their progress through the curriculum. The results of this data will be discussed in professional learning communities per grade level teams, and as a department with the headmaster and/or ACA instructional staff to determine professional development needs.
• Professional development will also be delivered during weekly faculty meeting times, and various in-session professional development days - up to 4 per year.
• Quarterly professional development will include the provision of training by literacy and math specialists in grammar school; in high school, the headmaster and third-party specialists will provide training in the areas of time management, skills concentration, vertical alignments, and Socratic seminar.

A portion of the professional development budget will allow each teacher to select, with headmaster and other ACA input, the best training opportunities outside the predetermined school professional development. A national conference, a local conference, or even a visit to a model school to observe and network with teachers will be considered upon request to

the headmaster. In this way, the school supports the teacher's growth as well as allowing them the opportunity to dream and determine their own path.

Professional development days will be planned throughout the course of the year, including two days in the fall to permit any instructional adjustments to address issues identified in benchmarking tests. In February, after the middle of year testing, there will be a day of professional development to evaluate the data and determine next steps for each student. In the spring there will be one more day to determine and reflect upon strategies employed throughout the year.

The headmaster and ACA instructional staff will determine what courses of professional development need to occur throughout the school year. However, prior to the start of the school year, all teachers will participate in two to three weeks of professional development regardless of tenure. ACACSSC teachers live by their convictions that everyone is a lifelong learner, and therefore always have the ability to improve their pedagogical practices.

Core Components and Schedule

The School has developed two levels of professional development to support every teacher within the school. The first level provided is ACA and the second from the individual school. Through this partnership, ACACSSC has the unique capability to provide not only local support and development, but national as well. Just as the School's mission is to develop within its students 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, so this mission is extended to ACACSSC's faculty and staff.

The School will provide at least 90 hours of professional development for faculty yearly. Additionally, a minimum of 80 hours is expected in team collaboration, self-development, and planning yearly. The ACA instructional staff and headmaster have arranged for teachers to meet weekly in professional learning communities without conflict to their teaching schedules, selected specific days throughout the year for continued professional development while students are not in the building, and for any off-site training, the headmaster will ensure appropriate substitutes are available. All training will be evaluated through yearly faculty surveys and noted in teacher files to be evaluated during observations.

Induction Professional Development

ACA will provide professional development for all faculty and staff prior to the start of every school year. This training will include, but is not limited to the following:

• Introduction to Ascent Classical Academies, its leaders, structure, and the relationship between the CMO and the local school
• The School's educational program: course fidelity, learning differentiation, course sequences, completing the mission, and culture of scholarship
• The School's unique culture, implementation of classical education, decorum, "restful learning", high expectations and low threat culture, communication, discipline, etc.
• Ascent Classical Academies human resources and compliance processes
• Ascent Classical Academies financial and purchasing policies

The School's headmaster will direct and provide the following professional development for all faculty and staff prior to the start of every school year. This training will include, but is not limited to the following:

• ACA writing and math standards
• Classroom procedures
• Crucial Conversations
• MTSS and Special Education Services
• Student Information System
• First Aid/CPR
• Child Find
• Socratic Seminar
• Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting

Through-Year Professional Development

Yearly training will include department specific professional development allowing the faculty to receive training in their unique discipline, department driven professional learning communities and quarterly all-teacher trainings. The headmaster, in coordination with the ACA instructional staff, will determine what opportunities are available for teachers and staff to attend off-site trainings as well throughout the state and nation. Every professional development opportunity will be selected with the purpose of enhancing pedagogy and developing leadership skills.

Professional Learning Communities

Teachers will participate in professional learning communities that will endeavor to meet weekly under a departmental head. During these professional development periods, teachers will be reading a selection of best practices books, as well as staying abreast of best practices in their fields. Training will be delivered by the department head when needed. Along with the department meetings, once a week the team will interface with the headmaster in a teacher talk time where they will have the undivided attention of their leader for an hour. This timeframe gives voice to all teachers in the school.

Quarterly Professional Development:

During the course of the academic year, teachers will be accountable to attend professional development on-site. Two professional development days will happen in the first semester. The first PD day will take place after school begins and once teachers are established with their classes. This professional development will focus on classroom management and best practices for content delivery.

The second PD day will focus on benchmark tests and student abilities. If students need to be referred, that will take place between the teachers and the MTSS team who will present once again on the process. Teachers will also be instructed as to how to level their classrooms for math practice and literacy reading groups.

The third PD day will take place after the middle of year testing has been completed for specific in-house testing to determine the progress of students. Adjustments to instruction will be made at this point. PD will be differentiated as half of the day will be spent in an area of needed improvement be it math, literacy, or content.

The last PD day will incorporate all that the teachers have learned over the course of the year and any last adjustments that need to be made to ensure student success in a grade. At this PD in particular, the promotion/retention team would meet with teachers and collect documentation and parent notifications to set up appointments and discuss the possibility of retention for the following year. This PD time will again be differentiated to provide specific training in an area of need, be it math, literacy, or content.

Beyond quarterly professional development, teachers will be formulating their own professional development plan with their headmasters. This is their time to determine where they want to go with their career and how they want to develop their skill sets. They are given the opportunity to state what they would like to do over the course of the year in their specific areas, such as leading a competition, expanding an offering, working with a club, becoming a master of their own content, etc. They are also assisted to find opportunities where they can improve their practice, be it professional organizations, associations, conferences, or training. Once the teacher has chosen a particular event, the teacher works with the headmaster to arrange for substitute teachers if need be. Once the teacher returns from outside development or training, he or she shares the content with their colleagues in a formatted faculty meeting.

Potential Off-Site Training:

• South Carolina Charter School Conference
• National Symposium of Classical Education
• Circe Institute Training Conference
• Veritas Teacher Training Conference
• Singapore Training

• Literacy Essentials Training

ACA has a detailed professional development schedule available for review upon request.

Response to Serving Students with Disabilities

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools of South Carolina ("ACACSSC" or "School") is committed to serving students willing to work hard, including those with disabilities, English Language Learners (ELLs), and those who have Individual Education Plans ("IEP"s), advanced learning plans, or 504 plans.

Through a partnership with the local education agency ("LEA)", ACA will collaborate on the development of IEPs, handling of administrative proceedings, and generally ensuring the provision of necessary special education programs and services. The School will provide students with free appropriate public education (FAPE) in compliance with special education laws. Least restrictive environments will be provided, and services in coordination with IEPs and 504s will be readily available.

Special Education Staff

A Student Services Director will be a licensed and qualified Special Education professional that will handle all program administration of special education, support services, and interventions. Additional support faculty and staff will be hired to meet the level of need for students enrolled. Training will be provided beyond general education strategies to ensure that teachers and staff are properly equipped to implement and support the program and students.

The School intends to work closely with the sponsor's staff regarding delivering special education programs and services appropriately. Subject to annual negotiation, the school will endeavor to employ at least one licensed and credentialed Special Education Teacher and may purchase additional required special education services. Such services will be negotiated to reflect the ACACSSC's proportionate share of the sponsor's overall special education program budget. The school may also purchase special education services from another certified provider.

The School will endeavor to employ a special education coordinator who aligns with ACACSSC's vision and mission, specifically in the commitment to creating a personalized, systematic, and structured education. The special education coordinator will be responsible for coordinating the school-wide approach to the prevention, identification, layered support, and assessment of students requiring atypical education services, consistent with the goal of providing a FAPE for all students.

FAPE and IDEA

In order to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to all students, the School will comply with all federal and state laws and mandated regulations, including without limitation the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. § 1400, et seq.), Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the South Carolina Special Education laws and regulations for students enrolled in the school.

ACACSSC will review and set in place strategies to comply with the letter and spirit of any formal 504, ELL, or IEP plans in place for incoming students.

By adhering to the provisions of the IDEA and applicable South Carolina special education laws and regulations, the School will assure that all students with disabilities are accorded FAPE, including special education-related services, and accommodations. ACACSSC will also ensure that no student otherwise eligible to enroll will be denied enrollment on the basis of the student's special education or disability status.

Instructional Programs and Practices

In full compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the School is committed to providing a continuum of services in the least restrictive environment that is appropriate to the individual student's needs. Therefore, ACACSSC students will remain in classrooms with their peers as much as possible. The Student Services Director in coordination with faculty and staff will work together to provide effective accommodations and modifications for students within the classroom. At times special education teachers will work in conjunction with general education teachers for inclusion support, co-teaching, support in designing lesson plans, and any other needs that need to be addressed. For ACACSSC students with disabilities, the goal will be to minimally impact their course schedules. Therefore, students' schedules will be individually designed to ensure the least restrictive environment possible.

Depending on a student's disability, the School will provide additional support necessary for the student's success. This may include but is not limited to oral testing, extended time, alternative learning formats, additional learning tools, etc. Some students will require one on one support, or participation in a small group, where the student works with a special education teacher more directly, outside of the classroom. Other supports may be occupational, physical, or speech therapy. ACACSSC will strive to make these situations minimally invasive of the student's daily schedule and learning environment.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Student Services Director will supervise and manage all faculty and staff that are hired specifically for special education services. The Director will be responsible for overseeing all student records, schedules, and reporting requirements. Additionally, the staffing schedule will be created by the Director and needs for additional staff will be requested to the headmaster. The Student Services Director will report to the headmaster and provide relevant and requested data regarding the Special Education services being provided to students.

