



# The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy

*children. family. community. possibility.*

*We ask for that which all other hearing children in this nation simply take for granted-  
the right of a deaf or hard of hearing child to develop communication and language,  
to communicate, to become literate and therefore to learn.*

*- The National Agenda*

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**SECTION II.**

**APPLICATION COVER SHEET/ABSTRACT**

**School Information:**

Name of Proposed Charter School: The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy

School Address (if known): Unknown

School Location (City/Town): Albuquerque, NM

School District within which the school will be located: Albuquerque Public Schools

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**Contact Information:**

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**Partner Organizations (if applicable):**

County of Bernalillo, Youth Development Inc., New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons, New Mexico Chapter of Hands & Voices

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**Enrollment Information:**

Grade span at full enrollment: Preschool through 8<sup>th</sup> grade

Total number of students at full enrollment: 80

Complete the chart, indicating phase-in grades if applicable.

<b>School Year</b>	<b>Grade Levels</b>	<b>Total Projected Student Enrollment</b>
First Year 2010-11	Kindergarten - 4 <sup>th</sup>	40
Second Year 2011-12	Preschool - 5 <sup>th</sup>	56
Third Year 2012-13	Preschool - 6 <sup>th</sup>	64
Fourth Year 2013-14	Preschool - 7 <sup>th</sup>	72
Fifth Year 2014-15	Preschool - 8 <sup>th</sup>	80

## **ABSTRACT**

As parents, educators, and professionals we are dedicated to improving educational outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing, as well as hearing students in the greater Albuquerque area. Therefore, it is our intent to open a bilingual charter school, The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy (ASL Academy), which will utilize American Sign Language (ASL) and English in order to achieve academic excellence, support family involvement, and promote multicultural community integration. Because of the relatively small number of deaf and hard of hearing (dhh) children, the ASL Academy will accommodate not only deaf and hard of hearing students, but also hearing students - including siblings of dhh, children of deaf adults (CODAs), visual learners, and others who would benefit from a bilingual education but are not eligible for enrollment in existing “deaf” programs and schools. Nationally, only a few programs offer this innovative model serving a diverse population. By expanding the critical mass of bilingual peers, an optimal learning environment supportive of academic, social, and emotional development will be created.

The ASL Academy will initially offer classes for 40 students in kindergarten through the fourth grade, and ultimately for 80 students from pre-school through the eighth grade. The ASL Academy will be centrally located in Albuquerque so that children from outlying areas, including Rio Rancho, Bernalillo, Belen, Los Lunas, Tijeras, Moriarty and Edgewood, may readily attend. We will operate on a year-round schedule in order to increase continuous access to ASL. The weekly schedule will be structured to accommodate ancillary services for students, and it is intended that additional programming will be offered during intercessions. Professional development for teachers will emphasize deaf and bilingual education topics that are relevant to their work and beneficial to students.

A rigorous standards-based bilingual educational program which promotes high academic expectations is the foundation of our school. The curriculum will support language acquisition of both ASL and English for all students. We believe a learning environment carefully tailored to support each student’s unique needs will result in increased academic performance in all subject areas. Therefore, educators will frequently assess student performance and adjust curriculum and/or student placement as necessary to ensure all students are being appropriately challenged.

Of vital importance to the success of all children is the involvement and support of their family. Since 90% of students with hearing loss come from hearing families, we must also focus on educating parents. We will provide programs for families including ASL classes, parent groups, and educational workshops. By providing parental support and encouraging parental involvement, we will promote social and emotional well-being, increase academic expectations and student performance, and create a collaborative relationship between school and family.

Furthermore, we will unite deaf and hearing persons of varying backgrounds in the greater Albuquerque area by offering events which promote school, family, and multicultural community interaction. Hosting community events will increase awareness of deaf and hard of hearing children and their abilities, connect students and parents with deaf and hard of hearing adults, provide social opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing students and hearing siblings enrolled in other schools, encourage family networking, and offer interpreting opportunities for students attending the University of New Mexico. The creation of these new partnerships will complete the framework in which children can grow and prosper throughout childhood and into adulthood.

**SECTION III.**

**STATEMENT OF ASSURANCES**

STATE OF NEW MEXICO     )  
  )  
COUNTY OF BERNALILLO )

I, Raphael Martinez, after being duly sworn, state as follows:

1. My name is Raphael Martinez and I reside in Albuquerque, NM.
2. I am the authorized representative of the governing body, or applicant group, for The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy to be located at Albuquerque, NM. I certify that, if awarded a charter:
  1. The CHARTER SCHOOL’s admission process shall not discriminate against anyone regarding race, gender, national origin, color, ability level, or age.
  2. If more students apply than can be accommodated, The CHARTER SCHOOL shall admit students on the basis of a lottery.
  3. The CHARTER SCHOOL’s admission processes shall be in compliance with Section 22-8B-4.1 NMSA 1978.
  4. The CHARTER SCHOOL shall be a nonsectarian, non-religious, and non-home-based public school.
  5. Except as otherwise provided in the Public School Code, the CHARTER SCHOOL shall not charge tuition or have admission requirements.
  6. The CHARTER SCHOOL shall comply with all state and federal health and safety requirements applicable to public schools, including those health and safety codes relating to educational building occupancy.
  7. The governing body shall not contract with a for-profit entity for the management of the CHARTER SCHOOL.
  8. The CHARTER SCHOOL shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws and rules related to providing special education services.
  9. The CHARTER SCHOOL shall avoid apparent and actual conflicts of interest when administering grants and entering into contracts for equipment and services.
  10. The CHARTER SCHOOL shall comply with conflict of interest provisions identified in the New Mexico Procurement Code, Section 13-1-128 et seq. NMSA 1978 and the Prohibited Sales Act, Section 22-21-1 et seq. NMSA 1978; and the federal regulations at 34 CFR 75.525 and 80.36.
  11. The CHARTER SCHOOL shall ensure that criminal background checks are conducted on all employees in accordance with Section 22-10A-5 NMSA 1978.
  12. The CHARTER SCHOOL shall develop written procurement procedures and conduct all procurement transactions in a manner that provides open and fair competition.
  13. The CHARTER SCHOOL shall comply with the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title VI

*(Statements of Assurances page 2 of 3)*

14. of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
15. The CHARTER SCHOOL shall provide equitable access to and participation in its federally assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs.
16. The CHARTER SCHOOL shall be economically sound and the fiscal management shall comply with all applicable federal and state laws, regulations and rules relative to fiscal procedures.
17. The CHARTER SCHOOL shall provide to the Public Education Commission by the sooner of the end of the planning year or within ten (10) days of receipt of any federal or state stimulus funds a detailed plan indicating how the CHARTER SCHOOL will manage its fiscal responsibilities, the plan will include a description of the internal control procedures that the charter school will utilize to safeguard assets, segregate its payroll and other check disbursement duties, provide reliable financial information, promote operational efficiency, and ensure compliance with all applicable federal statutes and regulations and state statutes and rules relative to fiscal procedures.
18. Meetings of the CHARTER SCHOOL Governing Body shall comply with the New Mexico Open Meetings Act, Sections 10-15-1 et seq., NMSA 1978.
19. The CHARTER SCHOOL shall adopt policies and procedures of the governing body, that address governance, relationship to staff, professional development, the role of the governing body in policy-making, personnel decisions, budgeting, and operation of the school, including how decisions will be made.
20. The Governing Body or head administrator of the CHARTER SCHOOL shall recognize and work with employee labor representatives, if any.
21. The CHARTER SCHOOL shall produce a certificate of occupancy prior to opening a facility for use as a school; the facility shall meet all applicable federal and state health, safety and code requirements and be suitable for use as a school.
22. The CHARTER SCHOOL shall develop and maintain a plan for addressing code, accessibility, health and safety requirements as well as operation, maintenance and repair of any facility it seeks to use as a school.
23. The CHARTER SCHOOL shall develop personnel policies that comply with all applicable federal and state labor laws, regulations and rules implementing them and shall submit the policies to the Public Education Department for comment prior to the hiring of any employees.

I hereby certify that the information submitted in this application for a charter is true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that I am the authorized representative of the applicant group, or the governing body, of this charter school.

*[Signatures required on next page]*

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Signature]

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Raphael Martinez, representative of the applicant group, or governing body member, of the proposed “The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy” Charter School.

Subscribed and sworn to before me, this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

[Notary Seal:]

\_\_\_\_\_  
[signature of Notary]

Patricia Marsh  
[typed name of Notary]

NOTARY PUBLIC

My commission expires: \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.



## **SECTION IV.**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy is to improve educational outcomes for deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing students in the greater Albuquerque area by providing a rigorous standards-based bilingual educational program which utilizes American Sign Language and English to achieve academic excellence, support family involvement, and promote multi-cultural community partnerships.

### **ACHIEVEMENT OF MISSION**

The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy will successfully achieve its mission by creating a learning environment in which the following are true:

- Student population includes deaf, hard of hearing and hearing students, all of whom express feelings of membership within the school community, as reflected in teacher observations and student self-assessments.
- School curriculum and classroom environment reflect high academic expectations of all students, regardless of special needs, and promote acquisition and fluency of both ASL and English for all students, as demonstrated in regular student evaluations.
- Teachers and parents collaborate frequently, assess student performance regularly, and adjust curriculum and/or student placement as necessary to ensure each child is being appropriately challenged and demonstrates measurable progress in all subject areas, as displayed through attendance at Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) or Personal Learning Plan (PLP) meetings and parent-teacher conferences.
- Parents possess an understanding of the critically important role they play in their child's academic, social and emotional development and well-being - a role which no school or community can substitute – as reflected in their participation at educational workshops for parents and other school sponsored events.
- School leaders and community stakeholders develop cooperative relationships in order to further grow and enrich the school program, as shown through mutual promotion of multicultural community events and increased student enrollment.

## **STATEMENT OF NEED**

### **LOW INCIDENCE POPULATION**

There are approximately 600 deaf and hard of hearing children in the State of New Mexico. Currently, the only educational options available for deaf and hard of hearing children are the New Mexico School for the Deaf in Santa Fe or their local education agency, most commonly Albuquerque Public Schools (APS). There are upwards of 120 students attending the New Mexico School for the Deaf, more than 30 of whom are from Albuquerque but who live at the school or commute daily. The Albuquerque Public School system now serves approximately 160 children who are deaf or hard of hearing, and approximately 30 students who have deaf parents. In comparison, there are approximately 90,000 total students enrolled in APS. The exact number of siblings of deaf and hard of hearing students in APS is unknown.

### **POOR EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES**

In 2001, the New Mexico Task Force on the Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children was formed to examine the educational barriers unique to hearing loss and to investigate ways in which the state can improve educational results for deaf and hard of hearing children. *Toward Brighter Futures: 2003 Task Force Report on the Education of the Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing (See Appendix G)*, a collaborative effort between the New Mexico School for the Deaf and the New Mexico State Department of Education, along with the New Mexico Department of Health, parents, consumers and educators, detailed the poor educational outcomes and resulting social implications for deaf and hard of hearing persons as reflected in the following statistics (p. 7):

- Deaf/hard of hearing students graduate from high school reading at the 2.8 to 4.5 grade level. Comparatively, hearing students graduate reading at the 10+ grade level.
- Children who are deaf/hard of hearing gain only 1.5 years in reading skills between the ages of 8 and 18.
- 30% of deaf/hard of hearing students leave school functionally illiterate, as compared to only 1% of hearing students.
- Only 8% of deaf/hard of hearing students graduate from college.
- In 2002, 64% of New Mexicans with hearing loss were unemployed or under-employed, as compared to only 5.9% of New Mexico's total population.
- Nationally, the income of deaf adults is only 40-60% of hearing adults, and one third of deaf adults receive some form of governmental assistance.

Parents and educators are simply unwilling to accept such poor educational outcomes and to lose another generation of New Mexico's children to a similar fate. Such unsatisfactory results would not be tolerated for hearing children, and the lowering of expectations for deaf children is unacceptable. Such data is alarming, but swift action can bring about necessary change in the current educational system - a system which has been failing deaf and hard of hearing children for decades.

## **CURRENT EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS**

The current educational options for deaf and hard of hearing children in the greater Albuquerque area are limited and not ideal. The options for K-12 students are:

1. Their Local Educational Agency
2. The Albuquerque Public School's District Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing
3. The New Mexico School for the Deaf, a state funded institutional school in Santa Fe

It is important to note that not all deaf and hard of hearing students in the greater Albuquerque area are eligible for all of these options, thus further limiting their access for appropriate placement. Following is a description of each of these educational options and how they specifically impact deaf and hard of hearing students.

### **Local School Districts in Surrounding Areas**

Children living in areas surrounding Albuquerque including Rio Rancho, Bernalillo, Belen, Los Lunas, Tijeras, Moriarty and Edgewood, have the option of attending the schools in their district or The New Mexico School for the Deaf. Students from other districts must submit a "transfer request" if they wish to attend the Albuquerque Public Schools District Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing and are accepted only if there is a vacancy in that grade level.

Due to the low incidence of hearing loss, there is no critical mass of deaf and hard of hearing children in smaller communities. Typically there are only one or two students with hearing loss in an entire district, so it is logical to expect that these smaller districts will have less experience with hearing loss, and therefore are less likely to understand or focus on the many education issues specifically impacting these few students. Children attending their local school are placed in a regular classroom or in a special education setting with children of varying special needs. It is unlikely that those teachers and administrators will not be experienced and trained in deaf education or deaf culture, and that they fully understand the additional classroom considerations required to support a child with hearing loss. Such considerations must be constantly monitored to ensure the curriculum is fully accessible at all times, and if a teacher has no understanding of deaf education, the child will have a diminished educational experience. Not surprisingly, deaf students in mainstream settings report finding it difficult to interact with hearing peers and teachers, and to participate fully in classroom activities because of the following reasons: pace of information presented by the teacher, number of speaking persons involved, differences in language and culture, and how the classroom environment is set-up physically (Lang). Frequently the burden will fall on the parents, assuming they themselves have accurate and adequate information, to inform teachers and oversee the learning environment. Often, a lack of understanding of the issues or a failure to take action leads to diminished academic expectations and outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing students.

Research shows that direct instruction is the best method for educating deaf and hard of hearing children (Marchand-Martella, Martella, & Ausdemore, 2005); however, direct instruction in American Sign Language is rarely an option in small school districts. Oftentimes deaf and hard

of hearing children will be placed in a classroom with an interpreter or with an educator who knows “some sign”. Regarding the use of interpreters in the classroom, one study of 2,100 educational interpreters working throughout the United States found that 60% of interpreters did not have skills adequate to provide students will full access to curriculum and social interaction (Schick, B., Williams, K., & Kupermintz, H., 2005). Research further suggests that it is more difficult for deaf and hard of hearing students to learn information presented through an interpreter, as opposed to hearing students who access the information directly from the teacher. Undoubtedly, a teacher unskilled in ASL will limit student accessibility to the curriculum and limit language development as well. The school environment additionally lacks adult and peer language models so students who use sign language as their primary mode of communication do not have total and direct access to language school-wide, including the cafeteria and on the playground where important social interactions occur with fellow students. Many students report feelings of isolation in the mainstream setting where they may be the only student with hearing loss. Such isolation can hinder social growth and emotion well-being (Nowell, R. & Innes, J., 1997).

Because relatively few students have hearing loss, professional development opportunities for teachers who focus on deaf issues are lacking in these smaller districts. No extensive programs for families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing are provided by the districts. Again, because of the low incidence of hearing loss, community programs and events will be limited in the local area and therefore children and their families will not benefit from such interactions.

Although the inclusion model allows many children to remain at home with their families, rather than commuting daily to or living at a residential state school, and does provide more opportunities for interaction with the hearing world and exposure to societal norms, the disadvantages of inclusion frequently include isolation from peers, teachers and school staff, limited opportunities for direct and independent interactions with peers, teachers and school staff, limited opportunities for direct instruction, and lack of quality support staff, including educational interpreters (Nowell and Innes, 1997). Although we are thankful to the many dedicated professionals working with deaf and hard of hearing students in their local schools, and while some students are successful in these mainstream environments, the poor educational outcomes for the majority of deaf and hard of hearing children in the greater Albuquerque area indicates a need for a school which provides greater understanding and support of their educational, social and emotional needs.

## **Albuquerque Public Schools (APS)**

Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) has approximately 90,000 students total, with only 160 who are deaf or hard of hearing. APS offers deaf and hard of hearing students the choice of attending their neighborhood school in a mainstream setting or The District Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing at Hodgin Elementary, McKinley Middle School and Del Norte High School.

The District Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing within APS is not a bilingual program and does not provide students with total and direct access to language school-wide, including the cafeteria and playground. Teaching American Sign Language to hearing students is not a district goal. Although classrooms throughout Hodgin incorporate deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing students, there is no support to teach the hearing students ASL from year to year. Although hearing students in those classrooms many gain sign language skills, those hearing children are not necessarily kept in the same classes for subsequent grades so that they may continue their acquisition of sign language, provide opportunities for peer interactions, and develop lasting relationships with deaf and hard of hearing students. The result is that many deaf and hard of hearing students remain socially isolated from their non-signing peers, and this isolation continues through high school.

The program is relatively small at the elementary level (less than 30 students), and the middle and high schools have even fewer students since many will choose to be mainstreamed in their neighborhood school or attend the New Mexico School for the Deaf in Santa Fe as they get older. Many students have expressed feelings of social isolation in APS due to the relatively few deaf and hard of hearing students at the higher grade levels and the lack of communication opportunities outside of their few teachers and fellow deaf and hard of hearing classmates. Educational workshops and family support programs are limited and often do not align with student curriculum. Opportunities for community programs and events are also limited.

None of the current principals at Hodgin Elementary, McKinley Middle School and Del Norte High School have any formal training in deaf education nor are they fluent in American Sign Language. Hodgin Elementary has approximately 550 total students, and less than 30 who are deaf or hard of hearing. Once again, because of the small deaf and hard of hearing population, school officials attention and priorities are understandably focused on the majority population and not on improving the deaf and hard of hearing program. The deaf and special education teachers at these schools are often left to maintain the program themselves, with little support or understanding from the school administration. Every time a new principal is hired, the dhh teachers are burdened with the additional responsibility of educating the new school leader on deaf topics - including such fundamental safety issues as why the alarm siren is ineffective in communicating a lock-down emergency to a deaf student or teacher. Professional development opportunities are geared toward the majority of teachers and the majority student population, and therefore are often not related to topics such as the latest technological advances for classrooms, deaf educational research findings, or ways to improve the emotional and social well-being of deaf children, all of which impact educators of the deaf and are critical to their students' success.