The Student Service Director will also be responsible to communicate with

the sponsor for reporting and coordination regarding the Special Education services provided at the School.

Ascent Classical Academies has detailed program guidelines and manuals for all aspects of its student services program available for review.

Response to Goals, Objectives, and Assessment Plan

Serving as one part in the greater mission of achieving the objectives and goals articulated by the South Carolina Board of Education, and the Charter Institute at Erskine, Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools of South Carolina ("ACACSSC" or "School") has clear measurements to ensure it remains focused on the mission and vision. Through explicit SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-based) goals, the School's mission of academic success and financial accountability will be measured in accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-20.

Academic Goals & Objectives

• By 2035, the School will meet South Carolina Department of Education's goal of 70% of its students meeting or exceeding the state standards.
• Students who have attended the School for three or more years will perform in the top 50% of all South Carolina schools on the state assessments.
• After three years, the School will out-perform the local school district (whichever school district proposed school is in) on the state assessments.

Strategically, teachers and staff will focus on through-year testing (NWEA) during specific professional development days to drill down to students in their classrooms and generate a plan sufficient to address each student's needs and growth. NWEA provides metrics and methodologies to address areas of need for students that have gaps and students who are ready to move onto higher learning within a specific domain. Once those plans are in place teachers will objectively target areas of need and growth. The next testing session results will determine whether methodologies were productive to reach the goals.

Organizational Goals & Objectives

The School will demonstrate fiduciary and financial responsibility.
• The School will operate with a balanced budget, as adopted by the governing board.
• The School will have an audit annually without any material findings.

Parents demonstrate high satisfaction with the academic program and the clear, frequent, and open communication of the School.

• The School will receive an 85% satisfactory rating from its annual parent survey.

The School will strive for a 90% re-enrollment rate for students remaining in the local area.

The school will measure its performance against test scores and other data from the local school district.

The most recent Lexington Richland School District 5 baseline data is

below:

SC Ready English Language Arts - 55.0%
SC Ready Mathematics - 45.1%
End of Course Assessment Results English - 71.0%
End of Course Assessment Results Algebra 1 - 61.1%
End of Course Assessment History/US Constitution - 49.7%
End of Course Assessment Biology - 63.7%
SCPASS Science - 51.8%
On-Time Graduation Rate - 89.0%
College AND Career Readiness - 44.3%

Diagnostic Assessment and Baselining

Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA)/ mClass Dibels; Next (Acadience)/KRA

Ascent Classical Academy Charter School of South Carolina ("ACACSSC" or "School") may administer Kindergarten Readiness Assessment by John Hopkins University.

The School utilizes NWEA MAPS, a nationally-normed assessment which measures student growth from grades 3-12 in math, reading, language usage and science. NWEA produces accurate and actionable data of students' achievement for teachers and schools to develop instructional strategies which will enhance student learning and outcomes.

Benchmark testing will occur at the beginning of year for all students enrolled at ACACSSC. These results will provide the School the ability to measure a student's current educational grade level, and project future results. All students will be administered a mid-year assessment to evaluate growth and develop additional learning strategies if necessary. The mid-year assessment will likely be late January. A final end-of-year assessment will be administered for all ACACSSC students to evaluate individual growth, academy growth, and instructional practices.

Other diagnostic test that will be administered throughout the year is the Dibels reading assessments for K-2 grade. Dibels will be administered three times a year with a benchmark, MOY and EOY score for each student.

Formative Assessments

Formative assessments include chapter tests for core content in each grade as well as weekly spelling, writing, and math assessments. Daily, grammar school students are assessed for math facts and phonics in a formative fashion (Mad Minute, Literacy Essentials quizzes). These formative assessments provide information to help the teacher direct instruction. The norm will be if 80% of the class does not perform well (80%

or above) on a formative assessment, that the teacher will re-teach the content.

In the upper school formative assessments will include spot quizzes and exit tickets to be sure students are on track with the content taught on a particular day.

Formative assessments in the upper school can include oral questioning and Socratic discussion.

Summative Assessments

Various summative assessments are administered to meet state requirements. Other than SCPASS, SCREADY, and EOCEP, the School may administer or have students participate in any of the following: PACT, PSAT/NMSQT, ACT, SAT, or CLT.

Resources needed to administer testing will include Chromebooks or laptops as well as headphones and personnel that are trained in the ethics of testing. The School will administer paper and pencil version of assessments as able.

The headmaster, department leaders, and ACA instructional staff will assess data to improve instruction and provide summary information to the governing board of the School.

The dean of academics will be responsible for sending testing results to parents.

If students test "at risk," meaning they are close to not being on grade level, then the promotion/retention team will invite the parents in for a meeting to discuss further a plan for instruction.

The School will continue improving its assessment plan to best need the needs of students and to improve their academic achievement, growth, and mastery.

Response to Governing Board

This charter application is submitted by Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools of South Carolina ("ACACSSC" or "School"), a South Carolina nonprofit corporation organized to hold multiple charters as a charter network.

The founding group/planning committee are those individuals who will play a substantial and ongoing role in the school's development, governance, and/or operation, sharing responsibility for the school's outcomes. The founding group includes members of the charter committee, the interim directors of ACACSSC, and employees of Ascent Classical Academies ("ACA"), the expected operating partners charged with helping establish and operate this campus.

The planning committee includes a mix of experienced charter school leaders who have founded charter schools as concerned parents, have operated successful classical charter schools, and other local members of the community wanting better education choices for families in South Carolina.

Ashley Hyman - Mrs. Hyman is a member of the charter committee. She is the Executive Director of the Heritage at Lowman, a life plan community offering independent living, assisted living, memory support, and rehabilitation and long-term skilled nursing services. Her experience includes working in the highly-regulated industry of long-term care. She graduated from the University of North Georgia with a degree in Exercise Science. She and her husband live in Chapin, SC with their three daughters.

Dennis Getter - Mr. Getter is a member of the charter committee. He is retired after a career in business and manufacturing. Mr. Getter earned his MBA from St. Thomas University and his BS in Electrical Engineering from University of Minnesota Institute of Technology. He and his wife live in Fort Mill, SC.

Derec Shuler - Mr. Shuler is the Executive Director of Ascent Classical Academies, an organization supporting the development and operations of high-quality classical schools. He has been involved in helping launch a number of successful schools. Prior to becoming involved in education, he worked in national security and technology, while also serving as an officer in the United States Army Reserves. Mr. Shuler has held elected office and served on the board of a charter school where he developed experience being accountable for public funds, administration, and governance. He is a graduate of Appalachian State University and lives in Golden, Colorado with his wife and two children, who attend a classical charter school he helped found.

Susan Goers, E.D. - Dr. Goers has worked in the arena of classical education for the past 40 years. She has taught in and practiced administration in schools in Colorado, New York, Florida, and Utah. Her

work includes standing up three charter schools and designing an educational program centered on classical education. She has experience implementing classical programs and developing classical educators and leaders. She earned her Ed.D. from Concordia University with an M.S. in Curriculum and Instruction from Western Governor's University and a B.A. from Nazareth College of Rochester. Dr. Goers and her husband live in Ogden, Utah.

Stacey Bowman - Mrs. Bowman is the Director of Legal and Human Resources at Ascent Classical Academies. She joins Ascent after 12 years in private law practice, advising clients in the areas of commercial litigation, labor and employment, and education law. During her law firm career, Mrs. Bowman was recognized for her commitment to pro bono work. She previously served on the Board of Directors of Golden View Classical Academy. Mrs. Bowman obtained both her J.D. and her B.A. in Russian from the University of Iowa. Mrs. Bowman is married with three children and lives in Arvada, Colorado.

Chris Scott - Mr. Scott is the Director of Finance for Ascent Classical Academies. Prior to joining the Ascent team, he worked with a financial service provider that served a number of charter school clients, exposing him to a wide range of charter school models and governmental accounting. He earned an undergraduate degree from Carnegie Mellon University. He lives in Lakewood, Colorado with his wife and two children, who attend a classical charter school.

Brad Miller - Mr. Miller is on the charter committee and has a professional background in charter schools. He is the founder of Miller Farmer Carlson Law. He earned his Juris Doctorate from Northwestern University and has served as a board member of the Colorado League of Charter Schools and the Colorado Charter School Institute. Mr. Miller has a deep understanding of charter law, representing both charter schools, school districts, and authorizers.

Mark Shuler - Mr. Shuler serves on the charter committee. He is retired but has a passion for classical education after seeing several of his grandchildren thrive in a classical school. He has experience as a project manager and Agile coach. Mr. Shuler earned his M.S. in Computer Science from Clemson University and a B.S. in Business Administration from the University of South Carolina.

David Corbin, Ph.D. - Dr. Corbin is a school administrator for Ascent Classical Academies and supports faculty and leadership culture in a classical environment. He has served as the Head of School for the Geneva School of Boerne, the Dean of Academic Affairs at Providence Christian College, and the Dean of the School of Politics, Philosophy, and Economics at King's College. He earned his Ph.D. in Political Science from Boston University and his M.A. in Political Science from the University of New Hampshire. He lives in Colorado with his wife and children, who

attend an Ascent Classical Academy.