Additionally, the schools in which the District Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program is placed have general populations which are struggling academically. For the 2007/2008 school year, Hodgin Elementary did not meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and is a Corrective Action school. McKinley Middle School and Del Norte High School also did not meet AYP for 2007/2008 and both are classified as Restructuring-1 (R-1) schools (New Mexico Public Education Department). The result is that administrations efforts are predominately focused on the general population and less focused on the handful of deaf and hard of hearing students at their schools. Not surprisingly, the deaf and hard of hearing district program has failed to flourish at all levels.

Deaf and hard of hearing students are not meeting or exceeding their educational goals, as the following data specific to the Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing at Hodgin Elementary shows. Results for the New Mexico Standards Based Assessment (NMSBA) for the 2007/2008 school year are as follows:

The following data includes all twelve deaf/hard of hearing students tested.

Grade Level	% Proficiency		
	Reading	Math	Science
3 <sup>rd</sup>	14%	14%	42%
4 <sup>th</sup>	25%	25%	25%
5 <sup>th</sup>	0%	0%	0%

The following data includes ten deaf/hard of hearing students tested and excludes “A Level” and “Twice Exceptional” students.

Grade Level	% Proficiency		
	Reading	Math	Science
3 <sup>rd</sup>	0%	0%	33%
4 <sup>th</sup>	0%	0%	0%
5 <sup>th</sup>	0%	0%	0%

In conclusion, while APS attempts to provide a number of services to deaf and hard of hearing students, the learning environment is less than ideal. As the statistics show, deaf and hard of hearing students enter school at an educational disadvantage, and placing these students in failing schools further decreases their likelihood for success. The program provides no opportunity to grow a critical mass of bilingual peers by providing ASL instruction to hearing students. Feelings of frustration arise in both teachers and parents when principals make decisions which adversely affect their deaf and hard of hearing children. Staff, parents and students in the deaf and hard of hearing program are oftentimes simply overlooked as school resources are diverted to the larger general population. Test results show that elementary students are not gaining the critical skills necessary to build a strong academic foundation which will carry them throughout their scholastic careers. So while we are thankful to the many dedicated professionals currently working with our children in APS, we believe a charter school focused on the specific needs of this underserved population will yield a superior learning environment for both students and staff.

## New Mexico School for the Deaf (NMSD)

The New Mexico School for the Deaf (NMSD) is a state-funded institutional school. The main campus, located in Santa Fe, serves preschool through high school students. Students whose families do not live in Santa Fe have the option of being bused daily from Albuquerque or living in on-campus dormitories during the week. NMSD also has preschools located in Albuquerque and Las Cruces. There are approximately 125 students attending the New Mexico School for the Deaf in Santa Fe, an estimated 30 of whom have families living in Albuquerque. The NMSD Preschool in Albuquerque currently has 25 students enrolled, ages 2-6 years. Only children with hearing loss as their “primary impacting condition” may attend NMSD schools. Deaf and hard of hearing children with additional special needs may be deemed ineligible for enrollment at NMSD. Hearing children, including those with deaf parents or deaf siblings, and those with special needs who would benefit from an ASL curriculum, are not eligible for enrollment. NMSD Outreach provides Step-Hi, a home-based program for families of deaf and hard of hearing children, which is available state-wide. Unfortunately, Step-Hi services are discontinued when the deaf and hard of hearing child reach six years of age.

Academically, the New Mexico School for the Deaf did not meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) for the 2007/2008 school year and is classified as a Restructuring-1 (R-1) school. Testing results for all students are listed below, and such results indicate the need for improvement in academic achievement and educational outcomes among deaf and hard of hearing students currently attending the state-funded institutional school (New Mexico Public Education Department). The New Mexico School for the Deaf is the current primary resource for deaf and hard of hearing students in New Mexico, with an annual budget of \$15 million, and it is substandard. This statistic alone illustrates the dismal state of deaf and hard of hearing education in New Mexico and demonstrates the need for an alternative for the deaf and hard of hearing community.

Testing Year	% Proficiency		
	Reading	Math	Science
2003/2004	16.0%	5.0%	- not available -
2004/2005	7.7%	7.7%	- not available -
2005/2006	14.5%	7.1%	7.3%
2006/2007	11.9%	9.1%	10.3%
2007/2008	17.5%	14.0%	10.5%

In addition to poor educational outcomes, sending young children to live in Santa Fe or to have them commute every day undermines the family structure. The commute makes it difficult parents who live outside of Santa Fe to stay closely connected to the school and involved in their child’s academic experience because of time limitations due to work schedules and the demands of home life, which often include other children who attend a different school, since hearing siblings are not eligible for enrollment at NMSD. Many parents cannot “drop in” on a frequent basis or volunteer at NMSD as often as they may prefer. Clearly, having a school located in another city impedes parent-professional relationships and limits parent involvement at the school, and may ultimately impact educational outcomes.

For students who live on-campus in Santa Fe during the week, the effect of this disconnection from their family is profound. As one article stated, referring to deaf residential schools in general, “deaf children need to be with their family where there is love, nurturing and discipline. The residential supervisors are not capable of meeting every deaf child’s needs (emotionally and physically)” (*Deaf Education Options Guide*). Children in residential schools miss out on important daily interactions with parents and siblings. Such interactions include parents helping with homework, eating dinner as a family and recounting the events of the day, reading bedtime stories with siblings, and saying prayers before bedtime. When parents and their children are denied these cherished moments, which are the foundation of a strong child-parent relationship and a reflection of their family’s unique culture, the results can have life-long negative affects.

Additionally, since 90% of parents are hearing, the reduced interactions with their child who commutes daily or lives on-campus results in fewer and less frequent language opportunities as well. Direct communication is critical for the parent’s acquisition of ASL since many parents themselves are learning ASL as a second language. If the goal is to improve family-child communication and interactions in order to affect academic outcomes and emotional development, sending children away from home to attend an institutional school is detrimental to this process. If a child is mostly absent from the home, parents and hearing siblings may be less likely to work on improving their ASL skills and they will also have fewer opportunities to practice their skills daily. The result will be limited opportunities for daily conversations and a decreased likelihood for strong parent-child relationships based on the foundation of a common language.

Perhaps of most concern is that removing children with disabilities from their families presents additional risks and is potentially unsafe. Currently there are two civil lawsuits pending against NMSD for incidents of rape and molestation. There have been numerous incidents of sexual abuse at the NMSD main campus as detailed in the following timeline from an article dated January 31, 2008 in *The Santa Fe New Mexican* (Storey, N., 2008) (*See Appendix H*) and from court records.

1997: A 16-year-old student was found guilty of raping a fellow student at NMSD while they played a game of tag.

1998: An 18 year old NMSD student admitted in juvenile court that he raped and molested an 11-year-old boy at the school.

2003: The families of three boys claimed their sons were molested by another student at the School for the Deaf who had a history of sexual misconduct. The school settled the lawsuit out of court in 2007.

2006: A 15-year-old female student from Albuquerque was raped by a 19 year-old fellow student on the NMSD campus. The attacker pleaded guilty to criminal sexual penetration and contributing to the delinquency of a minor. A civil suit filed in October 2008 is currently pending (*See Appendix H*).

2007: A 16 year-old female student from Albuquerque reported to her group home that an NMSD employee molested her while driving her home in an NMSD school van. A civil suit filed in April 2009 is currently pending (*See Appendix H*). The accused employee is



still working among students primarily on the main campus, and occasionally at the NMSD-Albuquerque preschool campus as well.

Such incidents are not unique to NMSD. Sadly, students with disabilities who are placed in institutional settings have been victims of sexual abuse in deaf schools across the country (*See Appendix H*). Recently, at the Louisiana School for the Deaf, a six year-old girl was raped by a 16 year-old male student while they were riding a school bus home (*See Appendix H*). Because of this and other incidents, the school was closed temporarily and an independent investigation was conducted. The ensuing expert report provides a historical context and valuable insight regarding deaf institutional schools. The section pertaining to sexual abuse is extremely thoughtful and thorough. In order to provide the reader with a better understanding of deaf institutions and the culture within, that text is reprinted in its entirety below, as quoted from the *Final Report to Superintendent Pastorek on the Status of Student Safety and Security at the Louisiana School for the Deaf* (Cohen. A., 2008, pp. 6-7) (*See Appendix H*):

*To be clear, it is important to also note that scandals regarding inappropriate sexual acting out at Deaf schools are not uncommon. Of course, this doesn't make it acceptable, but it does beg the question of whether or not the problem is endemic to Deafness or is a function of circumstances. The answer is complicated for a number of reasons.*

*First and foremost, Deaf residential schools are unique in the sense that they historically housed a wide range of diverse ages in dormitory like settings over many years. I would venture to say that any population that is housed together over time will experience a fair amount of sexual acting out, and that has been seen as recently as last year in a very prominent elite co-ed boarding school in New England. Sex among unsupervised children and adolescents is certainly not unique to Deafness.*

*That said, some of the circumstances related to Deafness, highlighted below, are, in fact, unique and require attention:*

- *As we have learned above, Deafness, and Deaf residential schools, tends to include a wildly divergent group of individuals, many of whom are functioning on levels well below others. Research has shown us time and again that sexual abuse takes place under a variety of circumstances, but frequently when there is a dramatic gulf in status between the participants. An example might be a child of normal intelligence and a retarded or autistic individual. Likewise, an older and younger student. In both cases there is a status gap between the individuals and abuse can flourish.*
- *We have also learned that all things being equal, more Deaf kids are sexually molested than non-Deaf kids. The reasons for this are complex, but the easiest way to understand it is probably through the metaphor that “Deaf people have no voice” – meaning that they both literally and figuratively lack a voice and speak in a language that isolates them from the overwhelming majority of the population, in addition to the fact that they tend to be marginalized by society, in general.*

- *Deaf residential schools are run as “regular” schools despite the fact that they function more and more as residential treatment centers for kids with a multitude of problems. As a result, state guidelines and standards are relatively minimal in regard to staffing requirements, training of staff, level of supervision, etc. Interestingly, and for a variety of reasons, most school directors tend to protect their status as “schools” rather than RTCs as they are uncomfortable with the dramatic increased expectations and costs that are necessary to provide security to such a complex population.*
- *Even if the residential schools were heavily staffed, we are all painfully aware of economic pressures that have routinely faced individual state departments of education. When that happens, budgets are cut everywhere, and Deaf schools tend to feel the loss in spades as their population is significantly less elastic than others and the result of decreased staffing is that kids go unsupervised.*
- *Ironically, even if the funding remained stable, which it has not, simply finding adequate staff is difficult as ASL is not known by most non-Deaf professionals, and line staff jobs tend to pay minimal wage for only a 9 month period of time as the academic year end allows states to pay the least skilled staff members, who happen to spend the most time with the students, the least amount possible. What kind of staff do you think you’ll attract under those circumstances?*
- *By definition, many Deaf students are developmentally delayed and frequently cannot handle the implications of sexual maturity in the face of societal limitations and boundaries.*

*Lastly, and perhaps most politically dangerous to suggest, the Deaf community tends to be a somewhat incestuous one by necessity. In most small towns or states the paucity of people fluent in ASL is minimal, so Deaf children, adolescents and adults are literally forced to rely on a relatively small total population of people who tend to gravitate to Deaf centers of employment for the socialization that they crave. As a result, many Deaf people who have gone through Deaf schools return to work there. If they experienced any abuse while there, they are statistically more prone to repeat the behaviors, and so on down the line.*

In conclusion, while NMSD receives considerable State funding and provides a number of services to deaf and hard of hearing children, the institutional learning environment can be less than ideal. Although school leaders and teachers are knowledgeable in deaf education and fluent in ASL, the program provides no educational opportunities for hearing students including siblings of deaf and hard of hearing, children of deaf parents, or children with special needs who would benefit from an ASL curriculum. Students sent to live away from their families can experience emotional problems and their relationship with their parents can suffer. While NMSD does provide access to ASL throughout the campus and a variety of social opportunities for students, test results indicate that many students are still educationally deficient and are not gaining the critical academic skills they will need throughout their lives. So while we are thankful to the many dedicated professionals currently working with children at NMSD, and while we agree that for some children an institutional school may be the best placement, many families would prefer an educational program located in Albuquerque which not only provides a language rich environment, but which is also safe, supportive of family connections and family culture, and academically outstanding.

## **PROPOSED EDUCATIONAL OPTION**

### **The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy (ASL Academy)**

The educational statistics on deaf and hard of hearing students are grim. Clearly there is a need for a quality educational program in Albuquerque, the largest metropolitan area in the State of New Mexico, which will accommodate deaf, hard of hearing and hearing students. The ASL Academy founders are devoted to closing the gap between deaf and hard of hearing children and their hearing counterparts by focusing on the importance of academic achievement, family involvement, and community connections. To that end, charter founders will develop a program focused on and knowledgeable in the unique needs of deaf and hard of hearing children and their families. By providing a carefully constructed learning environment for children who are deaf and hard of hearing, we will give them the opportunity to flourish and reach their full potential – not only educationally, but also socially and emotionally. We look forward to the opportunity to overcome these challenges and alter the course of these children’s lives for the better.

To change course we must first understand the issues which influence the statistical data. *Toward Brighter Futures: 2003 Task Force Report on the Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing* (NMSD & NMDOE, 2003) also examined the causes of such poor educational outcomes and the following contributing factors were given:

- The unique, low incidence nature of hearing loss
- Limited auditory access to expressive and receptive language which is necessary for language development and attainment of cognitive milestones
- Lack of communication opportunities at home because 90% of children with hearing loss are born to hearing parents
- Limited opportunities for language at school due to lack of communicatively-fluent staff and communication-accessible program components
- Lack of timely modifications to school programming which ensure communication development and optimize academic achievement
- Society’s historically negative view of hearing loss, which often results in low expectations for deaf and hard of hearing individuals

Additionally, the *2003 Task Force Report* gives a call to action to improve services to deaf and hard of hearing children by stating (NMSD & NMDOE, p. 17):

*“It is necessary because we cannot and must not tolerate the isolation of our children and youth and cannot accept impediments to their well-being and education growth.*

*It is necessary and the right thing to do because this is not a partisan issue or an academic debate, but a matter of basic human needs and human rights.*

*It is necessary because we cannot lose another generation of children and youth who are deaf or hard of hearing.*

*Finally, it is necessary because they are all our children and youth.”*

We intend to answer that call by creating an excellent educational program for deaf and hard of hearing children and families. Opening a charter school is an exciting option because it provides for *significant and immediate* change. As with many other charter schools, parents and educators see a need which is not being addressed and a population which is not being served by existing schools or government programs. The purposes of charter schools are many, but these, as listed in The Charter Schools Act [22-8B-1 NMSA 1978], speak directly to our deaf and hard of hearing children:

- *to enable individual schools to structure their educational curriculum to encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods*
- *to address the needs of all students, including those determined to be at risk*
- *to create new professional opportunities for teachers*
- *to improve student achievement*
- *to provide parents and students with an educational alternative*
- *to encourage parent and community involvement*

In 2004, the State of New Mexico enacted “The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children's Educational Bill of Rights” (*See Appendix I*) which acknowledges that “hearing loss affects the most basic human need, communication.” The purpose of this Bill is “to encourage the development of a communication-driven and language-driven educational delivery system in New Mexico for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.” Furthermore, the Bill states that it is necessary for deaf and hard of hearing children to advance in their educational endeavors, and that they are as capable as other children, but their educational environment must include:

- quality, ongoing and fluid communication
- teachers who understand and are trained in deaf education
- deaf and hard of hearing role models
- direct and appropriate access to all aspects of the educational model, including in the cafeteria, on the playground, and during extracurricular activities
- information to families

Section Three of *The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children's Educational Bill of Rights* calls upon the public education department and other agencies to act expeditiously in ensuring that:

*“these children have what every other child takes for granted, including an educational environment in which their language and communication needs are fully addressed and developed and in which they have early, ongoing and quality access to planned and incidental communication opportunities; and the recommendations, consistent with the findings and purpose of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children's Educational Bill of Rights, be completed expeditiously.”*

The ASL Academy will offer an innovative program unlike any other program in the State of New Mexico. Nationally, there are only a few deaf and hard of hearing programs which also enroll hearing siblings and peers, and the ASL Academy vision further extends to include parents and families in order to foster real change in deaf education. The educational and social statistics demonstrate that the program models offered to date are simply not working. The ASL Academy has been carefully constructed to offer an educational experience that no other school or program in the State does.

By creating a bilingual multicultural school staffed by teachers and administrators who are all trained, experienced and passionate about education, we will create a true school-wide community in which deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing children and their families will be the main priority. All aspects of the program will focus on the needs of people impacted by hearing loss, including full access to curriculum, direct instruction in American Sign Language, high academic standards and expectations for all students, expansion of the critical mass by including hearing children such as siblings and children with deaf parents, school-wide access to language including in the cafeteria and on the playground, development of parent groups and educational workshops, relevant professional education opportunities for teachers, social opportunities including school clubs and athletic programs, and community events encouraging multiculturalism and networking. For many teachers, parents, and children, this all-encompassing school has been an unattainable dream. By bringing together critical stakeholders and educational professionals, our charter school will succeed in accomplishing what many have long envisioned for the greater Albuquerque area.

*“...families, educators and consumers have realized that deaf and hard of hearing children, like all children, require and should have a number of options for the selection and development of communication and language and educational programs”* (The National Agenda, p. 16).

## SECTION V. EDUCATIONAL PLAN

### A. CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

#### 1. PHILOSOPHY AND APPROACH TO INSTRUCTION

- *A description of the educational philosophy and curricular approach of the proposed school.*

The educational philosophy of The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy is built upon serving three important entities: the child, the family, and the community. The ASL Academy will be comprised predominantly of children who are deaf or hard of hearing, a population often misunderstood and educationally underserved. The parents and teachers of deaf and hard of hearing children recognize that these children are capable and eager to learn, and if given the right learning environment, their accomplishments can be as limitless as those of their hearing peers. A carefully designed, dynamic, and bilingual learning environment which meets the needs of each child individually will optimize educational outcomes for all children, whether deaf, hard of hearing, or hearing.

- *A description of why the particular educational philosophy and/or approach was selected.*

The ASL Academy's educational philosophy supports the cultural model of deafness which recognizes that deaf persons have a unique identity, language, history and society, as opposed to simply a biological disability, and that children are served best when American Sign Language is the instructional language. This cultural model has gained support in the last decade, because the clinical model which focuses on simply overcoming the biological hearing deficit using amplification techniques resulted in poor educational outcomes such as the third grade reading levels of deaf high school graduates previously discussed (Dragow, 1998). The pedagogy for teaching deaf children has been the basis for much discussion. Some programs have utilized a "total communication" model which exposes students to both spoken English and ASL simultaneously. However, because ASL is a language that is both grammatically and structurally different than English, many critics contend that it is therefore impossible to speak English and sign ASL at the same time. Other programs provide use an educational interpreter, however, oftentimes the core meaning of the curriculum is lost, along with the richness of the language, when students must attend to two people at the same time. The ASL Academy will utilize a direct instruction model since these programs have been widely researched and are accepted as providing improved educational outcomes for a variety of students, including regular educational students, hearing students with learning disabilities, deaf, and hard of hearing students (Kraemer, Kramer & Koch, 2001). The ASL Academy believes that all children are entitled to full access to the curriculum and appropriately trained ASL fluent educators to guide them in their studies. Therefore, the bilingual curriculum will be rigorous and standards-based, and will utilize direct instruction in American Sign Language (ASL) and English to promote high academic expectations for all students.

- *Documentation, research, and/or a rationale that supports the educational philosophy and curricular approach.*

Sherman Wilcox, Ph.D, professor of linguistics and chair of the Department of Linguistics at the University of New Mexico, provides the following commentary regarding American Sign Language (Wilcox, 1991):

*Because of its unique modality -- visual/gestural rather than aural/oral -- many people wrongly assume that ASL is fundamentally different than spoken languages. ASL is a fully developed human language, one of the hundreds of naturally occurring signed languages of the world. It is not a derivative of English. It is not a "simplified" language -- it contains structures and processes which English lacks (such as ASL's rich verbal aspect and classifier systems). There is abundant linguistic research on ASL demonstrating that the grammar of ASL is radically different from English -- surely as different as any of the more traditional foreign languages taught in school.*

American Sign Language is the third most widely used language in the United States, and is the predominant language, meaning it was learned as the first or second language, for an estimated 500,000 Americans including Deaf native signers, hearing children who have Deaf parents, and adult Deaf persons who learned ASL from other Deaf adults (Wilcox, S & Peyton, J.K. 1999 and E-Michigan, 2002). Additionally, ASL has its own literature by and about Deaf people, in both written and oral modes, reflecting customs and rituals, legends and tales, games and jokes, poetry and naming practices unique to Deaf culture. In fact, “Deaf culture is now recognized and studied by anthropologists, ethnographers, folklorists, and others interested in culture and cross-cultural communication” (Wilcox, 1991).

Research indicates that because ASL is a fully developed and natural language, containing “grammatically sound phonological, morphological, and syntactical structures,” its use allows deaf and hard of hearing students to acquire language in a normal and predictable manner, quite similar to the way hearing children acquire spoken language. For optimal language acquisition, children should be exposed to ASL during the early years of childhood, including preschool and elementary ages. It is important for all deaf and hard of hearing children, regardless of level of impairment or family background, to have a foundation in ASL so that they have a mode for accessing, organizing, and expressing information presented in an academic setting (Drasgow, 1998). Children who have ASL as a first language can then further build upon that language base and develop English skills. Conversely, children with weak ASL skills and therefore a weak language base demonstrate more difficulty in transferring between ASL and English (Speights, 1996). Research shows that deaf children who are exposed to ASL at an early age have better academic outcomes than deaf children with limited or no ASL experience, and that children with only moderate levels of ASL fluency demonstrate improvements in English literacy. As a visual language, American Sign Language is best suited for providing full access to curriculum for deaf and hard of hearing students, which is why the ASL-English bilingual model will be utilized at the ASL Academy (Drasgow, 1998).

- *An explanation of why the educational philosophy and/or approach is/are likely to result in improved educational performance of students.*

American Sign Language was shown to enhance brain activity in a study of persons who were deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing, and included a mix of those who knew and did not know ASL prior to the study. Brain scans indicated increased blood flow as a measure of neural activity in both sides of the brain, with the left side being typically used to access English and the right side used to access sign language. When students utilize both sides of their brain they are capable of making more connections related to learning, thereby resulting in increased educational outcomes. Younger children can more readily acquire second and third languages, and those intellectual skills are transferable to other areas. This is true for both regular education and special education students (Lawrence, 2001). The concept of “distinct memory stores” demonstrates how the “built-in redundancy” of the bilingual model provides two sources for information recall, thereby assisting students in mastering new concepts, and further supporting brain growth and development in young children (Prevatte, 2005).

The bilingual educational model incorporating American Sign Language and English, in both spoken and written forms, is additionally beneficial to all students because it promotes acquisition of English literacy skills. The ASL Academy will utilize American Sign Language to improve pre-literacy and literacy skills in students since research has proven using ASL positively impacts “vocabulary development, phonemic awareness, letter-sound relationship, and spelling ability” (Prevatte, 2005). Additional evidence specific to hearing children’s exposure to sign language and fingerspelling indicates benefits in vocabulary recall, use of adjectives and adverbs, early language acquisition, improved reading and communication skills, and accelerated language development (Forham, 2001). Not surprisingly, research on the use of ASL with hearing students indicates benefits related not only to literacy, but also to cognition, including findings that exposure to a visuo-gestural language improves visual-spatial cognition and spatial memory. Sign language experience enhances nonverbal cognitive skills including visual/perceptual discrimination and spatial relations recognition. One report concluded that “it would be extremely useful to offer sign language as a second language to hearing children” for these reasons (Capirici, Cattani, Rossini & Volterra, 1998).

It is important to emphasize that in addition to utilizing ASL to deliver instructional information, the ASL Academy supports a true bilingual model in which students must develop *language* and *academic* proficiency in both ASL and English. To this end, educational research supports teaching each language separately. In order for students to experience the cognitive and academic advantages of a bilingual program, and become proficient in both languages, each language must be given equal importance in the curriculum and in classroom instruction, and the program must require sufficient amounts of student work product in both languages. The ASL Academy supports an instructional model which utilizes “language planning” to ensure teachers are “consciously separating and monitoring the two languages and presenting them as distinct systems” (Nover, 2006). The ASL Academy will implement a bilingual model for curriculum development and instruction in language arts to promote student language competence in both ASL and English and therefore improve student testing scores in reading, which will facilitate improvements in other content areas as well.



Research on a co-enrollment program containing deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing children noted that hearing students acquired sign language skills quickly and began signing to their deaf and hard of hearing classmates within a short time. Hearing students continued to gain ASL skills to the point that by the second and third year of the program some hearing students would sign without speaking, and for a classroom observer it would be difficult to distinguish the hearing students from the deaf and hard of hearing students in the class. Testing data showed significant gains in deaf and hard of hearing student's reading scores in the second and third years of the program, which was in contrast to the below grade level scores of children not in the program. Researchers commented that such improvement "speaks highly of the co-enrollment model." Additionally, teachers in the co-enrollment program noted that hearing students benefited from the "increased wait time and decreased teacher talk rate." Of equal importance was the resulting increased interaction between deaf and hearing students that the program provided by teaching ASL to hearing students. By providing students with a common language, deaf and hard of hearing students were able to expand their social circle and have meaningful conversations with hearing peers. Similarly, one of the first co-enrollment programs in the United States, the Tripod program in California, has noted that "socially, deaf and hard of hearing students and hearing students developed friendships that were maintained outside of the classroom setting and learned to comfortably communicate with one another" (Kreimeyer, Crooke, Drye, Egbert & Klein, 2000). The ASL Academy will further build upon these encouraging findings and create a diverse school setting in which all children can communicate directly with one another, thereby improving social opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing children which are frequently lacking in other programs, while increasing self-confidence and social-emotional well-being of all students.

- *A description of how the educational philosophy and/or approach aligns with the school's mission and student needs.*

ASL Academy students will be provided with a language rich environment (ASL and English) which will allow them to gain knowledge of self, peers and the world. The ASL Academy curriculum will provide state-required educational content through direct instruction utilizing a variety of teaching strategies including, but not limited to, thematic-focused classroom activities, special projects and field trips. The educational philosophy and classroom environment will promote the following additional aspects which are critical to student success:

- Students will be active participants in the educational process and will be provided with a variety of learning experiences and opportunities for hands-on and self-directed involvement.
- Students will be encouraged to develop relationships with other children, and such peer interaction opportunities will be incorporated into the curriculum and school environment daily.
- Classroom environments will be exciting, interesting, and academically focused, and will be integrated with the school environment and the surrounding community.

- Academic expectations for all students will be high, and instruction will be differentiated and appropriately modified to meet the needs of each child individually to ensure student mastery of required curriculum content.

Teachers and educational assistants will be instrumental in establishing high student expectations and providing a superior educational environment for ASL Academy students. ASL Academy educators will be deaf and hearing professionals certified in deaf education, special education and regular education collectively, and fluent in ASL and English. Teacher and educational staff quality will be ensured through a rigorous interview process, continuous supervision, and regular performance evaluations. Additionally, teachers and school staff will be supported through regular professional development programs which are applicable to their work and reflective of their knowledge, experience, abilities and interests. Research on teacher excellence indicates the following qualities, philosophies, skills, and instructional approaches serve students best, and therefore, will be utilized at the ASL Academy in order to promote high academic expectations and ultimately improve educational outcomes (Banks, 2005):

- Demonstrate a passion for school mission, educational content, and teaching, which indicates a concern for students' academic achievement and emotional well-being
- Knowledge of students' talents, needs, and prior experiences, and ability to modify instruction to accommodate for differences in students
- Ability to work collaboratively with families and professionals to implement student educational plans, and then effectively and regularly communicate instructional goals and progress with students, families, and other professionals
- Ability to convey information clearly and concisely, to break down complex ideas and make them understandable, and to repeat key concepts throughout the instructional period
- Engage students by teaching them not only the concepts, but also how to think and problem-solve in order to develop critical cognitive strategies that will better prepare them for life
- Encourage student interaction and participation, and provide opportunities for students to learn from each other in a nurturing, supportive and safe learning environment which fosters student trust and self-confidence
- Challenge students and provide situations in which students might fail
- Highly organized, efficient time management skills, and an established classroom routine including the development of high quality lesson plans
- Create an atmosphere that is flexible, yet controlled, integrate behavior management into instruction, and develop effective behavior support plans

The ASL Academy acknowledges that parents are of critical importance to the learning process and directly impact student achievement. Teachers and school staff will view parents as partners, collaborators and advocates for their children, and parents will be respected as their child's first teacher, and an integral part of the educational process. The school community will be supportive

of parents and families and will accept children as the collective responsibility of the community. Educational research encourages thoughtful reflection on the importance of parent-teacher relationships and the purposeful creation of positive partnerships. Oftentimes, the relationship between parents and deaf education professionals is strained when parents are sometimes made to feel “inadequate or at odds” with the professionals. The result is that parents may have a more difficult time being directly and actively involved in their child’s educational experience (Calderon, 2000). The educational philosophy of the ASL Academy requires that teachers and school officials work to promote healthy and cooperative relationships with parents in order to provide students with a positive educational experience and learning environment conducive to student achievement. Such relationships will be based on the mutual goal of improving educational outcomes and will be built through regular teacher-parent collaborative meetings and conversations regarding student progress. Teachers will also be encouraged to incorporate parent-volunteers into the classroom setting. These opportunities will allow the parent to observe teacher interactions with students, and parents can then model that behavior in order to improve communication with their own child. By consciously including parents in school activities, parents will feel valued by the school community (Calderon, 2000).

Because the ASL Academy’s educational philosophy and mission place a high value on the family, the school will employ a full-time Family and Community Programs Coordinator to provide ample opportunities to support families by organizing and providing ASL classes, parent groups, deaf role models, and educational workshops. ASL classes will be integrated with school themes and curriculum to allow parents to obtain relevant vocabulary and to assist their child with homework assignments. Other classes and workshops will relate to child development, parenting skills, and other topics of interest as identified by parental input. Research indicates a positive link between increased maternal communication skills and a child’s language development, early reading skills and social-emotional development. Additionally, “mothers who developed better communication skills with their children had children with higher language and reading scores and less behavior problems” (Calderon, 2000). Interestingly, it is also reported that parents of deaf children were more likely to observe, rather than actively volunteer, in the classroom. It was offered that one reason may be parents feeling that they are not skilled enough to actively participate in the classroom. It is further recommended that educators “do not undervalue the importance of school-sponsored sign classes, family retreats, open door policies, or other efforts that can help families increase their communication skills with their child. These activities indicate to families that they are vitally important to the education of their child and that schools value the home-school connection” (Calderon, 2000).

Research further suggests that parents who are deaf themselves may be more accepting of their children with hearing loss, and that the resulting positive parent-child interaction “contributes to the child’s higher self-esteem, which consequently results in higher achievement” (Dragow, 1998). Clearly, since 90% of deaf and hard of hearing children are born into hearing families, it is critical that support services including ASL acquisition, as well as information for parents regarding hearing loss, are provided. These hearing families are often learning ASL as a second language, and since a strong ASL foundation results in better educational outcomes, the ASL Academy’s educational philosophy encompasses family support services. By assisting parents in their attainment of ASL and thereby allowing them to communicate with their children directly and to have more meaningful conversations with their children, the ASL Academy will further

positively impact educational outcomes. Parents will be better equipped to support their child's language development, will have more understanding of their child's experiences related to hearing loss, and will hold higher overall expectations for their child.

Regarding community support, research indicates that mothers of deaf children have smaller social networks, and almost one-third express dissatisfaction with support received from partners and friends. It was noted that mothers who were satisfied with social support reported more positive interaction with their deaf children, and it was therefore recommended that increasing mothers' satisfaction with support networks would further improve their relationship with their deaf child (Lederberg & Golbach, 2002). Additionally, it is recommended that intervention services focus on "boosting the resources that mothers need for coping and try to diminish the effect of stress-intensifying factors." Such services would focus on improving networking and confirming a mother's sense of coherence, that is, her view of the world as being meaningful and predictable (Hintermair, 2004).

In an effort to develop community support and grow social networks in order to provide families with additional resources, the ASL Academy's Family and Community Programs Coordinator will organize school-sponsored events and will distribute information regarding additional community events. This will provide opportunities to connect students and parents with other deaf and hard of hearing families and adults in the greater Albuquerque area and throughout New Mexico. ASL Academy community events will encourage participation by deaf and hard of hearing peers enrolled in other schools and will facilitate student and family networking. In this way, the school will unite and expand the critical-mass of students in the greater Albuquerque area and promote school-family-community relationships with the Deaf and hearing communities. Research shows that for children who have significant hearing loss, being a member of the Deaf community is important because it "promotes a healthy view of who they are as human beings and increases self-esteem and confidence in their abilities to interact in a wide array of situations." It is important to note that Deaf, with a capital D, is used to identify deafness as a cultural issue, and not simply as a medical issue (Baker & Baker, 1997).

By hosting inclusive community events, the ASL Academy will increase awareness of deaf and hard of hearing persons, which are often overlooked by the majority community of hearing persons. The ASL Academy will strive to build connections between Deaf and hearing cultures, which are further entwined in the Mexican, Hispanic and Native American cultures also common in New Mexico. These opportunities to create new partnerships are exciting and will be embraced and fostered through the inclusive school culture of the ASL Academy. Important new relationships will provide the essential framework in which all children can grow and prosper, and will create a multi-cultural environment ideal for learning. By providing a quality bilingual multi-cultural educational program which focuses on ASL-English language acquisition, is aligned with State standards, and promotes family and community involvement, the ASL Academy will positively impact student achievement and educational outcomes for all students in the greater Albuquerque area.

## **2. DESCRIPTION OF THE CURRICULUM**

- ***If the curriculum has yet to be developed:*** A *description* of the proposed curriculum and a specific plan for its development that will include a scope and sequence. The development plan should include a description of the process, a timeline, and resources (including staffing) to be utilized.

### **Preschool Curriculum**

Beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, the second year of operation, the ASL Academy will offer a preschool class for three- and four-year-olds. The preschool curriculum will align with the educational philosophy of the ASL Academy by providing a bilingual ASL-English, multi-cultural educational model promoting student achievement, family involvement, and community integration.

The preschool curriculum will focus on:

- language acquisition and communication skill development
- physical, social and emotional development and well-being
- foundational knowledge of language arts, mathematics, science and social studies
- providing educational class for families and improving family support networks
- building multi-cultural community connections

By providing a quality preschool curriculum focused on early intervention and language acquisition for both the child and their parents, the ASL Academy will further positively impact student achievement and educational outcomes.

#### **Preschool Curriculum Development Plan:**

- *February-March 2011 – Trilateral Leadership Team conducts interviews for preschool teaching position(s) and makes hiring recommendations to Board.*
- *April-May 2011 – Governance Board fills teaching position(s) for preschool program.*
- *May-June 2011 – Academy Administrator and preschool staff develop and present preschool curriculum to Governance Board for review and approval.*
- *July 2011 – Implementation of finalized preschool curriculum for 2011/2012 school year.*

- *If the curriculum has already been selected/developed: A detailed description of the curriculum that includes a scope and sequence.*

### **Elementary and Middle School Curriculum**

The ASL Academy will offer classes for kindergarten through the fourth grade during the first school year, 2010-2011. The ASL Academy will expand one additional grade level each year, after the initial year, as follows: 2011-2012 add 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 2012-2013 add 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 2013-2014 add 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and 2014-2015 add 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Students will be provided with a language rich environment (ASL and English) which will allow them to gain knowledge through classroom instruction, special projects and field trips. The curriculum at all grade levels will align with New Mexico Content Standards, Benchmarks and Performance Standards for all subject areas, and will include a school-wide thematic component to facilitate language acquisition and learning across multiple content areas.