Resumes for members of the Charter Committee, the initial governance of ACACSSC, composed to meet the requirements of a SC nonprofit corporation, are included in Appendix K. This initial body will be the entity executing charter contracts and other agreements on behalf of the school and continue evolving. This body will transition to the governing board during the first year of operations and disband.

Conversations to start a classical charter school in South Carolina began in the summer of 2018 between Derec Shuler and leadership at the Charter Institute at Erskine. Mr. Shuler, a South Carolina native, has started three classical charter schools in Colorado, with two more starting in the fall of 2023. He has continued wanting to help support more high-quality, tuition-free classical options for families in SC, since both he and his wife's family live in the area. Mr. Shuler and the ACA team began outreach meetings in the summer of 2022, recruiting local parents and supporters from communities across the state desiring to help establish classical charter schools in their area. The locations Ascent Classical Academy is proposing to start new schools is based on demonstrated community support and interest.

Classical schools are among the most demanded school models in the country by parents wanting a traditional approach to education with a focus on developing the moral character and virtue of their children, in partnership with families, to prepare students to flourish in life. Specifically, Ascent Classical Academy will offer what is also known as an American Classical Education, that transmits the Western tradition and culture to students, connecting those ideals, that include concepts like democracy, individual liberty, a reliance on reason, to the American experiment, and the ideas and history behind the founding of our nation. After carefully reviewing available public options, there are not many classical charter schools that are philosophically aligned to Ascent's approach in the state.

Ascent Classical Academies deployed a website and Facebook pages and groups for South Carolina families and has been collecting Expressions of Interest to determine where the most need and demand is in the state.

The communities Ascent Classical Academy is proposing new schools are also communities that are experiencing high population growth.

The governing board uses the Policy Governance model as described by John Carver in his book Boards That Make a Difference. This model of governance provides clarity between the functions of governance and management, with the board exercising its control and oversight by adopting policies, which are executed by staff and contractors. 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).

Mission and Vision Guidance

The mission and vision will guide all the efforts to govern and operate the school. 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

In addition to being responsible for achieving the mission and vision, it is the responsibility of the board to oversee the operational, academic, and financial, and viability of the school. 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 charter committee as it transitions to the governing board.

Oversight of Operations

As outlined earlier in this section, it is the board's responsibility to ensure the school fulfills its mission. 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 ACACSSC 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.

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 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.
• The board is responsible for providing strategic leadership for the school.
• The board has a fiduciary responsibility to ensure that 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.

An important role of the governing board is the annual evaluation of the school leader. The school leader, in consultation with the executive director of ACA or his designee, will develop annual goals that align with the direction of the governing board. These goals may vary but will also include operational, academic, and financial measures. Members of the governing board are encouraged to visit the school throughout the year to obtain a first-perspective of the school. At the end of the school year, the school leader will provide a self-assessment that will be used in developing the year-end evaluation, that includes the other measures. This evaluation will be presented to the board for review and adoption.

ACA and the governing board will use the headmaster evaluation to inform professional development, compensation, retention, and, if necessary, termination. ACA and the governing board will continue working to improve the leader evaluation to ensure it is an effective and valuable process supporting the mission and vision of the school.

Board Oversight of Academics

In order for the ACACSSC governing board to measure progress, it will receive regular reports on student performance and assessments. The board will use this information to assess the school's progress toward the goals specified in the 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.

The board will review academic reports throughout the year during their public meetings and discuss ways to maintain or improve its program as needed.

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 ACACSSC 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 at least 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 ACA financial policies. If necessary, the board will review and approve amended budgets based on student need.

The charter committee is currently the governing body of the applicant and is organized consistent with the South Carolina Nonprofit Corporation Act. Once the school is approved and in its first year of operation, the charter committee will transition to the governing board. The applicant is concerned the current statutory requirements for charter school governing boards do not follow best practices that are more prescriptive than what the South Carolina Nonprofit Corporation Act require. These practices include a large board size, short, 2-term terms, and an elected class of directors, factors that cause instability and have been shown to impact the integrity of a charter school. However, the transition to the governing board will fully comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

Under the current requirements, the ACACSSC governing board will have eight members, a majority of whom will have experience in business or education. Four members of the board will be appointed and four members will be elected following the process described in statute. The governing board is expected to hold charters for multiple schools across South Carolina and the organization will seek directors from across the state who are aligned to the mission and vision and who have the experience and capacity to be effective directors. The board composition will meet the requirements of S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-50(B)(9).

Since the school is working with a management partner, this transition will not require a transfer in responsibilities from very "hands-on" and operational to governance, as is typically seen, and a challenge for many new charter schools. Since there is not a transition of roles and responsibilities, the change in the composition will occur in accordance with the bylaws of ACACSSC, included in Appendix L.

The appointed director class will be recruited and seated based on the needs of the governing board to ensure a variety of needed skillsets are on the board. In the spring of the first year of operation, the charter committee will invite candidates to apply for the elected director positions, which will be divided into 1-year and 2-year terms. As part of the process, candidates will provide statements on their understanding and support for classical education, their understanding of charter school governance, a resume, a commitment to follow the board agreement, and a statement of support or the mission and vision of the school. The charter committee will review applications and select a slate of candidates based on the qualifications of the candidates and the needs of the board to ensure the proper composition and experience to meet statutory requirements. The governing board director slate will be presented to the parents of all ACACSSC schools for election. The directors will then be seated in accordance with the bylaws of the organization. The annual meeting after the first election will finalize the transition to the governing board and will

continue operating in accordance with the bylaws. Vacancies will be handled in accordance with the bylaws.

Board Orientation and Development

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

When a new member is added to the board, that new director receives an initial orientation that includes the legal obligations of a public board in South Carolina. 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 of South Carolina, 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.

ACA is also responsible for supporting board development and will work to implement a program similar to what boards they work with in other states follow. The governing board will access best practice resources and training from South Carolina, other states, and national organizations.

Each member of the board will complete an annual self-assessment of their understanding of various expectations and governance requirements and their skills. This assessment will be reviewed by the board to develop annual training plans.

Governing Board Support in Planning Year

• Charter School Board Training Modules: Complete modules 1-6, 8-11, 14, 17, 23, and 25 - As applicable for SC
• Board Fundamentals (2 events) - 1 Required
• Specialized Governing Board Training (scheduled individually) - Encouraged
• Topic Based Webinars (4 to 6 offered annually) - Encouraged
• South Carolina or National Charter Schools Conference Breakout Sessions (schedule individually) - encouraged
• Performance Management Training: Data Dashboard training - Required

Governing Board Support in Year 1 Implementation

• Charter School Board Training Modules: Complete modules 7, 12, 13, 15, 16, 19-22, 24, 26, and 30 - As applicable for SC
• Board Fundamentals (2 events) - Encouraged

• Specialized Governing Board Training (scheduled individually) - Encouraged
• Topic Based Webinars (4 to 6 offered annually) - Encouraged
• South Carolina or National Charter Schools Conference Breakout Sessions (schedule individually) - encouraged

Governing Board Support in Year 2 Implementation

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

The governing board will receive annual training on basic requirements of a public board and institutions, to include the Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"), open meeting requirements, and non-discrimination.

In addition to the board development required by the Planning and Implementation Grant, and normal annual training, the board and the staff of the ACA will identify 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 South Carolina charter authorizing environment, reviews and discussions on various contracts and agreements, especially with the ESP, and conflicts of interest.

The board will also access other resources, opportunities, and expertise, to include those provided by the Charter Institute at Erskine and Ascent Classical Academies.

In the ACACSSC model of policy governance, the executive director of ACA is primary contact for all matters, though there is a special relationship with the school leader, whom the board approves for that position, reviews, and may terminate. While there are no employees of the board, the board may also refuse the placement of any ACA staff into the school. While members of the board are welcome and encouraged to participate in the life of the school, they do not have operational authority over school matters, outside of adopting policies.

The board will receive the results of an annual parent satisfaction survey, the results of which are included as a measure for ACA's evaluation. The board has a grievance process for parents and members of the school community to bring issues to the attention of the board. The public is also invited to make public comment at governing board meetings.

The school will have a School Accountability Committee ("SAC"), a volunteer advisory body responsible for monitoring academic progress, school safety, parent satisfaction, and providing other input to the school leader as needed. The SAC is responsible for reviewing the parent survey and presenting findings to the school leader, ACA, and governing board. The SAC is composed of the headmaster, or his designee, at least two faculty members, a community member, and parents of the schools. Parents will always be the largest block of members. The headmaster will appoint local members of the SAC. The chair of this committee will be a parent, selected by the rest of the SAC.

While this school is not yet a replication, this governance structure is designed as a network governing board that will hold multiple charters.

The school and governing board will continue refining and improving its governance to ensure it is best meeting its mission and vision, obligations to the taxpayers of South Carolina, parents and students, and fulfilling its contractual obligations to the sponsor.

Response to EMO/CMO Contracts

Ascent Classical Academy Charter School of South Carolina ("ACACSSC" or "School") intends to contract with Ascent Classical Academies ("ACA"), a non-profit charter management organization ("CMO"). ACA has experience establishing and operating successful classical charter schools using the same model as this campus. ACA was founded and operates other classical charter schools in Colorado, in an authorizing environment fairly similar to South Carolina.

Key members of the ACA team, whose own children attend ACA-affiliated schools and are originally from South Carolina, decided to assist in the formation of this school out of a dedication to the mission and vision of expanding access to high-quality classical education to families. Members of the ACA team have worked to establish this campus and to advise on a governance structure to allow for a network of classical schools under the governing board of the School.

There is no other CMO in the State of South Carolina that has the demonstrated experience implementing the program proposed in this application.

Given the desire to establish a school like what ACA has already put together, the mission alignment of ACA and ACACSSC, the success of existing ACA schools, the comprehensive support for implementing all aspects of the program, and ACA's commitment to following best practices promoted by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers ("NACSA"), this partnership has been determined to be in the best interest of the school, the families and children who will be served, and the citizens of South Carolina.

The ACACSSC governing board's management agreement with ACA (see a draft in Appendix O) includes performance measures that will be used in the oversight and evaluation of the CMO. These academic and operational measures include academic growth, academic proficiency, SAT scores, student re-enrollment rates, parent satisfaction, staff satisfaction, operating with a balanced budget, and the fiscal strength of the campus. These measures are collected and reviewed by the governing board annually.

The Governing Board reviews financial statements and academic performance data at least quarterly, while its finance committee reviews more detailed financial data, to include bank and credit card statements, more frequently. The board adopts financial policies the CMO must follow that meet Governmental Accounting Standards Board ("GASB") standards. The board receives an audit report annually from an auditor that it selects, independently of the CMO. The board will retain its own independent legal counsel to be available for any negotiations between the school and CMO and other matters as needed.

The governing board has complete discretion on the placement and retention of the headmaster. While the headmaster is an employee of

Ascent Classical Academies, the governing board shall approve the placement of the headmaster to lead the school and may vote to remove the headmaster at any time.

The CMO will manage and have supervision of all employees working in the school. The faculty and staff are provided clear expectations of their position by the school leadership team, have performance agreements in place, and are provided feedback and coaching on their growth, development, and performance. The governing board may have any staff removed from the school at their discretion.

The governing board is independent of the CMO, both legally and in spirit. The contract between the two entities is developed using national best practices and shall be reviewed by the authorizer. No employees or representatives of the CMO may serve as voting members on the school governing board, though the executive director may serve as an ex officio, non-voting member, similar to a superintendent on a school district board. The executive director will not be included in any executive sessions of the board in which it discusses negotiations with the CMO. The school selects its own auditor and has its own independent legal counsel that is available for any negotiations between the parties, to ensure all negotiations and agreements are arms-length.

At the time of this application, there is a disclosed conflict of interest in Appendix O, that has been addressed. Members of the school governing board will complete an annual conflict of interest disclosure that will be available to the public. All conflicts of interest will be reviewed with legal counsel to determine how to properly address the conflict ethically and legally.

The CMO does not have any related entities or subsidiaries.

The CMO, at its discretion, may offer a loan or line of credit to the school if needed, upon request by the governing board. Any loans will be offered at commercially reasonable terms to be negotiated between the parties and may be refused by either party. Any loans will not be incorporated into the management agreement, will not require the management relationship remain in place, and be documented separately.

The CMO or school may terminate the relationship without cause as indicated in the attached draft agreement. In the event of termination, the school may continue using the services of the CMO for the remainder of the academic year under the negotiated terms. Staff will not have a non-compete and may elect to remain with the school.

The CMO operates on a fee for service model and also bills for direct services, at cost, as indicated in the management agreement. The school will maintain and retain ownership of its own bank and financial accounts. Any property purchased with public funds will remain an asset of the

school.

Operating and capital expenditures responsibilities and spending-level authorities are established in the financial policies of the governing board. Reimbursements to the CMO by the school will be approved by the board in accordance with its financial policies. The board treasurer and any other members will have access to all its financial accounts, in accordance with its financial policies. All financial records of the school, to include monthly account and credit card statements and online access, will be available to the board upon demand and presented to the finance committee of the board at their meetings. A profit and loss statement and balance sheet will be presented to the entire board at least quarterly. Audited financials and an audit report will be provided to the board annually or more frequently as requested by the governing board. These reports, accesses, and financial policies will ensure the governing board retains oversight of the finances of the school. The financial policies currently in place have been reviewed by a Certified Fraud Examiner who specializes in charter school finance.

ACA and its team have established three similar schools that are currently operating, with another two approved to open in the fall of 2023. Of the three currently operating, two are currently partnered with Ascent Classical Academies. The first school, Golden View Classical Academy, remains independent and was the flagship school from which the other Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools were developed.

ACA currently works with two campuses under the Ascent Classical Academy Charter School ("ACACS") network in Colorado: Ascent Classical Academy of Douglas County in Lone Tree, Colorado and Ascent Classical Academy of Northern Colorado in Windsor, Colorado. These two schools are rated as Performance schools using the Colorado Department of Education framework and also Performance by the Colorado Charter School Institute ("CSI"), which included expanded measures for operations and financial health, in addition to academic achievement and growth.

While CSI rates the schools' non-academic function as meeting expectations, both campuses have continued increasing their financial reserves and expanding programming, with continued increases in enrollment and waitlists. These two schools serve demographics similar to the school proposed in this application.

Information on the existing ACACSs in Colorado follow:

Ascent Classical Academy of Douglas County ("ACADC")
Year Founded: 2018
Current Grades Served: K-12
Current Total Enrollment: 1,036
10004 Park Meadows Dr
Lone Tree, Colorado 80124
https://dougco.ascentclassical.org

Ascent Classical Academy of Northern Colorado ("ACANC")
Year Founded: 2020
Current Grades Served: K-10 (currently growing to K-12)
Current Total Enrollment: 669
6402 S. County Road 5
Windsor, Colorado 80528
https://noco.ascentclassical.org

New schools opening in the fall of 2023 include:

Ascent Classical Academy of Grand Junction
Grand Junction, CO
Year Founded: 2023
Approved for K-12
https://grandjunction.ascentclassical.org

Ascent Classical Academy of 27J
Brighton, CO
Year Founded: 2023
Approved for K-12
https://27j.ascentclassical.org

The board chair for these schools is Robert Williams who may be contacted at rwilliams@ascentclassical.org.

All the Colorado ACACS schools are authorized by the Colorado Charter School Institute. The executive director for CSI is Dr. Terry Croy-Lewis who may be contacted at terrycroylewis@csi.state.co.us.

Included in Appendix O are the most recent Colorado School Performance Framework ("SPF") reports for ACADC and ACANC. ACADC and ACANC both hold Performance ratings. Unfortunately, the Colorado state evaluation framework was postponed for the previous two years due to COVID and state accountability data is not available. ACA desires to note that over the past two years, it has substantially increased enrollment at ACADC and ACANC, bringing in students who have missed at least a year of school due to COVID, a factor impacting the schools' ratings. CSI has also evaluated operational factors of these two schools and rates these areas as Performance as well.

All ACA affiliated schools have begun using NWEA MAPS assessments this current school year to provide more timely and responsive tools to adjust instruction to improve student outcomes.

ACA has not experienced any contract terminations, charter revocations, non-renewals, or withdrawals/non-openings in the past five (5) years.

ACA is not involved in any current nor previous litigation.

ACA has developed a strategic plan it is executing to expand its capacity to establish successful campuses in South Carolina. As an organization, it is six quarters into its implementation of the Entrepreneurial Operating System ("EOS"), a business operating framework guiding the vision, goals, and development of its infrastructure, team, and capacity to support its growth. Significant outcomes from this implementation that will help in South Carolina are the development of a school leader fellowship program to develop classical school leaders, expanding its in-house recruiting team and processes, implementing a new financial system that can handle fund accounting for multiple states, improving school-level leadership teams, and becoming a more process-driven organization.

Response to Administrative Structure/Building Leadership

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools of South Carolina ("ACACSSC" or "School") plans to have a robust administrative team, to open with a headmaster, assistant headmaster and a small administrative support team to consist of a registrar and a front office manager. Depending upon enrollment, a dean of students will be added to the team, along with a director of student services, and then once the high school is up and running a dean of academics, dean of faculty, and dean of operations. The growth of the administrative team will support student achievement in that positions will be added to attend to particular specifics. It is expected that the full administrative team will be in place by the fifth year of operation.

The headmaster is the master teacher at the school and will be the final determiner of academic matters within the curricular guidelines set by Ascent Classical Academies ("ACA"). The headmaster is the cultural and academic visionary and chief executive of the School. He or she will be a master teacher with several years' experience in classical education and executive experience in administration. ACA's services, as the charter management organization ("CMO"), allows the headmaster to focus on instructional and academic leadership and the implementation of a strong school culture, with ACA handling non-academic functions such as human resources, payroll and benefits selection, information technology, marketing, facilities, and other areas. The headmaster exhibits leadership and credibility as he or she leads the school while teaching at least one class.

A K-12 classical school leader requires a lot of capacity, especially given the continued growth of the school in the first several years. The School will expect a school leader to have administrative experience or be certified, to know the academic program, and to have a vision for the culture of the school and be able to implement steps to achieve that vision for the desired culture of the school. The details and background sought for this position are in Appendix P.