The elementary and middle school curriculum will focus on:

- proficiency in both ASL and English
- attainment of grade appropriate knowledge in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, health and physical education, and career readiness, and additional fourth and fifth grade social and emotional development and well-being
- communication and self-advocacy skills
- family and multi-cultural community connections

### **Language Arts/ Pre-Literacy and Literacy**

The ASL Academy will provide a thematic and individualized approach to literacy. Instruction will be provided daily in language arts, both ASL and English, and will emphasize student skill development in reading and listening for comprehension, writing and speaking for self-expression, and use of literature to understand self, society, and cultures throughout the world. Teaching strategies will highlight phonemic awareness, phonics in the lower grades, vocabulary, and fluency in ASL and in English, and will provide for opportunities for families to include literature in the home in order to promote child-parent interaction and reinforce classroom concepts.

The following programs will be utilized to meet Language Arts requirements:

#### **Breakthrough to Literacy**

This literacy curriculum, for preschool through third grade, introduces students to one book each week through multiple formats including; a Big Book, a Take-Me-Home Book, an audio book (if appropriate), and a computerized version of the book. The weekly book serves as the basis of classroom and independent learning activities for that week. Classroom activities that focus on the book include: (1) teacher-led whole group instruction, (2) teacher-led small group instruction, and (3) independent learning activities including individualized computer instruction that allows students to progress at their own pace. Student learning is directly linked to home and families through take home materials that align with classroom learning. (*See Appendix J*)

### Visual Phonics

This multi-sensory, interactive and visual approach to reading instruction, appropriate for preschool and elementary age children, uses hand cues and written symbols to represent spoken English phonemes. Students quickly and easily associate the way a sound is produced verbally with the visual and kinesthetic information provided by these hand cues. Visual Phonics can be used with any reading curriculum and is compatible with brain-based theories of learning. Visual Phonics is helpful when working with regular educational students just learning to read or who are struggling with reading, or with special education students, including deaf and hard of hearing students using ASL, autistic students, students with learning disabilities, or students who are English Language Learners (ELL). Therefore, Visual Phonics can be utilized by a variety of professionals including classroom teachers, special educators, reading specialists, speech-language pathologists, and ELL teachers to develop, facilitate and maintain literacy and communication skills. (*See Appendix K*)

### Fairview Learning Program

This five-component program for elementary level students provides consistent tools for literacy that work quickly and effectively to enhance reading skills by building vocabulary and understanding of words with multiple meanings. The five learning components are: Bridging Lists and Process, Adapted Dolch Words, Phonemic Awareness, Reading Comprehension and Bridging, and ASL Development/Spontaneous Written English. The Fairview Learning program provides direct access to ASL and allows hearing and deaf people to begin to think and sign bilingually. This program and each of its components will assist teachers in developing student skills in both ASL and English. (*See Appendix L*)

### Manipulative Visual Language (MVL)

This visual approach to teaching writing, appropriate for elementary and middle school, is a tool which utilizes a series of blocks of varying shapes to represent grammatical structure. MVL assists teaching English by representing the different parts of speech visually, and can be used in conjunction with the regular classroom curriculum to improve reading and writing skills. (*See Appendix M*)

### Achieve 3000 Program: KidBiz

KidBiz is a web-based reading and writing program for grades 2<sup>nd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> which utilizes email, technology and current events to strengthen literacy skills. KidBiz is proven to accelerate reading comprehension, writing proficiency, and vocabulary development by using pre-reading, during reading, and after-reading activities to help students construct meaning from the text. Students receive a daily news-based reading assignment via email, and while the topics are the same for all students, the content and related activities are customized for each child's reading level. Students work independently, at their own pace, while progress and assessment data for each student is readily available to teachers. Additionally, teachers may elect to scaffold activities by pre-teaching vocabulary, activating prior knowledge, developing schema, and building curriculum units. (*See Appendix N*).

## **Mathematics**

The ASL Academy will provide instruction in mathematics emphasizing student skill development in the areas of problem solving, reasoning, communication, connections of ideas, and representation of concepts. Specific content will include numbers and operations, algebra, geometry, tools and units of measurement, data analysis and probability.

The following resources and programs will be utilized to meet Mathematics requirements:

### **Illuminations**

This web-based program, developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and appropriate for K-12 students, provides online resources that are based on the NCTM's *Principals and Standards for School Mathematics*. Math topics including numbers and operations, algebra, geometry, measurement, and data analysis and probability are addressed. The website provides interactive math resources in the areas of standards, lessons, activities, and web-links which are in alignment with state standards and arranged by grade level. (See Appendix O)

### **FASTT Math**

This computer program designed for grades 2<sup>nd</sup> and beyond will be used as a supplement to direct instruction by providing individualized online math computation practice. FASTT Math delivers targeted, differentiated instruction to ensure each student develops skills at a pace and level adapted specifically for that student. (See Appendix O)

## **Science**

The ASL Academy will provide instruction in science and health (for 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades) emphasizing student understanding of scientific thinking and practice; physical, life, and earth and space sciences; and how science and technology affect individuals and society. School-wide themes will be utilized when developing grade-appropriate science and health focused lessons which align with state standards. Teachers will utilize the AIMS Education Foundation printed and online resources to provide a hands-on approach to science (See Appendix P). Teachers will use the Science/Social Studies matrix to guide instruction (See Appendix Q).

## **Social Studies**

The ASL Academy will provide instruction in social studies, including New Mexico history, United States history, and geography (as required in 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades) and will align with the state standards to include the study of contemporary and historical events and people in order to understand how their actions and beliefs impacted society and changed the world. Social studies will be taught in conjunction with reading themes, which will include a variety of non-fictional materials, in order to allow for cross-curriculum learning and provide opportunities for students to connect content throughout the day. Teachers will utilize Achieve 3000, a program which is aligned to state standards and appropriate for 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades to supplement the thematic units as well as trade books, maps and a variety of online resources at all grade levels. Additionally, teachers will use the Science/Social Studies Matrix (See Appendix Q) to guide instruction.



### **Language other than English: American Sign Language (ASL)**

The ASL Academy will provide instruction for all grade levels related to ASL skill acquisition, including linguistic analysis of ASL grammar, components of ASL literature, and Deaf culture. Teachers will utilize Signing Naturally, a widely used ASL standardized curriculum, along with other textbooks, videotapes, flash cards, computer programs, online materials, and guest speakers to develop grade-level appropriate lesson plans which coincide with school-wide themes to meet the state standards. Regular assessments of student progress in receptive and expressive skills will be conducted to ensure students are meeting appropriate benchmarks for acquiring a second language.

### **Visual and Performing Arts**

The ASL Academy will provide opportunities for all students to participate in music, dance, and visual arts as a means of both personal self-expression and as a tool to develop an understanding and appreciation of others. The Family and Community Programs Coordinator will be responsible for ensuring a wide range of experiences for students. Students will learn and develop essential skills; use art as an expression of their own ideas; understand the connection of art to other content areas; develop art-related vocabulary; gain knowledge of the materials, tools and techniques for each art discipline; make judgments about the work of other artists; demonstrate increased awareness of other cultures; understand historical aspects and influence of art; and participate in community art activities. Additionally, the arts will be embedded in and integrated throughout the school curriculum.

### **Multi-Cultural Studies**

Students will study many cultures throughout the world, with an emphasis on Deaf culture in New Mexico, the United States, and in other countries. Deaf culture provides a rich body of material encompassing history, literature, poetry, art, drama, storytelling, and film for students to analyze and appreciate. Additionally, local cultures common in New Mexico, including Hispanic, Mexican, and Native American, are also a part of the Deaf community and reflect many ASL Academy students and their families. Therefore, this class will further emphasize the multi-cultural aspects of the Southwestern United States. By focusing on respecting differences, learning about personal heritage, and understanding diversity the students will develop an appreciation of themselves and others.

### **Independent Study**

Independent Study will provide students with a range of classroom activities in which they may select to participate. Classrooms will contain many structured options and students will be empowered to join whichever activity they choose, as a means of building self-confidence and allowing for self-regulation. Students will learn life lessons based on choices and consequences, and they will also have an interactive hands-on environment in which to explore their own interests. The classroom will contain a variety of grade-level appropriate work stations including pretend play, special projects, quiet reading corners, computer time, theme-focused project tables, and other learning-centered activities as limitless as teacher and student imaginations. Teachers and educational assistants will provide support for students to assist with language acquisition, exploration and experimentation, and social interaction.

### **Physical Education/Health**

The ASL Academy will provide instruction in physical education and health (for 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades) which will enable students to understand movement and movement forms, develop motor skills, increase their knowledge of and participation in a physically active lifestyle, and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical fitness. Physical education and fitness will be taught in a non-competitive, instructionally-focused environment that promotes teamwork and social interaction, encourages individual achievement of motor skills and physical fitness, and provides for regular student assessments.

### **Career Readiness**

The ASL Academy will provide opportunities for all students to develop skills related to career readiness by embedding such instruction throughout the content areas. Each student will have the opportunity to demonstrate growth in areas related to career readiness such as identifying personal interests, setting and monitoring achievement of personal goals, and demonstrating appropriate leadership and team participant skills.

### **Health/Social and Emotional Well-being**

#### **Learning for Life**

Learning for Life, designed for kindergarten through high school age students, provides an age-appropriate curriculum, aligned with New Mexico Content Standards for health, physical education, social studies, language arts, mathematics, science, and career readiness, focused on teaching life skills to promote self-confidence, motivation, and self-esteem in students. The program promotes core character traits including respect, responsibility, honesty/trust, caring/fairness, perseverance, self-discipline, courage, and citizenship, across all grade levels in order to encourage positive behavior, develop a sense of belonging within the group, to build self-esteem, and reward positive work ethic. It also contains an age-appropriate drug and gang prevention component. The ASL Academy will utilize this cross-curricular approach, further integrated with family-centered activities, to enable students to become responsible individuals and productive members of society. (*See Appendix R*)

#### **Technology**

At The ASL Academy, technology will be utilized throughout the school day to access information, enhance communication and inspire individual creativity. Students will have opportunities to develop not only their computer skills, but by embedding instruction across multiple content areas, students will also develop an understanding that technology can be utilized as a tool for gathering and processing information. Teachers will integrate computer tasks throughout the curriculum and will use technology themselves to develop curriculum and track student progress. The ASL Academy will provide a school-wide internet accessible computer network to be utilized by staff members and students of all ages in order to enhance the curriculum.

- *If the curriculum has yet to be developed: A description of the proposed curriculum and a specific plan for its development that will include a scope and sequence. The development plan should include a description of the process, a timeline, and resources (including staffing) to be utilized.*

### **Curriculum Development Plan – Middle School**

While many of the educational programs listed in the prior section are applicable and useful in middle school, the curriculum for middle school grades will be thoroughly and completely established when those additional grade levels are added in subsequent years. The teacher(s) hired to teach middle school will collaborate with the Academy Administrator to further review and finalize a middle school curriculum to ensure completeness and appropriateness, while maintaining the educational philosophy of the ASL Academy. The schedule for fully developing the middle school curriculum is as follows:

#### Addition of 6<sup>th</sup> Grade for 2012/2013 School Year

- March-June 2012 – Teachers and the Academy Administrator develop and present sixth grade curriculum to Board for review and approval.
- July 2012 - Implementation of finalized sixth grade curriculum for 2012/2013 school year.

Addition of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grades will follow this same curriculum development plan for each subsequent school year.

### **3. ALIGNMENT WITH NM STANDARDS**

- *If the alignment has not been completed, a description of the process and a specific timeline to be used for aligning the curriculum with the New Mexico Standards.*

The ASL Academy curriculum will be designed to align with and meet the New Mexico Content Standards, Benchmarks and Performance Standards. Involvement and collaboration of all school educators will be critical for aligning curriculum strategies and ensuring that the needs of all students are adequately addressed. Because teachers are an integral part of developing an academically rigorous program that meets all school and student goals, the following timeline will be used for alignment of Standards and Benchmarks:

- April-May 2010 – The Academy Administrator will develop the planning template for curriculum mapping and standards alignment.
- Early-Mid June 2010 - Teachers will review alignment and create a curriculum map to insure that all standards are addressed. School-wide themes will be assigned.
- Late June 2010 - Teachers and the Academy Administrator will submit curriculums maps and alignment plan to the Leadership Team and Governance Board for review and approval in order to ensure compliance with State Standards.
- Beginning August 2010 – Teachers and the Academy Administrator will regularly review curriculum and modify curriculum maps to ensure the individual educational needs of all students are being met, as reflected in on-going student assessment data.

Curriculum maps and alignment plans for grade levels added in subsequent years will be completed by the ASL Academy Administrator and teachers, and submitted to the Governance Board for approval no later than May 31<sup>st</sup> of each year.

A template containing sample data which will be utilized to align the curriculum with the New Mexico State Board of Education’s Content Standards, Benchmarks and Performance Standards up to the fourth grade is included in *Appendix S*.

A sample curriculum map is included in *Appendix S*.

#### **4. STRATEGIES AND METHODS**

- *Provide a description of the strategies and methods to be used in delivering the curriculum.*
- *Provide an explanation of how the curriculum will address students' needs and assist students in reaching the NM Standards.*

#### **Bilingual, Language Rich Environment**

*“The ability to receive and express individual thoughts and to be part of an environment with rich, appropriate, and on-going communication opportunities is both essential to the growth of deaf and hard of hearing children and a fundamental programmatic component that has not frequently been available to these children”* (The National Agenda, pp. 19-20).

*“Deaf and hard of hearing children must have access to programs and services that will ensure their development of age-appropriate communication and language skills. They must have access to effective communication with language models and meaningful and shared communication with a variety of individuals in a variety of settings in order to enhance language development”* (The National Agenda, p. 20).

The underlying premise of the school is the use of American Sign Language (ASL) by all students and staff members in the classroom and on the school campus, including in the cafeteria, on the playground and during after-school activities to ensure all students have full access to school curriculum and experiences. This bilingual environment will allow students from varying backgrounds and experiences to communicate directly with peers and school staff by utilizing a common language, ASL. Educational staff, including native signers, will provide direct-instruction in ASL for all subject areas, which will improve and accelerate learning. All students will experience feelings of membership within the school community, and the resulting increase in emotional well-being and social interactions will further positively impact student academic performance.

#### **ASL and English - Language Arts**

*“The development of age-appropriate communication and language skills is fundamental to a child’s academic, social, cognitive, and linguistic development, as well a physical and mental well-being...”* (The National Agenda, p. 19).

*“The development of age-appropriate English skills is crucial to deaf and hard of hearing students”* (The National Agenda, p. 22).

*“Deaf and hard of hearing children are capable of and must develop age-appropriate literacy skills, including the ability to read and write”* (The National Agenda, p. 22).

School-wide, the curriculum will focus on ASL and English proficiency. By devoting the largest portion of the school day to Language Arts, teachers will emphasize the importance of language acquisition, reading, and writing. Students will be divided into age- and level-appropriate reading groups in order to provide a learning environment which addresses the specific needs of each student. Teachers will regularly evaluate student performance to ensure students are meeting academic goals consistent with NM Standards. As necessary, teachers will collaborate to re-evaluate student placement and instructional strategies. Nightly reading logs and school literacy

programs will encourage families to read to their children at home on a regular basis, which will allow students and families to develop an enthusiasm for reading. Greater exposure to language at home and in school will promote literacy and enable students to meet required state standards and improve upon historical testing scores.

*Fingerspelling can be "the most powerful strategies increase retention, understanding and students' abilities to apply the concepts they are learning" - Patricia Wolfe (PBS, 2004).*

The use of sign language and fingerspelling is an important strategy for engaging young readers and developing early literacy skills, especially since it is useful for all types of learners and all levels of ability, and therefore, will increase students' abilities to meet state standards and achieve adequate testing scores.

### **Direct Instruction / Individualized Instruction**

*"Deaf and hard of hearing children must be provided with full communication and language clearly and consistently in all educational environments with peers and professionals. Appropriate access can occur in many forms, most notably from educational staff that can communicate directly, proficiently, and in an on-going manner in the child's communication mode and language..." (The National Agenda, p. 20).*

The ASL Academy will focus on providing direct instruction in small class settings in order to meet the individual needs of all students. Prior to each school year, parents and teachers will collaborate to develop the best possible learning program for each child. The classroom and school environment will enable teachers to work together to address student abilities appropriately and allow students to receive direct educational instruction at an individualized level and pace. Regular student assessment and teacher evaluations will ensure that student progress is monitored frequently and student placement adjusted accordingly to best support the student in achieving his educational goals and meeting required standards.

### **ASL Fluent Staff**

"All educational staff working with deaf and hard of hearing students must demonstrate adult-level proficiency in the communication mode and language used by the students with whom they work." (The National Agenda, p. 36).

All teachers and educational assistants working at the ASL Academy will be fluent in ASL in order to provide direct instruction to students ensuring full access to the curriculum and promoting student ASL acquisition and competency. As demonstrated, improved ASL skills support increased literacy and will, therefore, result in better educational outcomes and attainment of state standards.

### **Audiological Services and Amplification Devices**

Regarding the issue of amplification, the ASL Academy will focus on neither deaf nor hearing culture exclusively, but rather will be inclusive of both cultures and respectful of each family's personal decision regarding amplification, thereby creating a multi-faceted community supportive of all deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing children. The ASL Academy's educational philosophy includes meeting the needs, as determined by both educators and parents, of each child. Such needs and related goals vary by child and are dependant on a variety of factors including degree of hearing loss, effectiveness of amplification devices, Individualized Education Program, and family culture. The ASL Academy will be thoughtfully supportive of students concurrently developing ASL and spoken language skills, while also preserving the mission and instructional model of the school. The classroom will make use of assistive devices, such as hearing aids and FM systems, in order to provide full access to spoken language utilized by teachers in specific settings, namely during the spoken language portion of reading class or during speech therapy sessions, for students appropriately requiring such services. This inclusive educational environment, focused on individual student needs and mindful of family culture, will foster feelings of self-confidence, belonging, and acceptance of others, among all students and their families, and will not undermine the school's bilingual educational model.

### **Personalized Learning Plan (PLP)**

In order to provide students with an exceptional learning environment, all regular education students, preschool through eighth grade, will have a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP), which is a parent-teacher collaborative accounting of a student's academic, social, and emotional strengths and weakness, areas of interest, and learning styles. This information will be utilized to create personalized learning goals which will be assessed at regular intervals throughout the school year. Teacher observations, student self-reporting and other assessments will be used to monitor PLP progress and to ensure that student goals are both realistic and challenging. Information concerning student performance will be provided to students and their families throughout the year in student progress reports and discussed during parent-teacher conferences. The PLP can be revised throughout the year based on these assessments and conversations to ensure all students are being appropriately challenged.

### **Family Involvement Plan (FIP)**

*"The educational system that serves deaf and hard of hearing children...must work collaboratively with the families of those children..."* (The National Agenda, p. 24).

All ASL Academy students will have a Family Involvement Plan (FIP), developed through parent-teacher collaboration, which will encourage families to share their time and talents with the school community by setting family goals related to the school and to their child's academic, social, and emotional development. Examples of family goals include assisting in the classroom, volunteering as field trip chaperones, and attending parent groups, ASL classes, and parental workshops offered by the school and other community organizations. Family involvement will be documented and discussed at parent-teacher conferences during the school year. Academic achievement will be reflective of parental involvement, and therefore, by increasing parental participation and knowledge, students will show improved educational outcomes.

### **Thematic-Cross Curricular Approach**

The learning environment will be based on school-wide educational themes/units which will change every 3-6 weeks, depending on the subject matter. At the beginning of each unit, teachers will collaborate to develop a cross-curricular map, including a timeline, core content and assessment tools, and will align it with state standards to guide instruction and ensure students have attained required skills at the conclusion of each unit. By offering school-wide thematic units, younger students will be able to develop language/vocabulary along with their siblings and older school mates, which will provide additional opportunities for social and emotional growth, and will foster feelings of self-confidence and self-competence. Theme-related vocabulary will be taught during parent workshops and ASL classes so that new language can be supported and reinforced at home.

Examples of educational themes/units are transportation, plants and flowers, zoo animals, the human body, birds and reptiles, the weather, ocean life, planets and stars, Africa, and Ancient Egypt. Such a wide variety of topics will provide critical opportunities for language development and a general knowledge base for the students. The classroom environment will include posters, bulletin boards, independent project tables, classroom library books, art projects, and music selections, which will all reflect the current theme. Preschoolers will be provided ample opportunities for self-selection exploration and student-directed play in a purposefully constructed environment, as well as teacher-led classroom activities such as storytelling, group discussions and art projects. In elementary and middle school, the themes will be integrated into the regular curriculum, and content will be adjusted to ensure it is grade-level appropriate. Examples of “special projects” which will reinforce the educational unit include guest speakers, student plays/performances or class science projects. Age-appropriate field trips relating to the current theme will be instrumental in reinforcing classroom instruction in a “real-world” setting. By including themes in the curriculum, students will be given additional opportunities for language development over a wide range of topics. Such topics will pique student interest and provide for a rich educational experience, which will assist them in achieving state academic goals across all content areas.

### **Vocabulary Development**

The ASL Academy will focus on developing student vocabulary in both ASL and English. The reading and literacy program will promote several key aspects of vocabulary attainment including natural growth in meaning vocabulary, lifelong learning through indirect vocabulary instruction, and learning of specific words through direct vocabulary instruction. Additionally, the following methods for building vocabulary will be utilized: definition-based approaches, context-based approaches, concept-based approaches, and semantic mapping (Schirmer, 2000). Children need a context based approach, encountering a word in context to develop a full sense of its meaning (Gipe, 1980; Gipe & Arnold, 1979). Guessing vocabulary from context is the most frequent way to discover the meaning of new words. Through a concept-based approach, students will find new relationships in old knowledge and from relating new information to old knowledge (Schirmer, 2000). Children will create semantic maps to organize prior knowledge into formal relations to provide a basis for understanding. By emphasizing attainment of vocabulary across the curriculum, the ASL Academy will provide students with a strong language foundation which will further improve standardized testing performance and educational outcomes for all students at all levels.



### **Early Intervention – The ASL Academy Preschool Program**

The preschool will provide a bilingual language-rich environment which will allow students to gain knowledge of self, peers and the world through thematic-focused play, classroom activities, special projects and field trips. Teachers will be ASL fluent and knowledgeable in early childhood education and deaf education, and will regularly assess student progress and document student development. Students will have access to native ASL users in order to further promote language development and increase knowledge of deaf culture. Students will be provided with age appropriate content in subject areas such as language arts, mathematics, social studies and science in order to ensure kindergarten-readiness. The classroom setting will provide students daily opportunities to learn and practice important life and school skills including behavior self-regulation, problem-solving, and negotiating social interactions. Teachers and educational assistants will provide student support for these spontaneous social interactions in order to promote appropriate behavior modifications and emotional development. Pre-school and kindergarten teachers will collaborate for seamless student transitions to elementary school at the end of the year.

By providing a thoughtfully and purposefully constructed preschool environment, focused on language acquisition and student progress and which encourages parental involvement and promotes family importance, we will create an ideal setting which will foster student growth and development, and will ultimately result in improved academic performance throughout the student's educational career. The preschool experience will provide a foundation for student achievement, which will be expanded on in subsequent grade levels at the ASL Academy.

### **ASL Academy Announcements**

The ASL Academy student body will meet collectively every morning for daily announcements, the pledge of allegiance, and other activities which promote school unity and community. The announcements will be led by the Academy Administrator, the Executive Director and the Family/Community Services Coordinator, and will provide opportunities for student interaction including games, stories, and mini-performances/presentations by students reflective of their classroom work. Announcement time will provide opportunities for peer-modeling across grade levels and confidence building for all students, as well as opportunities for language practice and exposure, which will be academically beneficial.

### **Educational Programs for Families**

*“Early, consistent and meaningful communication between family and child is essential in fostering language competency and the development of literacy. Therefore it is essential that families are provided with support in developing their own and their child’s communication and language skills. They need to work educationally at home and with the schools to develop their child’s communication and language skills”* (The National Agenda, pp. 20-21).

The ASL Academy will employ a full-time Family and Community Programs Coordinator to provide support services for families in the form of school-based and educational-focused parent groups, ASL classes, grade-level homework assistance training, educational workshops related to child development, parenting techniques, deaf culture and other topics of interest to parents and

relevant to student needs. The ASL classes will be skill level appropriate and designed to correspond with school themes and classroom curriculum so parents learn relevant vocabulary, which will provide increased communication opportunities and allow parents to be more helpful with homework assignments. The ASL Academy educators value parents and families and acknowledge that by supporting parents, parents can better support their children, resulting in increased educational outcomes as well as social and emotional benefits for all children.

### **Community Involvement**

“Deaf and hard of hearing children require and are best served when effective and mutually respectful partnerships are established between and among educators, families and the institutions and programs in the community that serve those children and their families” (The National Agenda, p. 23).

The ASL Academy will employ a full-time Family and Community Programs Coordinator to organize community events encouraging multiculturalism and networking by uniting deaf and hearing people in the greater Albuquerque area. By offering events which promote school, family and community interaction, the ASL Academy will increase awareness of deaf and hard of hearing children and their abilities, connect students and parents with deaf and hard of hearing adults, provide social opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing students enrolled in other schools, and encourage family networking, all of which are beneficial to the social, emotional and cognitive development of ASL Academy students.

### **Diversity of Student and Staff Populations**

The ASL Academy will serve a diverse student population which will include deaf and hard of hearing students, and also hearing students, including siblings of children with hearing loss, children of deaf adults (CODAs), visual learners, and other students with varying needs who would benefit from a bilingual education model. The ASL Academy Governance Board, the Academy Administrator, the Executive Director, the Family and Community Programs Coordinator, teachers, educational assistants, audiologists, therapists, parents and family members will include both deaf and hearing adults, each with their own unique background and experiences, which will be celebrated and respected throughout the school community. This diverse and knowledgeable group will work collaboratively to create a critical support system and optimal learning environment for the ASL Academy student population, resulting in academic, social, and emotional benefits for all students, as well as an optimal working environment for school staff.

## **Student Assessments**

“Historically, American educational policy and specific programs have not formally and systematically provided educational assessment, development, and access for deaf and hard of hearing children. Without such access, deaf and hard of hearing children cannot grow or achieve educationally in a way that is commensurate with their individual talents and dreams (The National Agenda, p. 19).

The ASL Academy’s emphasis on regular and continuous student assessments will provide teaching staff with the critical information they need in order to provide an individualized instructional program to each student. The ASL Academy will use a wide-variety of testing methods to ensure a clear, accurate, and overall view of student progress and abilities in areas of academic, social, and emotional growth, including the following assessment methods: NM Standards Based Assessments, teacher observations, student self-assessments, short-cycle school-based assessments, informal formative and non-standardized written and oral tests, pre- and post-year assessments, and assessment of student work-product. Assessment data will be gathered frequently, recorded diligently, and analyzed weekly at collaborative staff meetings. Such information will be vital in ensuring that all students are on track to meet or exceed state standards. Parents will be given regular updates regarding student progress throughout the year, including bi-annual written narratives, quarterly progress reports/report cards, and parent-teacher conferences which will be held a minimum of three times per year. Additionally, graded student work-product will be sent home weekly to allow parents an ongoing opportunity to review their child’s productivity during the previous week.

## **Technological Access**

Students will be provided opportunities to improve computer skills on a regular basis, and as an integrated part of the curriculum. The ASL Academy will purchase necessary computer equipment and will have hi-speed internet access in all classrooms which allows for safe and appropriate use of the internet by students. For example, several math and reading programs utilize computer programs so students may practice their skills, and related testing will provide technology-based, online and differentiated instruction on an on-going and grade level appropriate basis. The ASL Academy will utilize a school website to post information about the school which is useful to parents, and also as a tool to encourage community partnerships and promote student achievement, all of which will combine to increase educational outcomes and allow students to meet state standards across multiple content areas. The ASL Academy recognizes the importance for all students to be technologically literate in order to succeed academically at this time, and also to secure employment when they enter the workforce in the future.

- *A descriptive example of the curricular strategies and methods in action in the classroom.*

The following is an example of how school-wide themes will be integrated in classroom instruction across multiple grade-levels and curriculum content areas:

### **Theme: The American West**

Students will embark on an educational journey as they study the pioneers who traveled west of the Mississippi during the 1800's seeking land and fortune, encountering native people and ancient cultures, and bringing commerce and railroads to the vast landscape.

#### Family ASL Classes

Classes will focus on the vocabulary listed in the preschool class lesson below, as well as the more advanced vocabulary of the higher grades. Families will practice retelling stories in ASL related to pioneer life as a means of expanding their ASL storytelling skills while utilizing new vocabulary. Additionally, parents will practice reading (in ASL) books from the take-home literacy program and online texts which are applicable to their child's grade/reading level. Parents will be asked to bring personal items and family artifacts reflective of the pioneering time period to homeroom classes/morning announcements and to explain the history and relevance of such items to the students.

#### Academy Announcements

Students and teachers will bring quilts from home on a specified day for show-and-tell with the school community. Teachers and school leaders will facilitate the discussion by providing an overview of the historical significance of quilting and will highlight information such as the various quilt patterns and themes.

#### Preschool

Preschool students will focus on topical vocabulary including the following words: horse, buffalo, sheep, snake, cowboy, railroad (train), cowboy boots, Spanish, Native American, basket, wool, weaving, blanket (quilt), covered wagon, explorer, river, tent, teepee, corn, gold, camp fire and ghost towns. Students will be read a variety of stories related to the time period and will be encouraged to dress-up and re-enact stories as a means of practicing new vocabulary and understanding new concepts. Classroom projects will focus on period-specific items and will integrate colors, shapes and patterns from the discussion of quilting designs.

#### Kindergarten-First Grade / Art Class

Students will create their own quilting squares during art class, and a parent volunteer will assemble those squares into "school quilt" which will be displayed in the school entryway during the duration of the unit for parents and school visitors to admire.

#### Kindergarten-First Grade / Mathematics

Students will continue working with the day's "quilting" theme in order to explore and understand patterns of varying colors, sizes and shapes. Students will be required to recognize, reproduce, describe and extend existing patterns and also to create their own patterns utilizing blocks, paper cutouts, and coloring. Classroom work will transition from patterns of colors and shapes to include number patterns and pattern-related story problems.

### Second-Third Grade / Multicultural Studies

Students will discuss the different Native American tribes which prospered in the western United States during the pioneer days. Discussions will include living conditions, survival strategies, religious beliefs, and how their lives were affected by American settlers. Students will learn the story of Black Coyote, a deaf Native American killed at Wounded Knee Creek in 1890.

### Second-Third Grade / English Language Arts

Teachers will begin class with a continuation of the morning discussion regarding quilts and how they are made, what they are made from, and what they are used for. Teachers will then read “Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt” by Deborah Hopkinson to the class. Following the reading, there will be a discussion of the plot and new vocabulary will be noted related to slavery and the Underground Railroad. Students will be encouraged to participate in a discussion of the story and of slavery during the 1800’s, and the teacher will facilitate this discussion by asking How, Why and What If questions related to the text. Afterward, students will work independently on the Achieve 3000 website by accessing articles related to the topic in order to reinforce new vocabulary and concepts. Student writing assignments will include answering questions related to the story and to explain how they would feel and react if the things that happened to Clara in the story happened to them.

### Fourth-Fifth Grade / History & Geography

The lesson of the Lewis & Clark expedition of 1804 will focus on the historical context and significance of the trip, and will integrate geography and mapping skills as students document the journey.

### Fourth-Fifth Grade / Science

Students will further build upon their knowledge of the Lewis & Clark expedition by focusing on how the North Star and other constellations, as well as the phases of the moon, guided the explorers on their journey.

### Sixth-Seventh-Eighth Grade/ASL Language Arts

ASL storytellers (classroom guests) will showcase cowboy poetry from the 1800’s. Afterward, students will break into small groups and, with the assistance of a Deaf adult, will create their own cowboy poem in ASL which they will present as a group to the class.

### Community Event

At the end of the unit, the children, families and community will be invited for a Pioneer Days event at the school. Students and attendees will be encouraged to wear clothing appropriate to the era, including items they have made at school. Additionally, members of the Native American community will be invited to wear their traditional clothing. Student work-product including reports and art projects will be displayed. The Family and Community Programs Coordinator will organize pony rides and game booths for the children, including small prizes for them to win. Parent volunteers will be scheduled to operate each booth for a designated time frame, allowing opportunities to meet different people at the event. Students will perform songs, dances, or short plays, and read stories or poems they have studied in class. The event will be an enjoyable occasion for students to demonstrate what they have learned and an important opportunity to build family and community relationships.

- *Provide a description of professional development that may be necessary for implementation of the strategies and methods to be used in delivering the curriculum.*

### **Professional Development**

Professional development and staff training, offered as part of the weekly schedule and also during in-service days throughout the year, will focus on improving teacher skills and teaching strategies, and will be directly connected to classroom curriculum and student needs, including vertical articulation to assure smooth transitions as additional grade levels are added to the educational program. Teachers, staff, and the Academy Administrator will collaborate regularly to select topics, thereby ensuring that the training reflects teacher abilities and interests, expands and improves instructional techniques and curriculum content, focuses on students with special needs including hearing loss, and facilitates improvements in student progress and educational outcomes. Ideally, training will encompass a variety of issues, including social-emotional well-being of students and families, strategies for optimizing family-school interaction and relationship development, cultural diversity awareness and promotion, and information regarding State and Federal laws concerning special education services. Because of the specific population that the ASL Academy will serve, it may be necessary that guest speakers from other states, specifically trained in ASL strategies or the education of deaf and hard of hearing students, be hired for staff workshops. Similarly, staff will likely need to attend seminars and workshops out of state. The ASL Academy will optimize educational opportunities and minimize costs by attending conferences offered in New Mexico and in nearby states when offered. Training staff on applicable topics throughout the year will directly impact teacher-student interaction and classroom teaching techniques, resulting in improved student performance across all content areas.

## **B. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

### **1. LENGTH OF SCHOOL DAY AND SCHOOL YEAR**

- *The proposed length of the school day, including the number of instructional hours*
- *The proposed length of the school year, including number of days and total number of instructional hours*

The ASL Academy will operate on a year round schedule which will include 182 instructional days for students. The school day for students will begin at 8:00 am and conclude at 3:15 pm Monday through Friday, providing 6 hours and 20 minutes of instructional time daily, for a total of 1152.6 instructional hours for the school year. Teachers' required work days will be from 7:45 am to 3:30 pm Monday through Friday, 7.25 hours daily, for a total of 190 days for the school year.

- *A description of how the proposed length of the school day and school year support the Educational Plan.*

By utilizing a year round schedule, the ASL Academy will provide students with more continuous and consistent exposure to ASL as compared to a traditional school year, which will be beneficial for language attainment and educational outcomes.

Additionally, short intercessions throughout the year will provide for up to 9 weeks of additional programming opportunities including day camps focusing on performing arts, cultural diversity, athletics, outdoor activities, etc. Ideally, students will partake in these programs and benefit from exposure to language during this time. Grant money and/or program fees will be required to fund intercession programming, and the details of funding the programs will be determined at a later time by the Financial Manager and Governance Board.

For students who are struggling academically, intercession time may also be used for tutoring. By providing opportunities for tutoring *throughout* the school year, the ASL Academy will be able to offer timely interventions and address student deficiencies quickly. With a traditional school schedule, many students fall further behind because new material is continuously presented. With a year round school schedule, intermittent breaks will allow struggling students additional time to master content before new material is introduced in the next regular session. Again, the Financial Manager and Governance Board will be responsible for evaluating financial aspects and identifying funding sources for these programs.