The headmaster is responsible for all hiring and personnel actions at the school level. As the school grows, he or she may change the supervisory and oversight structure. The headmaster is ultimately responsible for all teacher evaluations and may solicit significant input from deans and department chairs.

The dean of students will primarily have oversight of the student population, the honor code, communicating with parents, and working with behavioral plans. This dean also communicates with and assists teachers with students and interfaces with the director of student services.

The dean of academics will oversee the curriculum and the fidelity of the programs employed. This position is held by the headmaster until the size of the student population makes it necessary and possible to place these responsibilities on the dean of academics.

The dean of faculty will be responsible for all professional development plans, training faculty at faculty meetings and professional development days, as well as bringing in certified professionals to train. He or she will be responsible for walk through observations, as well as formal and informal evaluations for the faculty.

The dean of operations will be responsible for the environmental aspects of the building, grounds, and maintenance required. This person will organize the daily operations of the physical environment as well as the technological environment of the school. Responsibilities also include organizing lunch and transportation providers as needed, and other vendors. He or she will also supervise non-academic staff such as aides and office staff.

As enrollment increases, the School will be able to create department chairs and grade level leads. An organizational chart showing this staffing plan is available upon request.

Administrative personnel will be experienced in office management, school management, or administrative skills and will be trained in all legal areas of mandatory reporting, FERPA, ADA, IDEA, employment laws and the like. Assistant headmasters will be experienced classical teachers who are stepping into leadership positions to be able to assist the headmaster in the daily running of the school, particularly in non-academic functions.

The school staffing plan and support from the School are designed to ensure the school has sufficient capacity to meet the mission and vision of the school, to sustain the organization while developing leadership capacity among the staff and faculty, and to ultimately improve student performance and outcomes. Sample job descriptions are found in Appendix P.

Parents choosing charter education are usually interested in being involved at the school. Those who are able and interested will undergo background checks as volunteers or as employees (as desired) and may serve in the role of teacher's aides, copy room assistant, or lunch or recess monitors.

Parents may also be involved in the School through opportunities to serve on the School Accountability Committee ("SAC"). The SAC is a volunteer advisory body responsible for monitoring academic progress, school safety, parent satisfaction, school spending, and providing other input to the school leader as needed. The SAC is responsible for reviewing the parent survey and presenting findings to the school leader, ACA, and governing board. The SAC is composed of the headmaster, or his designee, at least two faculty members, a community member, and parents of the schools. Parents will always be the largest block of members. The headmaster will appoint local members of the SAC. The chair of this committee will be a parent.

In addition, the parent community will also be involved in various gala or

fundraising events and are always welcome within the school to observe the educational model and active instruction.

Evaluation of School Leader and Management Company

School leaders will be evaluated yearly by the ACA Executive Director or the Superintendent using a specified rubric. The CMO will be evaluated by a set of standards specified by the Board of Directors on an annual basis as described above.

The administrative structure will evolve during the life of the School as it grows. ACA will continue ensuing the structure is appropriate and best supports the mission and vision of the School.

Employees

Response to Employees

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools of South Carolina ("ACACSSC" or "School") intends to contract with Ascent Classical Academies ("ACA"), a private, not-for-profit corporation, as its educational service provider ("ESP"). Under a management agreement, ACA is required to provide all staffing to support the school's program. Thus, all faculty, staff, and administrators are private-sector employees of ACA and are assigned to or placed within the School.

The School is committed to ensuring ACA employs only high quality, classically trained educators who support the mission and vision of the School. These teachers will have a passion for educating children, and a desire to serve every student's educational needs. This commitment and expectation of service and passion for classical education is extended to the administration and staff of the School as well. It is the intent of the School to foster a culture of unity amongst all employees that desire to provide an exceptional education to all students entering the school.

The School will adhere to all state and federal legal requirements regarding qualifications and certifications for all personnel. Background checks will be required per S.C. Code Ann. § 59-15-115, and teachers will meet the qualifications found in S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-20. ACA and the School will also ensure that at least one member of the administrative staff holds a current South Carolina certification in administration or has at least one year of experience in the field of school-based administration. The School reserves the right to refuse ACA's proposed placement of any staff, faculty, or administrator.

ACA has a recruiting team on staff that is developing more local sources of teaching talent, as well as continuing its national reach. Partnerships with local liberal arts colleges and programs like the Clemson Lyceum program and the USC Honors College will be utilized in the acquisition of qualified faculty and staff. ACA's recruiting team includes recruiters who are tied into various platforms such as Handshake, LinkedIn, Indeed, and classical-education job boards. Job postings are posted online on the ACA website, as well as the platforms mentioned. Recruiters screen possible candidates with screening questions aligned to the vision and mission, and potential fit with the culture of the school. Those who meet requirements are guided to Paylocity, the application tracking system and hiring platform. Once an applicant uploads the necessary documents the headmaster is notified of the application. Headmasters are responsible for interviewing and hiring of all faculty and staff at the School. ACACSSC also employs a third-party hiring and sourcing company to search for candidates nationwide to fill positions of leadership. Headmasters are interviewed and hired by ACA, and deans are interviewed and hired by the Headmaster with ACA's oversight. Both ACA and the School will use the ADEPT evaluation system for teacher evaluation.

The School provides an employee handbook upon hire during onboarding. The Employee Handbook is always accessible online through ACA. ACA

employees will also comply with School-adopted policies and be provided written or electronic copies. Changes are communicated via the employee newsletter, staff meetings, notifications within the human resources self-service portal, and other direct notifications as needed. Faculty and staff are encouraged to communicate with the Dean of Faculty and Headmaster any concerns or questions regarding their positions or any questions or concerns regarding curriculum or pedagogy. ACA's human resources department is currently staffed with 4.0 employees who respond promptly on issues involving payroll, benefits, and other employment policy-related questions. This staffing will be adjusted to meet the needs of the School

Due to the structure and relationship between the School and Ascent Classical Academies, the School will not adopt the procedures for teacher employment and termination required in S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-410 et seq. The School does not require a letter from the sponsor regarding these procedures as noted in Appendix R.

Employees are private employees, and ACA has a grievance process in place that all faculty and staff are expected to follow. In the event an employee has a grievance, the proper protocol will be enforced. An employee is first expected to go to their immediate supervisor for resolution. If their immediate supervisor cannot appropriately assist the employee, then the headmaster will become involved. Should the headmaster be unsuccessful in resolving the grievance, ACA will make final efforts to resolve the grievance and determine a final solution.

Supervisors will provide coaching and improvement plans for employees to improve practice before terminating employment. Employees may have verbal warnings, written warnings, and/or formal write ups in their files to document the process of attempting to support and improve practice.

If an educator does meet expectations, the headmaster terminate employment.

ACA will continue refining and improving its systems, processes, and procedures to ensure each child has an excellent teacher in their classroom.

Response to Enrollment

Enrollment takes place without regard to race, creed, color, sex, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, ancestry, disability, or need for special education services, in compliance with federal, state, and local laws. Within the time limits and priorities described below, students shall be enrolled at Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools of South Carolina ("ACACSSC" or "School") 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. All completed applications turned in by the deadline will be eligible for the lottery and are randomly selected. Should there be more lottery applicants than available seats, students are randomly assigned waitlist numbers. The School does not carry its enrollment list over from year to year and students not selected in the lottery will be eligible to reapply the following year.

Lottery Application Process

The headmaster 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.

Applications are processed online and any prospective families without online access may come to the school to apply or use a terminal at a public library. Parents may submit an application 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.

Applications must be complete and submitted by the deadline listed on the school's website. Applications received after the deadline 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. The School's lottery is conducted considering 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 volunteers who complete 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 ACACSSC. Reserved Priority 1 seats will not exceed 20% of grade capacity. Priority 1 families will taper off through the existence of the school as those students 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 the School 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 Founder or Staff preference combined 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. Any student falling under the Founder or Staff preference 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 ACACSSC 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.

• Priority 4: Ascent Classical Academies CMO Preference: Ascent Classical Academies ("ACA") allows a preference to children who have previously attended another school within the ACA network. Children must have attended a complete school year at an affiliated school to be eligible for this preference.

• Priority 5: All other applicants.

General Lottery

Once priority seats have been filled, the School holds a general lottery as previously referenced. The lottery will be held no later than the second Monday of February, and 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. The total number of students enrolled from out of the district will not exceed 20% of the school's population. If there are fewer spots than the number of applicants, then applicants will be received in the order of which their applications were received. Any student falling under the out of district policy who is not eligible for admission due to exceeding the 20% threshold, will be designated to the next highest applicable priority level.

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 waitlist 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 grounds for denial of admission to the school:

a) Failure to meet an age requirement. Kindergarten students must be 5 years old by October 1. Six-year-olds will be placed in first grade absent extenuating circumstances. Students who qualify for Gifted and Talented may qualify for Early Access, and the school may accept younger students in kindergarten if classes are not fully enrolled on September 1.
b) Considering a student's educational record, a clear inability of an incoming 11th or 12th grade student to meet the School's graduation requirements.
c) Having been expelled from any school district in the preceding twelve months.
d) 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.
e) Failure to comply with state immunization laws, including providing documentation of an exemption.
f) Falsification of application or enrollment documents.

Time Frame and Public Notice

The First-Round application period will take place from October through 2:30 p.m. 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 parents will be notified via email and given 72 hours to accept or decline the seat.

This offer is only for the grade level the parents applied to for their child. If the parents cannot be contacted because they failed to make notification changes in their email or phone number, they shall be removed from the lottery pool.

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

If a student is offered a seat after August 1, the parent must respond within

48 hours or that child's name is withdrawn from the application pool. Parents may choose to reapply to be put back into the applicant pool.

Openings at the School will be advertised at school information meetings, on websites, public newsletters, and posted in schools. ACASCCS does 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. While the School is unable to request demographic data in applications, it will strive to ensure its marketing efforts are broad in order to reflect the demographics of the local school district and nearby schools.

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.

The School 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.

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

Response to Student Conduct, Rights, and Responsibilities

Consistent with its mission to develop students with good character and virtue, Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools of South Carolina ("ACACSSC" or "School") sets forth the following honor code:

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

Using this honor code, the School sets a culture of respect, integrity and virtuous behavior. Therefore, the following is adopted as the expectation of student conduct, consistent with their rights and responsibilities as contributing members of the School community. The School will provide all information regarding the honor code, and student conduct, rights, and responsibilities within the Family Handbook that is on the School's website for review at any time, and also provided upon enrollment.

The main purpose of all discipline is to foster a child's desire to be morally and intellectually virtuous. Where that desire does not exist, self-discipline will not arise, and a child will falter when laws and rules are silent. The secondary purpose is to foster an orderly and disciplined environment in which all students can learn and present their ideas in a prudent way.

Any discipline policy must be consistently applied to all students. However, because not all students respond to the same arguments, incentives, or punishments, consequences must be fitted to both the nature of each individual student and the circumstances in which misbehavior occurs.

Disciplinary Action

Disciplinary action ranges from classroom verbal warnings to discipline referrals to administration, including suspension and expulsion. While discipline is often considered a punishment, the School believes in taking advantage of these learning opportunities and educating a student instead of issuing a punishment.

Detention before or after school, during lunch, or on the weekend in which a student is required to be reflective on their misbehavior may be one consequence of behavior inconsistent with the student code of conduct. Detention will always take precedence over any extracurricular activity and is not allowed to be skipped. Should a student skip detention repeatedly, they may be recommended for suspension. More egregious behavior may result in immediate disciplinary action such as suspension or expulsion, but appropriate measures will be taken to avoid such drastic results when possible.

Within the classroom, teachers are to be respected and their authority understood. Therefore, teachers have the authority to remove any disruptive students from their classroom. In the event of repeated removals, the dean of students will develop a behavior plan that will be approved by the headmaster and implemented in all necessary classrooms. For

behavior that merits immediate suspension or expulsion, the headmaster will be the deciding authority, subject to appeal procedures to the ACACSSC governing board.

In all cases, discipline for students with disabilities shall be in accordance with the student's individualized education plan (IEP), any behavior plan, 504 plan, and applicable laws affording procedural safeguards to students with disabilities. ACACSSC will ensure that all Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) requirements are met. The School tracks discipline events involving students with disabilities in its student information system in order to ensure that the discipline policy does not disproportionately affect them.

Parental Notification and Material Disruptions

In general, the School strives to notify parents of discipline problems before they escalate beyond a manageable level and communicates often with parents of any concerns regarding their student. In any event where a student is removed from their class, any physical contact, or any violent/threatening behavior, a parent will be notified immediately. Further, should a student exhibit habitually disruptive behavior, parents will be involved in establishing a behavior plan for their student in consultation with the dean of students and headmaster.

Suspension and Expulsion

The headmaster has the authority to suspend students as appropriate. For students in third grade and above, suspensions may last from one to five days depending on the severity of the infraction. Students in grades kindergarten through second grade may only be suspended up to three days and for specific reasons cited in statute. All suspensions will require a parent meeting at which a remedial discipline plan will be created. The school may request the parent attend (as a volunteer) a full day of class with the student upon return. ACACSSC may also require a risk assessment if the reasons for suspension merit it.

The following are grounds for suspension or expulsion of a student during the school year, whether committed on academy grounds, in academy vehicles, or at an academy-sanctioned event(s):

• Continually, willful disobedience or open and persistent defiance of proper authority;
• Willful destruction or defacing of school property;
• Behavior on or off school property, which is detrimental to the welfare or safety of other students or of school personnel;
• Carrying, using, actively displaying, or threatening with a firearm facsimile that could reasonably be mistaken for an actual firearm;
• Intentionally making a false accusation of criminal activity against an school employee to law enforcement authorities, academy authorizer

officials or personnel, or both;
• Use of possession of a drug or controlled substance without medical authorization; and
• Repeated interference with the academy's ability to provide educational opportunities to other students.

The School shall refer a student to the ACACSSC Governing Board for expulsion for the following violations:

• Carrying, bringing, using or possessing a dangerous weapon, as determined by the school, as required by law;
• Sale or distribution of a drug or controlled substance;
• The commission of an act which, if committed by an adult, would be robbery or assault; or
• Declaration of a students as habitually disruptive.

Expulsion Procedure

The headmaster may request expulsion to the ACACSSC Governing Board when merited. Parents may elect to dispute the recommendation for expulsion to the governing board in writing within three days of the headmaster's request. Upon such election, the matter will be referred to a Disciplinary Officer (DO). This designee will be responsible for conducting a prompt hearing affording the student "due process," and producing a written report summarizing the evidence containing the DO's decision to uphold or overrule the recommendation for expulsion.

The DO's decision may be appealed to the governing board by the headmaster or by the parent/guardian(s) of the student. A person wishing to appeal a decision must provide written notice to the other party and the board chair within ten (10) business days of receipt of the decision. This may be done using the normal grievance process, through the grievance form on the School's website.

Upon receipt of notice, the governing board will promptly schedule a special meeting, unless the matter can be timely considered in a regular meeting. The DO's written decision will be provided to the board at least three days in advance of the meeting. Consideration of the appeal shall be in executive session. The headmaster and parents shall each be allowed to present fifteen (15) minutes of argument concerning why the DO's decision should be approved or disapproved. New evidence will not be received on an appeal. The decision of the board shall be by vote and uphold or overturn the DO's decision, takin in public session, and without use of the student's or parent's names. The decision of the board is final.

A student's out of school suspension may be extended by the headmaster to accommodate the time needed to conduct and conclude a "due process" hearing held by the governing board. The School must schedule such a hearing so as to permit a final decision within no more than twenty-five (25)

school days of the initial out of school suspension. Expulsion may not extend past one full calendar year. The School will provide the parents of an excelled student notice of their obligation and rights to education during the period of expulsion.

Behavioral Standards

Within the classroom, teachers have the authority to set their specific classroom rules and procedures within the parameters of the ACACSSC handbooks. Further, throughout the school, students are expected to be polite and attentive at all times. Students should listen when others are talking and not interrupt, speak courteously and respectfully, follow directions, keep one's body and objects to oneself, and not disturb others. ACACSSC students will be responsible for cleaning up after themselves and respecting school property.

ACACSSC will review its approach to discipline and its related policies and make adjustments as appropriate to fulfill the mission and vision of the School.

Transportation

Response to Transportation

Though Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools of South Carolina ("the School") recognizes transportation can be a barrier to access for families, it does not currently anticipate being able to provide transportation services. Over the course of the charter contract, the School will work to develop transportation options as resources allow, to include acquiring its own transportation or contracting with the local school district or third parties. The School will ensure any transportation and transportation providers will meet state rules and regulations.

The School will promote and support families carpooling to address transportation challenges and to reduce traffic on campus. The exact manner will be determined closer to the opening of School and may include technologies and applications that facilitate connecting families. The School will also work with local jurisdictions to determine if public transportation can serve the campus.

Budget and Finance

Response to Budget and Finance

Ascent Classical Academies ("ACA" or "CMO") and its staff have extensive experience with district, state, and federal reporting requirements, and are prepared to collaborate with all governmental agencies to meet all expectations of timely reporting, deadlines, and deliverables. The Applicant Team's expertise comes from the combined experience of the Executive Director, the Director of Finance, and the Director of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction. Over the past eight years, the Executive Director has successfully written and obtained approval for five charter applications to date. Through this experience, he has further developed a keen awareness of the critical parameters and components of a viable financial plan's financial management and fundraising/development. Over the past seven years, the Director of Finance has not only prepared budgets and forecasts for over 20 charter schools, but also guided boards, school leaders, and financial staff in each school's development, execution, and improvement of sound accounting practices and conservative internal controls. The Director of Finance has further experience in the area of internal controls; he has managed the transition of internal controls through three different accounting systems.

The proposed budget supports the mission, vision, and educational program by allocating resources to deliver a classical content rich liberal arts and sciences instructional program to students while also focusing on the development of moral character and civic virtue in an orderly and disciplined environment. Ascent focuses on spending money on staff, materials, and learning space so that the entire community can focus on the work of the vision and mission. The budget includes covering the costs of items needed by students to succeed in school if a barrier exists for the student and family, including the cost of the required uniform, waiver of instructional fees, and the cost of lunch. The budget also includes covering the cost of services that educationally disadvantaged students may need (e.g. mental health supports, developmental supports, and instructional intervention supports) by both contracting with and hiring individuals who can address the needs of the educationally disadvantaged.