## The ASL Academy Daily Schedule

**Monday / Tuesday / Thursday / Friday**

Grade/Time	K/1	2/3	4/5
7:45-8:00	Student Drop-Off		
8:00-8:25	ASL Academy Morning Announcements		
8:25-9:20	English Language Arts Reading/Writing*/Phonics**	Math	Science/Social Studies
9:20-10:15			ASL Language Arts
10:15-10:35	Morning Break/Recess		
10:35-11:30	ASL Language Arts	English Language Arts Reading/Writing*/Phonics**	Math
11:30-12:00	Lunch/Recess		
12:00-12:55	Science/Social Studies	English Lang. Arts Cont'd	Math Cont'd
12:55-1:50	Math	Science/Social Studies	English Language Arts Reading/Writing*/Phonics**
1:50-2:45		ASL Language Arts	
2:45-3:15	Homeroom - Daily Review		
3:15-3:30	Student Pick-Up		
3:30-4:30	To Be Determined (Homework Club / Tutoring / After School Care)		

### Wednesday

Grade/Time	K/1	2/3	4/5
7:45-8:00	Student Drop-Off		
8:00-8:25	ASL Academy Morning Announcements		
8:25-9:05	Multi-Cultural Studies	Independent Study <i>Ancillary Services Pullout</i>	ASL Language Arts
9:05-9:40	ASL Language Arts	Multi-Cultural Studies	Independent Study <i>Ancillary Services Pullout</i>
9:40-10:15	Independent Study <i>Ancillary Services Pullout</i>	ASL Language Arts	Multi-Cultural Studies
10:15-10:35	Morning Break/Recess		
10:35-11:30	English Literacy Block Library/Reading/Writing*/Phonics**		
11:30-12:00	Lunch/Recess		
12:00-1:00	PE	Music/Dance	Art
1:00-2:00	Art	PE	Music/Dance
2:00-3:00	Music/Dance	Art	PE
3:00-3:15	Homeroom		
3:15-3:30	Student Pick-Up		
3:30-4:30	To Be Determined (Homework Club / Tutoring / After School Care)		

Educational Staff Collaboration Meetings/Professional Development - Every Wed. from 12:00-3:00pm

\* Occupational Therapist (OT) in Classroom for Students Receiving Ancillary Services

\*\* Speech Language Therapist (SLP) in Classroom for Students Receiving Ancillary Services



**The ASL Academy 2010-2011 Calendar**

July 2010						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

August 2010						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

September 2010						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

October 2010						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

November 2010						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

December 2010						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

January 2011						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

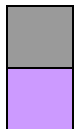
February 2011						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28					

March 2011						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

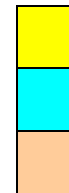
April 2011						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

May 2011						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

June 2011						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		



No School for Students and Staff  
 No School for Students (Staff Planning Day)



First and Last Days of School  
 Parent Teacher Conferences  
 Early Release - 12:15 Dismissal

- *A description of how the proposed length of the school day and school year support the Educational Plan.*

By utilizing a year round schedule, the ASL Academy will provide students with more continuous and consistent exposure to ASL as compared to a traditional school year, which will be beneficial for language attainment and educational outcomes.

Additionally, short intercessions throughout the year will provide for up to 9 weeks of additional programming opportunities including day camps focusing on performing arts, cultural diversity, athletics, outdoor activities, etc. Ideally, students will partake in these programs and benefit from exposure to language during this time. Grant money and/or program fees will be required to fund intercession programming, and the details of funding the programs will be determined at a later time by the Financial Manager and Governance Board.

For students who are struggling academically, intercession time may also be used for tutoring. By providing opportunities for tutoring *throughout* the school year, the ASL Academy will be able to offer timely interventions and address student deficiencies quickly. With a traditional school schedule, many students fall further behind because new material is continuously presented. With a year round school schedule, intermittent breaks will allow struggling students additional time to master content before new material is introduced in the next regular session. Again, the Financial Manager and Governance Board will be responsible for evaluating financial aspects and identifying funding sources for these programs.

## **2. GRADE LEVELS, CLASS SIZE AND PROJECTED ENROLLMENT**

- *The grade levels the charter school proposes to serve*
- *Projected class size*

The ASL Academy will offer classes for kindergarten through the fourth grade during the first school year, 2010-2011. Expected initial enrollment will be 40 students total, with approximately 8-16 students per class. Classes will be comprised of two grade levels, as indicated below:

<b>2010-2011 School Year</b>			
Homeroom Class	K/1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> /3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
Est. Initial Enrollment	16	16	8

- *If a phase-in of grade levels is proposed, a plan for the phase in by year and grade levels and a rationale for the phase-in plan*
- *Projected class size*

Beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, the second year of operation, the ASL Academy will offer a full-day preschool class for three- and four-year-olds in order to provide opportunities for early acquisition of ASL for preschoolers and their families, and therefore increase educational outcomes. The ASL Academy will also provide a 5<sup>th</sup> grade class for the 2011-2012 school year. Estimated total enrollment for the second year of operation is 56 children, distributed as follows:

<b>2011-2012 School Year</b>				
Homeroom Class	Preschool	K/1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> /3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup> /5 <sup>th</sup>
Estimated Enrollment	8	16	16	16

Thereafter, the ASL Academy will increase one additional grade level each year as follows: 2012-2013 add 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 2013-2014 add 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and 2014-2015 add 8<sup>th</sup> grade. By providing middle school courses, the ASL Academy will give parents another educational option which will allow students to further build upon their academic skills, including ASL and English proficiency, in an environment specifically designed to meet their individual needs.

- *The total projected student enrollment (maximum enrollment for the school)*
- *Projected class size*

Expected maximum enrollment during the fifth year of operation is 80 students. Class size for preschool is estimated at 8 students. Elementary and middle school will average 8 students per grade, with classes containing two grade levels having approximately 16 children per class:

<b>2014-2015 School Year</b>						
Homeroom Class	Preschool	K/1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> /3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup> /5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup> /7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>
Est. Full Enrollment	8	16	16	16	16	8

## **3. GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

Not applicable. High school level courses are not offered during the first 5 years of operation.

## **C. STUDENT PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS**

- *Provide student-centered goals that are SMART (Smart, Measurable, Ambitious, Attainable, Reflective, Time-Specific) and are aligned with the school's mission and educational plan.*

The following student-centered SMART goals align with the ASL Academy's Mission:

### **Preschool through Second Grade**

- Students will demonstrate improvements in monthly short-cycle assessments of ASL acquisition\*, reading, and math skills to ensure they are progressing adequately to achieve required grade-level year end academic requirements.
- Students will achieve scores of 80% or higher on ASL\*/English vocabulary tests which are grade-level appropriate, reflective of school-wide educational themes, and given at the conclusion of each theme-based unit to ensure students are obtaining bilingual language skills across multiple content areas.
- All students and their families will attend a minimum of four ASL Academy-sponsored events annually, as documented on event attendance forms. ASL Academy-sponsored events include but are not limited to: school field trips, parent educational workshops, student performances, and community events. Parent-teacher conferences are not considered "school events."

### **Third through Eighth Grade**

- Students with less than two consecutive prior years of attendance at the ASL Academy will demonstrate improvement in monthly short-cycle assessments of ASL acquisition\*, reading, and math skills. Students with two consecutive prior years of attendance at the ASL Academy, will demonstrate during their third year of attendance and thereafter, grade-level or higher scores on monthly short-cycle assessments of ASL acquisition\*, reading, and math skills, to ensure they are progressing adequately to achieve required grade-level year end academic requirements.
- Students will achieve scores of 80% or higher on ASL\*/English vocabulary tests which are grade-level appropriate, reflective of school-wide educational themes, and conducted at the conclusion of each theme-based unit to ensure students are obtaining bilingual language skills across multiple content areas.
- Students with two consecutive prior years of attendance at the ASL Academy will demonstrate during their third year of attendance and thereafter, New Mexico Standards Based Assessment (NMSBA) scores of "near proficient" or higher in the areas of language arts, math, and science. (Standardized Testing at the ASL Academy will comply with PED mandates.)
- All students and their families will attend a minimum of four ASL Academy-sponsored events annually, as documented on event attendance forms. ASL Academy-sponsored events include but are not limited to: school field trips, parent educational workshops, student performances, and community events. Parent-teacher conferences are not considered "school events."

\* See ASL Curriculum Rubric, Appendix T.

## **D. PLAN FOR EVALUATING STUDENT PERFORMANCE**

- *the types of assessments that will be used to measure student progress toward achievement of the NM Standards and the school's student performance expectations*

The ASL Academy will utilize a variety of assessments to thoroughly evaluate student progress. Such information will additionally be used for evaluative, diagnostic, and curriculum design purposes. Assessments will include, but are not limited to, the following:

### **Standardized or Criterion Referenced Tests**

Students will participate in state and federally mandated testing.

### **Teacher Observation Reports**

Teachers and educational staff will observe and document each student's physical, social, emotional, and academic performance and progress in an electronic database. Detailed notations, citing examples of student behavior and work-product, will be made weekly for each student.

### **Progress Monitoring**

All students will be evaluated monthly using short-cycle school-based assessments of ASL acquisition, reading, and math skills to ensure they are progressing adequately to achieve required grade-level year end academic requirements.

### **Student Performance Assessments**

Informal formative and non-standardized written and oral tests will be administered to inform the instructor of teaching effectiveness and student needs. For example, students will be evaluated on 10-20 grade level appropriate and thematically-related vocabulary words at the conclusion of each school-wide unit. Students will be tested on receptive and expressive knowledge of ASL and English, both written and spoken (if appropriate).

### **Pre and Post Evaluation**

A pre and post summative evaluation will be administered to all students upon entering and exiting each grade in order to show individual student improvement for the year.

### **Portfolio Based Assessments**

Portfolios will be maintained for each student containing selected student work-product for main lessons across all subject areas, teacher generated assessments, performance evaluations, etc., that will be reflective of student progress and indicative of areas in need of improvement. Teachers will actively utilize these portfolios for curriculum planning, student placement, collaborative meetings with ASL Academy staff, and parent-teacher conferences.

Based on this cumulative information, teachers will collectively create a Written Narrative detailing standardized testing data, summarizing additional assessment data, and documenting student progress related to overall achievement in the areas of academics, social involvement and group participation, emotional well-being, advocacy skills, self-regulation of behavior, and others. These Written Narratives will be provided to parents on a semi-annual basis, and will further supplement Student Report Cards which will contain grading marks in individual subject areas.

- *the timeline for achievement of the NM Standards and/or the school's student performance expectations*

All ASL Academy students will meet NM Standards and student performance expectations by the end of their third consecutive year of attendance, as reflected in NMSBA scores and student report cards.

- *the procedures for taking corrective action in the event that student performance falls below the NM Standards and/or the school's student performance expectations*

For students who are not meeting the NM Standards and student performance expectations, opportunities for additional programming will be provided, including the following educational intervention mandates as listed in the *Student Assistance Team Manual* developed by the NM Public Education Department (*See Appendix U*):

Tier I: Teachers will make appropriate modifications to the learning environment including methods utilized for delivery of instruction or student placement changes.

Tier II: For specialized school programming that includes small group instruction, pull-out/small group time during the school day, after school tutoring sessions, and classes held during intercessions designed to address specific areas of deficiency and remediation, Tier II interventions will be implemented in addition to the Tier I interventions. Such opportunities will be based on assessment data gathered throughout enrollment at the ASL Academy; therefore, students in need of additional programming will not wait until their third year of enrollment to receive these intervention services. Additionally, the convening of a Student Assistance Team (SAT) may be necessary to further develop interventions or to make recommendations regarding additional student evaluations. The ASL Academy SAT members will include, at a minimum, the Academy Administrator, and two teachers. The ASL Academy will adhere to all guidelines concerning parental consent and diagnostic testing.

Tier III: Applicable for special education students (*See Section E: Special Populations*).

- *remediation for students not achieving standards, including a timeline for implementation of the remediation plan*

As per the ASL Academy's educational philosophy, all students will receive appropriate modifications to the learning environment as discussed in their Personal Learning Plan (PLP) or their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Because of the in-depth conversations involving parents and educational staff, the ASL Academy Administrator and teachers will have significant knowledge of the student even before that student enters the classroom. Such information will be instrumental in allowing teachers to adequately and thoroughly evaluate student progress and to quickly identify and document any potential problems. The following remediation plan will be utilized by the ASL Academy to ensure timely action when needed:

1. Teachers will observe and document student progress weekly and will note any items of concern in such documentation. Teachers will be mindful of information obtained during

the PLP or IEP process when making such observations. Additionally, teachers will review information obtained from short-cycle assessments and student work-product to further evaluate student performance.

2. Teachers will have the opportunity to discuss student progress during weekly staff meetings held Wednesday afternoons. This process will allow the Academy Administrator and educational staff to focus on each student, noting individual progress and performance, and to express any concerns. If concerns exist, a course of action will be determined at that time, including continuing observations and classroom assessments, modifying student placement or instructional methods, requesting a parent-teacher conference, enlisting other teachers to observe the child, providing pullout or small group time, or recommending convening a Student Assistance Team (SAT). Recommendations regarding interventions other than the SAT will be implemented as soon as possible. Teachers will continue to monitor student progress closely regardless of which course of action is decided upon.
3. If a SAT is recommended, that team will initially meet as soon as possible, but no more than 15 working school days after the SAT recommendation date, while accommodating meeting dates to provide for parental attendance and participation. Additional professionals, such as therapists or counselors, may be invited to participate as needed.
4. If the SAT determines additional programming modifications are needed, those modifications will be implemented within 10 school days. If the SAT determines a referral for diagnostic testing, the Academy Administrator will schedule such testing within 30 days, after obtaining necessary parental consent, and the process will continue as outlined in Section E: Special Populations, Special Education Services, Determination of Eligibility (page 57 of this application).

- *assessments that might be considered in addition to the statewide-mandated testing*

The ASL Academy will utilize the SAT and IEP processes in order to further recommend appropriate alternative assessments including the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills/DIBELS, Texas Primary Reading Inventory/TPRI, Developmental Reading Assessment/DRA2, and Informal Reading Inventory/IRI.

- *documentation and reporting of student data to students and parents*

The ASL Academy educational philosophy supports parent-teacher collaboration to ensure student success. Therefore, teachers will be in contact with parents frequently regarding student progress and will utilize the following methods to ensure parents are adequately informed of their child's academic progress:

#### Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parents and teachers will meet a minimum of three times per year. Parents and educational staff will meet annually to develop/update Personalized Learning Plans (PLP) or Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for each student consisting of goals for student achievement; and, parent-teacher conferences are scheduled twice during the school year to discuss student progress and to make any modifications to student placement or educational goals.



### Report Cards

Report Cards will be distributed quarterly and will contain information gathered from student assessments, student work-product evaluations, teacher observations, student self-evaluations, student attendance and behavior, and student attainment of state standards and PLP/IEP goals. Teachers may request a parent-teacher meeting at that time if the student is exhibiting deficiencies in any areas. *(See Appendix V)*

### Written Narratives

Annual written narratives will be reflective of information obtained through teacher observations, student self-assessments, standardized testing, student portfolio evaluations, and also of goals listed in the student's IEP/PLP. Written narratives will include examples of student's academic, emotional, and social growth and discussions of how students, teachers, and families can further improve upon overall achievement.

## **E. SPECIAL POPULATIONS**

- *suggested modifications to the proposed educational program to meet individual student needs, such as bilingual, limited English proficient, and special education*

### **Bilingual / Limited English Proficient (LEP)**

It is anticipated that the majority of students attending the ASL Academy will be bilingual (ASL and/or Spanish) and/or limited English proficient (LEP). Because of this, the ASL Academy's educational philosophy and school structure provide for such students, including students with hearing loss whose primary language is ASL, who frequently have both ASL and English language delays, and who may additionally be members of Spanish speaking families.

As required by federal law, the ASL Academy will not discriminate against such students and will provide students with an educationally-sound program, necessary instructional modifications included, which will help them overcome language barriers in order to benefit fully from the curriculum. The ASL Academy program will provide adequate and properly trained staff and will regularly assess student progress to ensure all students improve language skills, while additionally acquiring curriculum content, in order to meet state standards for proficiency. Proficient students will be addressed utilizing a combination of the following: licensed/certified bilingual, TESOL and/or LEP teachers/educational specialists, English-speaking and American Sign Language bilingual peers, community member mentoring, and school-wide American Sign Language instruction. The sheltered instruction protocol will be used as a reference.

Likewise, students with disabilities requiring special education services, including but not limited to those with hearing loss, will not be discriminated against at the ASL Academy. All special education students will be evaluated and an Individualized Educational Plan will be developed as required by federal law.

- *an outline of a special education plan (the final plan of which must be completed and submitted to the charter authorizer by the end of the planning year) that demonstrates understanding of state and federal special education requirements including the fundamental obligation to provide a free, appropriate education to students identified with disabilities*

### **Special Education Services**

The ASL Academy will provide all parents with a copy of the NM Public Education Department's "Parent and Child Rights in Special Education: Procedural Safeguards Notice" (See Appendix W) upon enrollment in the ASL Academy to ensure parents are fully informed of the special education process and their rights related to this process. Additionally, the ASL Academy Administrator will act as an IEP coordinator for the school to ensure that all required policies, procedures and laws, both State and Federal, are complied with fully and that all necessary services are provided as indicated in the Individualized Education Plan. The Academy Administrator and educational staff will regularly attend professional development training in order to remain current on any and all changes to requirements/procedures concerning special education services. The following information regarding the special education process and mandated requirements will be implemented at the ASL Academy:

### Determination of Eligibility (Tier III Services)

The ASL Academy will identify, locate and screen students who are potential candidates for special education services pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the American With Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004 (IDEA).

Upon completion of the initial evaluation, a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT), composed of parents, general and special education teachers, a diagnostician, related service providers involved in the student evaluation(s), and a school administrator, will meet to discuss the results of the testing and to make a determination regarding student eligibility. Parents will be provided written notice concerning the meeting and afforded sufficient time to confirm they will attend, or to request another more convenient meeting time. The purpose of the meeting is to determine if a disability exists, and if it does, to further discuss the educational needs of the child. If it is determined that no disability exists, the child can be placed in the regular education program, or, additional evaluations may be ordered, depending on what the multidisciplinary team concludes is the best course of action. If the multidisciplinary team determines that a disability does exist, then an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will be developed to address any and all educational considerations and resulting special services related to the child.

### Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Students who enroll at the ASL Academy with an existing IEP will receive those same services listed in their IEP at the ASL Academy, provided that the IEP is current. If the IEP is not current, students may be re-evaluated to determine eligibility and/or the IEP will be updated by the ASL Academy IEP team as required per law. Thereafter, all Individualized Education Plans will be updated annually, whether they were initially developed at the ASL Academy or at another school.

An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will be developed for students identified as eligible for special education services. The ASL Academy will comply with the IEP process established by state and federal law to ensure that all students are properly identified and assessed, and that specialized services listed in the IEP are delivered. This process will ensure:

- Equal access to all students
- Utilization of Individualized Education Plans
- Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
- Least Restricted Environment (LRE)
- Due process and parental involvement
- Nondiscriminatory evaluations

The ASL Academy will be responsible for developing, implementing, reviewing, and revising an IEP program in compliance with all applicable regulations and standards for each student identified with exceptionalities. At an IEP meeting, the individualized education plan is developed by a collaborative team who will, together, make informed decisions designed to provide the student with his or her best opportunity for current and future success. The IEP team is composed of parents, regular education teachers, special education teachers, administrators, specialist, and other professionals with relevant knowledge or expertise. Additional individuals,

such as a parent/child advocate, may be included in the IEP meetings. The ASL Academy recognizes that the IEP is the written statement documenting a specific educational plan which will allow a special education student a free appropriate public education. The IEP document is required for any student eligible for special education services, and provides for that student to receive such services.

Prior to the IEP meeting, the following actions will occur as required by law:

- Student will be evaluated through a variety of assessments, observations, and information-gathering which target all areas related to the student's eligibility.
- For initial IEP meetings, the MDT team will examine all data and determine if the child meets the criteria to be considered eligible for special education and, if appropriate, related services. Determination results will be recorded in the student's school record. If the student is determined to be eligible for special education because of a specific learning disability, the MDT must also complete the "Determining the Existence of a Specific Learning Disability" form. This two-page form utilizes objective results (such as test data) and subjective assessments (such observation and professional opinion) to make the determination. This form also requires each team member to agree or disagree with the findings. A team member who disagrees must submit a separate statement presenting his or her conclusions.
- Written notice of the IEP meeting will be sent to the parents prior to the meeting, detailing required information regarding the meeting.

### IEP Content

IDEA 2004 requires that when developing a student's Individualized Education Plan, that the following information be considered:

- the strengths of the child;
- the concerns of the parents for enhancing the education of their child;
- the results of the initial evaluation or most recent evaluation of the child, and
- the academic, developmental, and functional needs of the child

To that end, the ASL Academy will use the New Mexico Special Education Bureau's IEP form, which includes the following sections:

1. Consideration of special factors (such as hearing loss)
2. Student profile and student/family vision
3. Transition services (required at age 14, or sooner, if appropriate)
4. Present levels of educational performance
  - a. How the child's disability affects the child's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum;
  - b. For children with disabilities who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards, a description of benchmarks or short-term objectives

5. Annual goals (objectives/benchmarks): The statement of measurable annual academic and functional goals must be designed to meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum.
6. Least restrictive environment
7. Summary of services
8. Modifications
9. Supplementary aids and services
10. Participation in mandated testing
11. Schedules of Services: the projected date for the beginning of the services and modifications
12. Level of Service/Setting: the anticipated frequency, location, and duration of those services and modifications
13. Accommodations and Modifications: a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child, and a statement of the program modifications of supports for school personnel that will be provided for the child
14. IEP Progress Documentation
15. Prior written notice of proposed/rejected action(s)

#### Student Discipline

IDEA 2004 states that "school personnel may consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis when determining whether to order a change in placement for a student with a disability who violated a code of student conduct," per Section 615(k)(1)(A). Therefore, the Academy Administrator of the ASL Academy will consider each set of unique circumstances in deciding whether to seek a long-term disciplinary removal of a student with a disability. A long-term disciplinary removal is 10 or more school days.

Should the school recommend a change in the student's placement due to a disciplinary offense, the school, parents, and relevant members of the IEP will review all information in the student's file, including the child's IEP, any teacher observation and any relevant information provided by the parents to determine if: 1) the conduct in question was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to the child's disability, or, 2) the conduct in question was the direct result of the school's failure to implement the IEP.

If the manifestation determination concludes that the conduct in question was not caused by the child's disability, and IEP team is charged with determining an interim alternative education setting of the student per Section 615 (k)(2).

If it is determined that the child's behavior was related to the disability, the IEP team is to "return the child to the placement from which the child was removed, unless the parent and the school agree to a change of placement as part of the modification of the behavioral intervention plan" per Section 615(k)(1)(F)(iii). At that time, the IEP team will conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and implement a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP). A functional behavioral assessment is conducted when a student's behavior interferes with his/her learning or the learning of others, and is used to identify why a behavior is occurring so that appropriate interventions can be developed by through the IEP process. If a functional behavioral assessment was previously conducted prior to the behavior in question, a new FBA may not be conducted per Section 615(k)(1)(iii). Similarly, if the school had previously developed and implemented a behavioral intervention plan, the IEP team will then review and modify the existing plan as needed to address the behavior in question. The ASL Academy will utilize the FBA and BIP forms provided by the NM PED Special Education Bureau.

#### Treatment of Student Records

Assessments of Individualized Education Plans and all other student records will be maintained confidentially consistent with state and federal law. The ASL Academy assures that all records and procedures pertaining to such records will comply with the New Mexico Inspection of Public Records Act.

#### Least Restrictive Environment

Students who qualify for special education services will be placed in the least restrictive environment (LRE), which will vary by student and will depend on each student's needs. The Least Restrictive Environment could be inclusion in regular programs, special speech and language services, and partial-day special education classes which address student needs. Least Restrictive Environments can extend to local district programs, regional or state-provided services, or private providers contracted by the school. Instructional support materials, computer programs, digitized media and other materials will be available to enhance and increase academic learning as needed.

#### NM Standards and Student Performance Expectations

For special education students who are not meeting the NM Standards and student performance expectations, opportunities for additional programming will be provided through the IEP process.

#### Alternate Assessment

The ASL Academy understands that Alternate Assessment was developed for students with severe cognitive disabilities to measure the performance of this relatively small population of students who are unable to participate in the general assessment system, with or without accommodations as determined by an IEP team. In the event that a student is enrolled at The ASL Academy whose disabilities preclude him/her from valid and reliable participation in general assessments, an alternate assessment will be used to gather information on the standards based performance and progress of the student. Eligible students will take the New Mexico Alternate Assessment in grades 3-8 as an alternate to state mandated testing in those grades. Teachers can use the results from each year to identify goals, program needs, and student growth. The IEP team will complete the New Mexico Public Education Department "Addendum for Determining Eligibility for the New Mexico Alternate Assessment" and provide documentation that the student meets participation or eligibility criteria per 34 CFR Sec 300.138(b)(1).

### Due Process

Due Process Hearing Procedures may be initiated between parent and public education agency concerning the following circumstances:

- A proposal or refusal to initiate or change identification, assessment, or educational placement of a child or the provision of a free, appropriate, public education to the child.
- A parent refuses consent to assessment procedures. A mediation conference may be requested at any point during the hearing process if both parties agree to mediate and are willing to extend the 45 day limit for issuing a hearing decision for a period equal to the length of the mediation process.

### **Section 504 / American Disabilities Act**

Section 504 (Subpart D) is a civil rights law that is the responsibility of the comprehensive general education system. It requires students with disabilities be provided with a free appropriate public education (FAPE). As such, the ASL Academy will provide the full range of accommodations and services necessary for students with disabilities to participate in and benefit from public education programs and activities.

The ASL Academy recognizes that all individuals who are disabled under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) are also considered to be disabled, and therefore protected, under Section 504/ADA. However, all individuals who are disabled under Section 504 will not meet the eligibility requirements of IDEA. These children do require a response from the regular education staff, and a plan for the provision of accommodations and services may take the form of a written Section 504 Plan.

Section 504 protects all qualified students with disabilities, defined as those persons having a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities; has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment per 29 U.S.C Sec. 706(8). “Major life activities” are defined as “...functions such as caring for one’s self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working” per 34CFR Part 104.3.

The components of evaluation assessment for Section 504 are determined by the type of disability suspected, data required to define the impact of the disability in the education environment, and the type of services/accommodations that may be needed. There are no evaluation requirements as exist under IDEA. However, the evaluation will be sufficient to accurately and completely assess the nature and extent of the disability, and the impact of the disability on a specific major life activity.

The determination of services needed will be made in accordance with evaluation data by a group of persons knowledgeable about the student. The group will review the nature and presence of the disability, how it affects the student’s access to the educational process, and whether accommodations are needed to prevent discrimination. The decisions about 504 eligibility and services will be documented in the student’s file, and if services are provided, eligibility and the plan for services will be reviewed periodically, as determined by the group who developed the plan.

As required by this law, the parent or guardian will be provided with notice of actions affecting the identification, evaluation or placement of the student. Parents/guardians will be invited to the meeting and participate in the decisions made. Parents are entitled to an impartial due process hearing if they disagree with the school's decisions in these areas. A section 504 hearing will be made available by the school if requested by the parent. The ASL Academy understands that parents may choose to appeal directly to the Office of Civil Rights without notifying the school of their concerns or requesting a 504 due process hearing.

### **Highly Qualified Teachers**

Under No Child Left Behind, NCLB, instruction at the ASL Academy will be provided by highly qualified teachers. This applies to both general and special education teachers teaching in the academic subjects listed in the NCLB regulations: English, reading, language arts, mathematics, science, foreign language, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography per 34 CFR 200.55(b)(2). The ASL Academy will follow the state rules on determining the status of a teacher as highly qualified.

- *how the charter school will provide access to ancillary services including, but not limited to, counseling and health.*

The ASL Academy anticipates that a significant number of students will require ancillary services related to occupational therapy, speech therapy, and audiology. Therefore, the ASL Academy will hire full-time staff consisting of an occupation therapist (OT), a tri-lingual speech language pathologist (SLP), and an audiologist to provide student support services. Ancillary services will be provided throughout the week, during regular class time, as appropriate, and during designated student pull-out times, which are accommodated in the weekly class schedule to ensure students do not miss important instructional time. Because social and emotional well-being is a fundamental component of the school's education philosophy, teachers will receive professional development training related to these topics, with an emphasis on screening techniques used to identify students who may require targeted counseling services. Students that require additional services beyond the capacity of the school will be referred to a menu of outside resources created by school administration. Counselors will be contracted by the school for students whose IEP's require such services. Other service providers, including physical therapists and diagnosticians, will be contracted as needed. The ASL Academy will employ a full-time school nurse.



**SECTION VI.**  
**FINANCIAL PLAN**

**A. BUDGET**

- *Provide a completed revenue projection form 910B5*

**Revenue Projection Form 910B5 - See Appendix C**

- *Provide a balanced proposed operating budget covering each year of the charter term based on current unit value using the Budget Spreadsheet*

**Proposed Operating Budget Spreadsheet - See Appendix D**

- *Provide a detailed narrative description of the revenue and expenditure assumptions on which the operating budget is based. The budget narrative should provide sufficient information to fully understand how budgetary figures were determined.*

**Budget Narrative: Overview of Budget Assumptions**

The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy is unique in that it will be a charter school specifically created to address the needs of the underserved special education population of hearing impaired children. It is therefore anticipated that the majority of the student population will require an alternative mode of communication, namely American Sign Language (ASL), and by offering direct instruction in ASL in an environment consisting of regular education and special education students, the ASL Academy's educational setting will be the least restrictive environment for many deaf and hard of hearing students. The ASL Academy is aware of the complexities of special education funding and legal requirements involved in serving the deaf and hard of hearing population, and moreover, understands the cultural complexities which exist between the deaf and hearing communities. The ASL Academy is capable of and devoted to establishing strong relationships between school, family, and the community in order to improve educational outcomes for all children. In order to successfully serve the diverse student population of ASL Academy, the following assumptions were made when preparing the Revenue Projection Form and the Operating Budget Spreadsheet:

- 85% of ASL Academy students will qualify for "C" and "D" level special education funding, 25% and 60% respectively, and will require additional services as indicated in their IEPs. Such a population will require substantial support services which are reflected in administrative and educational staffing, ancillary service providers, and specialized equipment and training expenses.
- In order to comply with State and Federal mandates tied to pupil-teacher ratio (PTR), budget projections will assume an initial overall ratio of 10:1 when determining staffing requirements, which will additionally provide for an increase in student population in subsequent years.

- Ancillary services will require employing a full-time audiologist, occupational therapist, and speech language pathologist. Additional ancillary services, including physical therapy and a social worker to provide counseling services, will be contracted as indicated by student need and through the IEP process.
- It is expected that many students will have additional medical needs, and therefore the school will also employ a full-time registered nurse.
- Due to the importance of early language acquisition and the fact that 90% of deaf and hard of hearing children have hearing parents, a full-time Family and Community Programs Coordinator will be employed for the specific purpose of addressing family educational needs and to organize additional community events supportive of deaf and hard of hearing children and their families.
- The ASL Academy will establish a trilateral leadership model in order to fully support the educational needs, business requirements, and family/community programming which combine to fulfill the mission of the school.
- It is expected that the full-time administrative and ancillary staff will be sufficient to serve additional students as the school adds additional grades in subsequent years. When grades are added, additional full-time teachers and educational assistants are factored into the budget.
- Expendables will include educational material, supplies, and equipment needed to operate a high quality school. Moreover, specific maintenance and replacement costs tied to audiology equipment, hearing aids, and special education related equipment will be an important piece in providing a quality educational environment for all students. Other expendable budget items include, but are not limited to liability insurance, professional development, and testing materials.

The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy will prepare and adopt an annual budget in accordance with all statutory requirements. The operating budget is prepared under the direction of the Finance Manager and the Trilateral Leadership Team, consisting of the Executive Director, Academy Administrator, and Family and Community Programs Coordinator. The needs of all aspects of the school program will be taken into consideration with regard to budget issues. The operating budget will be submitted to the Governance Board for revision and/or final approval, and ultimately to the Public Education Department pursuant to the Public School Finance Act.

### **State Equalization Guarantee (SEG) Funding Revenue**

Initial enrollment for the ASL Academy is projected at 40 students. This estimate is taken from known deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing children in need of an ASL curriculum within the metropolitan area whose ages and grades fall within the first year's K-4 parameters. First year funding is commensurate with this number. For budgetary purposes, special education figures utilized in the Revenue Projection Form and the Proposed Operating Budget Spreadsheet have been estimated at 85% of the total population, with 25% and 60% of the total qualifying for "C"

and “D” level services respectively. All staffing and ancillary expense estimates are reflective of this student population breakdown.

### Bilingual Status

The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy will seek to establish itself as a bilingual-multicultural charter school as recognized by the Bilingual Multicultural Education Act (Section 22-23-1, NMSA 1978). Upon charter approval, the ASL Academy will submit all necessary application documentation as mandated in the “Guidelines for Implementing Bilingual Multicultural Education Programs” (Section 6.32.2.11, NMSA 1978). The ASL Academy will operate within all prescribed guidelines associated with being a Bilingual Multicultural school, including, but not limited to, employing properly endorsed teachers and approved alignment with all bilingual standards and benchmarks.

American Sign Language (ASL) is a fully-developed and naturally occurring language. ASL has its own literature by and about Deaf people, in both written and oral modes, reflecting customs and rituals, legends and tales, games and jokes, poetry and naming practices unique to Deaf culture. In fact, “Deaf culture is now recognized and studied by anthropologists, ethnographers, folklorists, and others interested in culture and cross cultural communication.” (Wilcox, 1991). The ASL Academy will present ASL and English as separate distinct systems to ensure students experience the cognitive and academic advantages of a bilingual program and become proficient in both languages.

### Elementary Physical Education, Art, Music and Dance Programs

The ASL Academy will provide a comprehensive physical education and fine arts program that addresses all standards and benchmarks established by the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) and will operate in compliance with all regulations associated with these programs. The ASL Academy will contract certified teachers endorsed in elementary physical education and elementary fine arts for these classes, scheduled weekly and occurring during full-time educational staff meetings and professional development sessions. The contract Physical Education and Fine Arts teachers will comply with all program requirements and standards, and will document student assessments in accordance with the educational philosophy emphasizing regular assessments and monitoring of student progress.

### Preschool Program

During the second year of operation, the ASL Academy will add a full-day preschool class for three- and four year-olds and will hire a full-time teacher certified in early childhood development and a full-time educational assistant to serve those students. It is expected that existing administrative and full-time ancillary staff will serve these additional students. Beyond that, additional ancillary services, such as physical therapy and counseling services, will be contracted as needed. The SEG formula only compensates for a half-day preschool program. Because of language delays seen in this population and the importance of early intervention services, the ASL Academy will apply for full-time preschool program funding. Therefore, the spreadsheet calculation has been adjusted by doubling the preschool student counts to allow for the calculation of full-time preschool funding.

- *Address major start-up expenses, including staffing and benefits; special education services; facility costs; materials and services; and contracted services*

### **Start-Up Expenses**

Through the use of the Proposed Charter Schools Program Federal Grant and with assistance of Bernalillo County, the ASL Academy foresees securing adequate resources to open for the 2010-2011 school year. Besides the typical expenses associated with the opening of any school, the ASL Academy anticipates having additional costs specifically related to serving the large population of special education students, specifically those who are deaf and hard of hearing. Upon charter approval, the ASL Academy will follow all prescribed procedures to secure the following materials and services necessary for opening the school:

- Advertising: Electronic media, website construction, print media
- Audiological Equipment: Audiology lab including sound booth and related equipment, FM system, supplies. Estimated at \$150,000 in initial costs.
- General Education Equipment and Supplies: Tables, chairs, desks, etc.
- Office Equipment: Office furniture including desks, chairs, filing cabinets with locks, tables, copy machine with scanner, printers, phone system, facsimile machine, etc.
- Facility Preparation and ADA Compliance: Emergency alarms system including flashing colored-lights for deaf/hearing impaired, security door lock system
- Contract Services (Deliverable Services): Financial manager, grant writer, administrator, advertising coordinator
- Books, Educational Materials, Curriculum: including educational software programs
- Playground and Gymnasium Equipment: including physical and occupational therapy equipment, and equipment for physical education classes
- Performing Arts Classroom Equipment: including music, art, and dance equipment and supplies
- Specialized Equipment: additional specialized equipment of physical, occupation, speech and other therapies/services required in student IEPs
- Technology: Active boards, laptops, document cameras, digital cameras, video camera, video phones, DSL internet connection, TTY
- Nursing Station: Refrigerator with lock, cabinet with lock, medical supplies and health center equipment, desk, bed, blankets, etc.
- Computer Software: IEP preparation program, student database program
- Financial Management System: Forms, checks, receipt book, purchase orders, equipment check out, registration forms.
- Professional Development, Certification, and Additional Training: Board orientation workshop, Learning for Life certification, Shared Reading Project certification, etc.