The proposed 5-year and 10-year budgets account annually for the increase in the costs listed above in proportion to the annual increases in enrollment and staffing as well as an inflation factor. Expenses are budgeted to ensure that the proven curriculum that ACA has implemented at three other schools (each of which demonstrate high achievement as measured by annual state testing data) may be purchased and that trainings supporting such curricula are also paid for. The specific curriculum consists of Literacy Essentials (literacy/phonics program), Singapore Math, Latin, Art, Music, Physical Education, Science, Literature, and History; both the curriculum and appropriate training are listed in the description below and are funded by general fund dollars in this estimated budget. The school will apply for the federal CSP startup grant and, if awarded, will record activity in such a manner as to demonstrate that the federal funds only supplement and do not supplant local spending. The data-driven decision making for resource allocation in the proposed budget comes from actuals

from the three currently operating Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools. Each school, like this one opening in South Carolina, follows a common model and so the actuals provide multiple data points for confirming the estimates in the proposed budget assumptions.

Below is a bullet list, aligned with the South Carolina accounting structure, of budget assumptions, calculations, and revenue estimates. The source for all these estimated amounts comes from an analysis of historical spending from the three current ACACS schools that deliver the same instructional model.

For Expenses, For Purchased Services:

• Professional and Technical Services: Instructional Services in the form of contracted staffing costs (Year 1 - 5, starting at $2.3M and increasing to $4.8M based on expansion) (a breakdown of the staffing costs is included in the 5 year budget Excel document); Instructional Programs Improvement Services for contracted services such as curriculum trainers (Year 1 - 3, $10,000, assuming 5 trainings @ $2,000/day; Year 4, 5, $20,000 assuming 10 trainings @ $2,000/day); Legal Services (Year 1 - 5, $20,000, fixed annual assumption); Audit Services (Year 1 - 5, $15,000, fixed annual assumption); Student Services in the form of contractors such as SLP, OT, Psych (Year 1 - $20,000, Years 2 and 3 - $30,000, assume approx. 7 hours/week @ $70/hour for 10 months for 5 service providers, increasing to $60,000 in year 4 and going forward), as well as a nursing service contractor (Year 1 - 3, $10,000, assume approx. 3 hours/week @ $80/hour for 10 months, increasing to $20,000 in years 4 - 5); Management Services in the form of the CMO partner's contract fee that also covers Staff Services, Data Processing Services, and Statistical Services (Year 1 - 5, 14% of foundational and governmental revenue)
• Property Services: Public Utility Services costs for water, sewer, waste services (Year 1 - 3, $18,000 assuming $1000/month for water and $500/month for waste, increasing in Year 4 to $32,000); Cleaning services for custodial services above what employed custodial staff will cover as well as groundskeeping (Year 1 - 3, $30,000 assuming $2500/month increasing in Year 4 to $65000; Rentals for facility and for leased printers (assuming approximately 20% of EFA revenue in Years 1 -5)
• Transportation Services: We assume $700 per employee in Years 1 - 5 to cover travel costs associated with training, professional development, and general job duties.
• Communication, Technology, Advertising: We assume $12,000 annually for phone/internet services ($500/month for each service) in Years 1 - 5; we assume $20,000 annually in Years 1 - 3, then increasing to $40,000 in Year 4 for technology licenses to include but not limited to student information system, accounting system, assessment systems, special education systems, and workflow systems; We assume $10,000 for advertising services annually for costs such as online ads, website development, and mailing/flyer development/printing.
For Supplies and Materials:

• Supplies: We assume $425 per student annually to pay for instructional, office, mailing, and custodial supplies.
• Textbooks: We assume $65,000 in Years 1 - 3 for books, then $90,000 in Year 4, then $70,000 in Year 5 and moving forward.
• Food: We assume the cost of food for Years 1 - 5 @ $900 annually per FRL Student, assuming $5/student @ 180 days)
• Energy: We assume $24,000 in Year 1, increasing each year by $12,000 to account for the additional natural gas and electric used to support additional students and staff.
• Other Supplies: We assume the cost of paying for uniforms for students who qualify for free and reduced lunch in Years 1 - 5, $150 per FRL student. We currently assume 20% of students will qualify for Free/Reduced lunch; if this percent increases, the increased WPU addon will offset the increase in expense.

For Capital Outlay:

• Equipment: We assume $75,000 in Year 1, $50,000 in Year 2 to furnish the school for students and staff (to include desks, chairs, tables, book cases, couches, common area furniture, café furniture, appliances, filing cabinets, etc.), then $25,000 in Year 3, then $45,000 in Year 4 and 5 as the school expands sections.
• Technology Equipment and Software: We assume $24,000 in Year 1, $40,000 in Year 2, $8,000 in Year 3, then $24,000 in Years 4 and 5 to purchase computers for students and staff, install network equipment in the building, purchase projectors, document cameras, screens for all classrooms, and procure phones and other audio/visual equipment.

For Other Objects

• Redemption of Principal and Interest: The management company will extend a $50,000 loan to the school, to be repaid within 4 years at a 7% interest rate. These Loan Proceeds are distributed in Year 0.
• Liability/Tort Insurance: From estimates received from our broker, we budget approximately $20,000/year for our Phase I property, then approximately $60,000/year when our Phase II is complete. We budget $4000 for general liability insurance in the first year, increasing annually by about 12% as our enrollment and staffing increase. We budget $20,000 for Years 1 and 2 for additional insurance coverage (Student accident, Workers Comp, Management Liability, etc.), increasing to $30,000/year in Years 3 - 5.
• Other Objects: We budget 1% of Revenue ($47,000 in the opening year) as contingency, to provide buffer in the budget so that spending does not exceed our appropriation.

For Revenue, for Revenue from Local Sources

• We assume a student instructional fee of $125; we further assume that students who qualify for free and reduced lunch will receive a waiver and

we also assume that about 10% of the fees will be uncollectible.

For Revenue from State Sources

• We assume EFA funding based on 1193 WPUs in the opening year; this is calculated based on the following assumptions: in the opening year 448 students in the charter school in grades K-8, 10% of which have an IEP, 1% of students in a Pre-Career and Career technology program, 1% are Gifted and Talented, 15% of which require Academic Assistance, 8% have Limited English Proficiency, 20% are Pupils in Poverty. We inserted this into the formula provided by our proposed sponsor as follows: WPUs * 203839518 / 54281.73. We assume this formula will, in and of itself, increase by 1% year over year.

For Revenue from Federal Sources

• We assume receiving the CSP startup grant, receiving $200,000 in each of Years 0, 1 and 2 of the school. We assume a CSP CMO Expansion grant applied for directly from the U.S. Department of Education by ACA.

Our estimated staffing levels over 10 years are broken out in the table on the following page (this does not include contracted positions such as a nurse, social worker, psychologist, speech language pathologist (those are mentioned above).

We conservatively assume two governmental funding sources in this budget, the new EFA source for charter schools and the CSP opening grant. We are aware that other state and federal grants are available, and we fully intend to apply for the grants (or, in the case of IDEA, receive the grants due to our student demographic); we also will pursue other sources of variable income (private grants, donations, fundraising, fees for extracurricular activity). We demonstrate, however, in the attached budget that the school's budget relies in no way on these variable sources of income. The management company ACA is committed to extending a loan at a market interest rate to the school of $50,000 in year zero to provide cashflow support for Year 0 CSP spending that must take place before it is reimbursed.

At this point, we do not intend to engage with services with our proposed sponsor. Financial accounting, payroll, curriculum, warehousing, and library media services will be provided through our CMO. We will explore and evaluate whether to privately engage with a food service provider (covering the cost of Free/Reduced lunches out of the school's budget) or whether to participate in the National School Lunch Program. We will seek out local contracts in the community for custodial and facility maintenance services.

The school will remain fiscally solvent through several analytical processes, supported by the central financial office of the CMO. The CMO has developed proven financial policies and procedures and will present those

to the Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools of South Carolina Governing Board for adoption. These policies, both initially drafted in conjunction with and continuously reviewed by people and agencies with extensive experience with charter schools and charter school finance, are available upon request for review. The CMO, in conjunction with the school's headmaster and purchasing specialist, will support the school's effort to develop and maintain a 10-year budget forecast with an annual cashflow analysis. As assumptions regarding revenue and expenditures are made available and/or updated, and as financial actuals are recorded, the forecast and cashflow analysis will be updated to ensure that cash balances remain healthy and state requirements regarding unassigned fund balance in reserve are met.

The CMO staff, in addition to being well experienced in GAAP and GASB, engage with financial consulting firms who have additional experience in GAAP and GASB to review reconciliations, financial reports, and selected transactions. Financial concerns will be addressed based on policy level (i.e. concerns regarding expenses up to $15,000 will be addressed with the headmaster, concerns regarding expenses up to $200,000 will be addressed with the Executive Director). The CMO has already read through and annotated the South Carolina Funding Manual, building out a budget based on SC's pupil accounting system and creating processes to align with the state's auditing and reporting requirements (e.g. we built out budgeting tool to display an error if the Unassigned Fund Balance drops below 30 days on hand in and after Year 3).

The CMO will provide the school with access to an accounting system in Oracle's NetSuite that has been built out and proven to satisfy the reporting and control requirements of GAAP. The CMO designed its NetSuite instance to have strict systems of internal controls, e.g. every expenditure is entered either as a purchase request (PR) or a journal entry (JE), and all PRs and JEs require approval from someone designated by policy before being posted to the ledger. The Accounting system records when items are ordered and received so that bills are paid accurately based on what has been shipped to the school. The school, as listed above in the budget narrative, will contract with outside providers primarily in the area of Student Services. RFPs will be posted and potential contractors will be interviewed and engaged based on level of experience and alignment with mission and vision.

The proposed financial policies state that an RFP for a public accounting firm to perform an annual, independent audit will be released at minimum every five years. The RFP will set forth state required deadlines and components of testing so that the chosen firm commits to completing the audit in accordance with state law and submits the audit to the ACACSSC governing board, the proposed sponsor, and required state agencies in alignment with deadline dates. The school has no employees; staff are employed by the private not-for-profit CMO and are assigned to a particular school by the CMO so the school will not offer the South Carolina

Retirement System.

The school has several measures available to support a variety of contingency plans for cashflow challenges, a budget shortfall, lower than expected student enrollment, and/or other financial challenges in the early years of operation. The school, as mentioned above, will be proactive in its partnership with the CMO in monitoring actuals and updating forecasts to continually examine how cash flows throughout the year. In the rare instance where cashflow challenges might arise, the CMO will extend a line of credit to support the school through the challenge. Budgets will be monitored and adjusted as new financial information becomes available so that budget shortfalls will be anticipated, and spending plans can be adjusted before the shortfall actually comes to pass.

In the rare instance where a shortfall would arise suddenly, staffing would be adjusted and purchases would be curtailed in order to accommodate the shortfall. Enrollment for both the current year and the upcoming year is monitored closely and regularly through the partnership with the CMO. This monitoring is put in place to ensure that, if students disenroll in the current year, waitlists can be worked to offer the open seat to the next available student so that overall enrollment remains stable. For the following year, newly enrolled students and their families are contacted regularly to ensure they are engaged in the community and committed to attending. Waitlists are also worked to ensure that, if students choose to enroll elsewhere before the new school year, the next available student is offered a position. Lower than expected enrollments would thus be recognized before they take place so that staffing and purchasing can be adjusted ahead of time.

The proposed financial policies also include budgeting. The annual budget will begin development by the January before the school year starts. It will be refined throughout the spring as enrollment numbers and state funding levels become available in conjunction with feedback from the school, support/guidance from the CMO, and guidance from the ACACSSC board treasurer. These three points of feedback will ensure that budget numbers will be set based on mission driven priorities and student achievement data. Year over year, actuals compared to budget will be analyzed and assumptions will be updated so that the school's budget continues to be both accurate and conservative. Policy allows for amendments up to January 31, with a supplemental amendment allowed only if new, unbudgeted revenue and corresponding expenses are recognized.

For the planning year, the school will receive a line of credit of at least $50,000 from the CMO. Purchases during the planning year will be limited to those listed on the approved CSP budget. As soon as permission is granted by the state, the school will execute spending up to the amount available from the line of credit, then submit those receipts to the state for reimbursement, then conduct a next round of spending and reimbursement. Revenue projections in the planning year will be met because purchasing will not take place until the grant reimbursement is received.

Facilities

Response to Facilities

Ascent Classical Academies ("ACA") is an experienced charter partner that will be assisting in the operations of Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools of South Carolina ("the School"). ACA also has experience in bringing together real estate and facility development teams that understand the programmatic needs of the School and code and zoning requirements to obtain the required certificate of occupancy. The School will be working with the South Carolina Department of Education Office of School Facilities ("OSF") and the South Carolina Department of Transportation ("SCDOT") School Traffic Engineering office to obtain all required approvals.

Part of code requirements for a public school include being accessible and meeting Americans with Disability Act ("ADA") requirements. The architect will ensure the design will meet these to allow access to students with physical disabilities.

The school intends to build a new campus and have it complete when the school opens in 2024.

The ACA team is working with an experienced South Carolina charter school architect to develop the program plan for the Phase I and Phase II build outs, based on the enrollment model included with this application. Detailed program plans for specific spaces are available for review.

The School intends to build out the campus in several phases, with the first phase being able to handle the maximum number of students the school could enroll in Year 3, 640 students. While the School is building to handle 640 students in Year 3, the budget model submitted with the application is for 554 students. The current design plan includes 75 square feet per student which includes instructional, administration, support, and circulation spaces. The Phase 1 capacity is 48,000 square feet, broken down as follows:

• General classrooms - 16 at 800-850 square feet
• Two art rooms
• Two music rooms
• 1 wet science lab
• Cafeteria/multi-purpose space
• Student services spaces with offices and small break out rooms
• Administrative spaces
• Gym
• Storage

The school will have an outdoor play space available in Phase I.

Phase II will be completed for Year 4 of the School and built to handle the full capacity of 1,248 students at 93,600 square feet. Though the School will be built to handle a larger capacity, the School is using lower enrollment figures in its budget in order to be conservative in its planning.

As mentioned above, a development partner of the School, Performance Charter Development, has a property under contract in the area of Dutch Fork and Rauch-Metz Roads. The School will discuss specifics about this site in conversations with the authorizer. The School will lease this facility from Performance Charter under terms to still be determined. The School anticipates these costs will be between 20-25% of total revenue. This is beyond ACA's typical best practice guidelines of facility costs being around 18% of total revenue but recent changes in the financial and construction markets are driving this increase in facility costs.

The School will be working with the developer on contingency plans in case school completion is delayed. Contingency plans may include using modular structures on the site or temporarily locating in a nearby church facility. All contingency options will meet code and other requirements.

In the event the contract on this facility falls through, the ACA team will continue looking for other land options and a temporary location.

Insurance Coverage

Appendices and Additional Information

Evidence of Support (Appendix Item C)	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272496
School Calendar and Daily Schedule for the Academic Year (Appendix Item F)	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272497
Support Documents for the described Educational Plan (Appendix Item G)	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272498
List of Teaching Positions (Appendix Item H)	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272499
Charter Committee (Appendix Item K)	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272500
Bylaws (Appendix Item L)	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272501
Articles of Incorporation (Appendix Item M)	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272502
Organizational Chart (Appendix Item N)	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272503
Sample Job Descriptions (Appendix Item P)	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272504
School Start-Up Plan (Appendix Item Q)	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272505
Draft Discipline Policy (Appendix Item T)	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272506
Student Enrollment Projection Form (Appendix Item V)	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272507
Five Year Budget [must be in Excel] - (Appendix Item X)	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272508
Ten Year Budget [must be in Excel] - (Appendix Item Y)	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272509
Documentation of Any "Soft Funds" (Appendix Item AA)	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272510
Applicable Insurance Documentation (Appendix Item FF)	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272511

Description Area	Additional Appendix ItemsThe remaining appendix items listed below, are required *as applicable. You may combine multiple files into one upload by compressing/"zip" them into one folder/file. Please view the resource guide on tips how to do so.(Appendix Item B) Evidence of Notification (to both the local school board of trustees and local delegation)*(Appendix Item D) Conversion School Support*(Appendix Item E) Private School Documentation*(Appendix Item I)Virtual School List of Courses*(Appendix Item J) Agreement with Sponsoring District for Special Education Services*(Appendix Item O) EMO/CMO Documentation*(Appendix Item R) Letter of Agreement from Sponsor Regarding Compliance with S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-410 et seq. (2004)*(Appendix Item S) Letter(s) from Sponsoring District Regarding Desegregation Plan or Order*(Appendix Item U) Transportation Services Contract*(Appendix Item Z) Memorandums of Agreement for Negotiated Services*(Appendix Item BB) Floor Plan of Identified Facility*(Appendix Item CC) Proposed Lease or Rental Agreement*(Appendix Item DD) Documentation from the SCDE's Office of School Facilities*(Appendix Item EE) Documentation from the SCDOT School Traffic Engineering*
Additional Appendix Items - upload attachments *as applicable.	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272512
Additional Appendix Items - upload attachments *as applicable.	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272513

Addenda for the Charter Institute at Erskine (CIE)

Please upload the Racial Composition Addendum here.	https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/14101272514
Has your planning team applied for a charter in the past?	No
Will your Charter School be an Alternative Education Campus (AEC)?	No
Does your school plan to enter a contract or lease agreement with a church or other religious organization?	No

Signature Certification Page

Name of Proposed Charter School	Ascent Classical Academy of Irmo/Chapin (TBD)
City, State, and Zip Code for Proposed Charter School	Irmo, SC 29063
Name of charter and/or education management organization (CMO/EMO)	Ascent Classical Academies
Proposed Sponsor	Charter Institute at Erskine
Description Area	Certification: I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the information and data contained in this application are true and correct. The applicant's governing body has duly authorized this application and documentation, and the applicant will comply with the South Carolina Public Charter School Statement of Assurances if the charter school is approved.
Signature of Charter School Committee Chair	
Date	February 01, 2023