## **Staffing: Full-Time and Contracted**

The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy staffing policies and practices will reflect the school's mission and commitment to high standards. The school will hire educators and support staff that are bilingual in English and ASL and exhibit the highest standards of professionalism and commitment. In addition to the annual salaries noted below, the budget worksheet automatically calculates and includes the cost of benefits for full-time staff as a percentage of their annual salary. Independent contractors are not eligible for benefits, and therefore, no additional adjustment is made their total cost beyond their annual salary. To assure the school's viability, no raises are scheduled. Raises and bonuses will be at the discretion of the Board.

### **The Trilateral Leadership Team**

The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy will operate under a trilateral leadership system where the Academy Administrator, the Executive Director, and the Family and Community Programs Coordinator have shared authority and responsibility of school programming and management. Each position is essential in assuring that the school is performing at the highest standard possible in order to provide a rigorous and comprehensive educational program, and encouraging school-family-community involvement, while being fiscally responsible and business-minded. The ASL Academy will compensate all three leadership positions equally according to competitive elementary school administrative salaries as compared to other outlying districts:

- Trilateral Leadership Team: Starting Salary: \$62,000 each / 3 total full-time employees

### **Teachers**

Due to the expected high special education population of the ASL Academy, it is assumed that the pupil-teacher ratio will remain relatively low (10:1 at opening) in order to stay in accordance with state regulations tied to "C" and "D" level special education students. Students will be grouped according to age-appropriate grade level and the curriculum will reflect those grade-level standards and benchmarks. It should be noted that each student's IEP will dictate additional changes in placement or services which will be accommodated using staff as indicated below. The ASL Academy will initially employ four full-time New Mexico teachers, dual-certified in general and special education, and will add one additional teachers each year to include eight total teachers for the fifth year of operation, organized as follows:

#### **Initial Year of Operation 2010-2011**

4 Full-Time Teachers: Kindergarten / 1st grade  
2nd grade / 3rd grade  
4th grade  
ASL Literacy Specialist servicing all grades

#### **Second Year of Operation 2011-2012**

5 Full-Time Teachers: Early Childhood Educator (Preschool)  
Kindergarten / 1st grade  
2nd grade / 3rd grade  
4th grade / 5<sup>th</sup> grade  
ASL Literacy Specialist servicing all grades

### Third Year of Operation 2012-2013

6 Full-Time Teachers: Early Childhood Educator (Preschool)  
Kindergarten / 1st grade  
2nd grade / 3rd grade  
4th grade / 5<sup>th</sup> grade  
6<sup>th</sup> grade  
ASL Literacy Specialist servicing all grades

### Fourth Year of Operation 2013-2014

7 Full-Time Teachers: Early Childhood Educator (Preschool)  
Kindergarten  
1st grade  
2nd grade / 3rd grade  
4th grade / 5<sup>th</sup> grade  
6<sup>th</sup> grade / 7<sup>th</sup> grade  
ASL Literacy Specialist servicing all grades

### Fifth Year of Operation 2014-2015

8 Full-Time Teachers: Early Childhood Educator (Preschool)  
Kindergarten  
1st grade  
2nd grade / 3rd grade  
4th grade / 5<sup>th</sup> grade  
6<sup>th</sup> grade / 7<sup>th</sup> grade  
8<sup>th</sup> grade  
ASL Literacy Specialist servicing all grades

Teachers will be compensated in accordance with the New Mexico tier licensing system salary plus 10% to account for additional work days and the specialized training, including ASL fluency, which these teachers will possess. The ASL Academy believes this spending priority will allow the recruitment of the high level, experienced teachers who are instrumental in accomplishing student academic goals.

- Teachers: Starting Salary \$55,000 each / 4 total full-time employees initially  
This is a salary estimate based on all teachers being level III certified. It is likely that in subsequent years, some teachers may have less years of experience and thus fall within the level I or level II pay scales. It was estimated that one of the teachers will be National Board Certified.
- Physical Education, Art, Music/Dance Teachers: Starting Salary \$5,500 each / 3 total  
These will be contracted positions, estimated at approximately 10% of a full-time salary upon school opening, and do not include benefits. The starting salary is \$5,500. These amounts are steadily increased over the 5 year period so the final figures represent 20% of a full-time salary, as will be required to accommodate the increase in the student population.

The ASL Academy budget accounts for the Training and Experience Index Adjustment [22.8-.24 NMSA 1978], to reflect that the initial staff of four teachers will all be Level III and highly experienced. In subsequent years the Index is lowered to demonstrate that less experienced teachers may be hired.

Years of Experience					
Academic Classification	0-2	3-5	6-8	9-15	Over 15
Bachelor's Degree or less	.75	.90	1.00	1.05	1.05
Bachelor's Degree plus 15 credit hours	.80	.95	1.00	1.10	1.15
Master's Degree or Bachelor's Degree plus 45 credit hours	.85	1.00	1.05	1.15	1.20
Master's Degree plus 15 credit hours	.90	1.05	1.15	1.30	1.35
Post-Master's Degree or Master's Degree plus 45 credit hours	1.00	1.15	1.30	1.40	1.50

Educational Assistants

Educational Assistants will partner with teachers to meet the educational needs of all students and ensure that low pupil-teacher ratios will be employed for “C” and “D” level inclusion models which dictate staffing needs. Educational Assistants (EAs) will be assigned to each grade level teacher, for a total of three educational assistants for the first year of operation. The ASL Literacy Specialist will not be assigned an EA. An EA will be hired for each subsequent year.

- Educational Assistants: Starting Salary \$17,000 each/ 3 total full-time employees initially  
Pay for educational assistants is significantly higher than that of surrounding districts to assure that the ASL Academy can attract bilingual, experienced educational assistants.

Ancillary Services

Due to the projected high number of special education services that will be provided, the ASL Academy foresees the need for full time ancillary staff in the areas of Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Audiology. The school will also contract out for part-time ancillary staff in Physical Therapy and Educational Diagnostic Services. A part-time social worker will be contracted as needed to provide counseling services, and the budget estimates that salary at 25% of a full-time position. The ASL Academy will follow a prescribed state salary schedule tied to experience and qualifications.

- Full-Time Employees (3 total)                      Starting Salary  
Speech Language Pathologist (SLP)              \$55,000  
Occupational Therapist (OT)                      \$55,000  
Audiologist    \$55,000

- <u>Part-Time Contractors (2 total)</u>	<u>Starting Salary</u>
Physical Therapist (PT)	\$13,750
Educational Diagnostician	\$13,750
Social Worker	\$20,000

All salaries used in the formulation of the budget are estimated for therapists/audiologists being level III certified. Additionally, all persons will need to have ASL skills, and the SLP will be trilingual. It is feasible that a strong Level I or Level II candidate can be hired for less than the budgeted amount. Part-time contractors are estimated at 25% of a full-time salary.

Non-Instructional Support Services

Because the ASL Academy is a relatively small school, it will initially contract a part-time Finance Manager to oversee all financial and business transactions, and the Governance Board understands the importance of hiring a person who is highly qualified and appropriately certified. The Board will review hiring a full-time Finance Manager if the need arises in subsequent years.

The ASL Academy will contract an Interpreter for the first year of operation in order to serve members of the trilateral leadership team which may include Deaf adults. Due to the expected growth and expansion of the school after the second year, the ASL Academy will hire a full-time trilingual Interpreter for utilization by Deaf staff. For example, if the Executive Director has meetings with a Legislator, the interpreter will be needed. Likewise, the Academy Administrator and/or Family and Community Programs Coordinator may need to converse with a non-signing or Spanish-speaking parent during the school day. Additionally, the Interpreter will be utilized to translate school information, such as flyers regarding intercession programs, for Spanish-speaking families.

It is necessary that the ASL Academy employ a full-time Nurse in order to service many of the children attending the school. As earlier stated, it is foreseeable that many of the students will require extra services, many of these being health-related.

The ASL Academy will hire a full-time Secretary to perform secretarial, clerical, and data management duties, and also a full-time Custodian to perform cleaning duties and general low level facility maintenance.

- <u>Full-Time Employees (3 total)</u>	<u>Starting Salary</u>
Nurse	\$50,000
Secretary	\$32,000
Custodian	\$21,000
- <u>Part-Time Contractor (initially)</u>	<u>Starting Salary</u>
Finance Manager	\$25,000
Interpreter	\$10,000

Insurance Benefits

The ASL Academy Employee Benefits Package is aligned with the New Mexico Public Schools Insurance Authority (NMPSIA) regulations and requirements, and will provide an appropriate Health, Dental, Life, and Disability benefits package to its employees.



### **Special Education Services**

It is anticipated that the student population of the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy will consist mainly of students experiencing some form of hearing loss and therefore requiring an alternative mode of communication, namely ASL. Therefore, it is expected that a high percentage of the student population will qualify for some level of special education services, and for purposes of budgets estimates, 85% of the total population was estimated to qualify for such services, with 25% of total students being classified as “C” level and 60% of total students classified as “D” level.

The ASL Academy is fully aware of the complexities and legalities of special education funding and service requirements. All students who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be provided services as dictated by the IEP process. Foreseeable special education considerations which impact the SEG funding formula include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Cost index tied to each level of special education student
- Obligation to carry out services as dictated by the IEP
- State requirements pertaining to pupil-teach ratio and inclusion model
- Providing Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for all students
- Assuring all ancillary services are necessary and used effectively

### **Facility Costs**

The ASL Academy will establish a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation for the purposes of complying with requirements necessary to obtain a viable facility. All procedures and regulations mandated through government statutes will be strictly followed.

The ASL Academy has made arrangements to enter into a lease agreement with Bernalillo County. Julie Baca, Deputy County Manager, will serve as Fiscal Agent and Project Administrator for the facility. Importantly, Bernalillo County will manage, coordinate, and oversee all necessary renovations to ensure the facility is in compliance with all ADA requirements and school building codes. In order to avoid unnecessary costs associated with additional renovations, the facility will be selected and designed to accommodate the school during the fifth school year when it is operating at full capacity.

Costs associated with building maintenance and upkeep will be the responsibility of the building owner, not the school. Daily janitorial services will be provided by the full-time custodian employed by the school. Monthly rent expense and utility costs will be negotiated with the lessor. The ASL Academy intends to utilize the lease reimbursement allowance of \$700 per student to fund the cost of leasing the facility.

### **Materials and Services/Contracted Services**

The ASL Academy’s yearly operational budget related to material and services will reflect all special educational services and equipment that are required as indicated in IEPs. Many of these equipment costs are one-time costs that were listed in the Start-Up Costs or Staffing sections, including:

- All ancillary service positions

- All audiological equipment including the sound booth, school-owned FM system and hearing aids, and equipment/materials necessary for service, maintenance and repair of hearing aids and related items.
- All specialized equipment related to physical, occupational and speech therapy services

There will be additional annual “maintenance and replacement” costs for equipment in future years and that will be considered when preparing each annual budget for subsequent years. The number of students requiring ancillary services will also be considered when preparing the annual budget. It is foreseeable that as the school population increases in subsequent years many of the services, which were initially contracted, may transition into full-time employee positions, if that proves to be more cost effective. Otherwise, the ASL Academy will continue to utilize contractors to meet the ancillary service requirements indicated in student IEPs.

Additionally, the ASL Academy anticipates contracting for services including professional development training for staff and Board, IT (computer and networking) services, advertising and marketing, and website design and maintenance.

- *Spending priorities that align with the school’s mission, educational program, management structure, professional development needs, and growth plan.*

### **Spending Priorities**

It is the intent of the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy to provide an academically rigorous and comprehensive educational environment for deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing children, and the budgetary considerations and spending priorities will directly reflect the ASL Academy’s commitment to this mission. In order to achieve the school’s ambitions goals and to provide specialized services to this specific population, it will be necessary to hire properly trained, certified and experienced administrators, educators and staff, and to maintain an environment which is properly equipped to adequately meet the needs of the students. It is the intent of the ASL Academy to carefully and purposefully allocate monies in order to ensure that the school’s goals are met in the most cost-effective manner possible.

### **Educational Program**

- The ASL Academy will hire and retain experienced, well-trained, and highly effective educators, service providers, and support personnel. The ASL Academy acknowledges that it will be necessary to offer nationally competitive salaries in order to recruit persons with specific skills in ASL and experience in deaf education.
- The ASL Academy will remain current regarding items related to the most recent educational research, materials, programs, and technology pertaining to the education of deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing children which promote rigor and accountability, and this will be reflected in the utilization of equipment and in professional development opportunities.
- The ASL Academy will provide prescribed educational and developmental services for all students in order to maximize their potential, and the resulting costs associated with

hiring additional high-quality therapists and adequately providing such services will always be a budgetary priority.

- The ASL Academy will maintain a facility that is functional, safe, and inviting to all stakeholders, and which promotes a positive learning environment for all students, staff and community members. The facility will provide adequate space for ancillary services and audiology equipment, as well as additional classrooms for parent group meetings and ASL classes.
- The ASL Academy will provide education programs for families which promote ASL acquisition and school involvement, and will also host community events to further support children and families by providing networking opportunities.

### Management Structure

- The ASL Academy's management structure directly reflects the education philosophy of the school which recognizes the importance of providing support for the child and the family, while building community connections. Therefore, the school will employ three full-time school leaders to collectively manage the ASL Academy. Equal authority is distributed to school leadership, business leadership, and community and family program leadership in order to determine, create, and oversee quality programs and practices. This Trilateral Leadership Team, composed of the Academy Administrator, the Executive Director, and the Family and Community Programs Coordinator will ensure positive collaboration and representation on all aspects of the school.
- Additionally, the ASL Academy will contract a part-time certified Finance Manager who is experienced in financial regulations and procedures in the education setting.
- The ASL Academy will assure that leaders of the school, including the Governing Board, will have the opportunity to grow and develop as school and community leaders through scheduled trainings and professional development.

### Professional Development

- The ASL Academy understands the importance of staying abreast of current educational pedagogy and best practices, and this is especially important for bilingual, deaf education. It is the intent of the ASL Academy that all professional development strive to be relevant to the needs of the school and its students.
- The ASL Academy will allocate a percentage of its yearly operational budget to ensure that professional development needs are adequately addressed. It is anticipated that due of the specialized nature of the educational program, such expenses will include the hiring of outside speakers or allowing staff to attend specialized workshops held in other states. The Academy Administrator will be responsible for scheduling, and overseeing all professional development training; however the Trilateral Leadership Team will work collectively to determine which specific professional development programs will be funded each year.

## Growth Plan

- The ASL Academy will expand the program by one grade each year, with the exception of second year which will add a preschool class and the 5th grade. The fifth year of operation will offer programming for preschool through the eighth grade. The student population is expected to grow from 40 students the first year to 80 students the fifth year.
- Staffing for additional teachers and educational assistants will be considered as previously indicated. For budgeting estimation purposes, the school will open with 4 full-time teachers and 3 educational assistants, and by adding staff as needed when grades are added, will ultimately employ 8 full-time teachers and 7 educational assistants. It is anticipated that the contracted positions for physical education and the art and music/dance teachers will also increase in cost as those teachers are to accommodate the additional student population, and this is also reflected in the budget estimates. Estimates for annual salaries are competitive and will ensure the ASL Academy can recruit out-of-state candidates as expected due to the specialized nature of the educational program.
- Increases in the number of students requiring special education services will be considered annually, and it is accepted that additional costs for employing or contracting ancillary service providers may increase as the school expands in size. Fortunately, the funding formula provides reimbursement on a “per student” basis for such services, so any additional expenditures will be met with coinciding additional revenue. The ASL Academy will monitor the use of ancillary services and will hire additional full-time employees when it becomes more cost-effective to do so rather than utilizing part-time contractors.
- The Trilateral Leadership model was established in order to address specific programs within the school, and the model is also accommodating of the school’s growth. It is expected that as the school expands and the population increases, each leadership team member will still be able to meet needs of the additional children and families. Although many of the children will require more oversight than the “typical” elementary student, the overall total population of the school remains low compared to other public elementary schools. It is also estimated that the non-instructional staff, including the secretary, school nurse and custodian, will also be able to adequately meet the needs of the school through the fifth year of operation.
- The school facility will be selected, designed and renovated in order to accommodate the school at full capacity of 80 students in order to eliminate the need for additional renovations and related costs throughout the years.
- *Provide a detailed narrative description of all revenue sources other than SEG funding, to include any federal, state, or private funds and/or grants.*

## **Revenue Sources Other Than SEG Funding**

The ASL Academy estimates that it will receive substantial funding beyond the SEG funding revenue. These additional monies will be used to provide for the additional costs of running a specialized school focused on a specific special education population, including recruiting appropriate and highly trained staff, providing specialized audiology equipment, offering family and community programming which is vital to student success, providing necessary and appropriate professional development which may be more costly due to the specific needs of the student population, and providing low pupil-teacher ratios in order to meet student needs.

In order to secure state and federal grants, the ASL Academy will require both the Executive Director and the Family and Community Service Coordinator to actively engage in writing grant proposals that specifically address the needs and programs promoted by the school. The goal of the ASL Academy is to provide the most comprehensive program available for students, families and communities, and the additional funds received from sources other than the SEG funding formula will be utilized to assist in the achievement of the school's mission. The ASL Academy's Tri-lateral Leadership Team, Finance Director, and Governance Board understand that many grants have specific requirements with regard to how monies can be spent; and therefore, will act in accordance with specific grant guidelines and mandates when utilizing such funds.

The budget is aligned with the mission of the school and provides for growth and high program standards. The following additional sources of revenue were considered when constructing the budget and comply with all state and federal laws and regulations. Such grant/revenue applications will be completed upon approval of the charter application.

### **Prospective Charter School Program Federal Grant (PCSP Start-Up Grant)**

It is expected that many start up costs will be addressed through this grant, but the specific amount of the award will be determined through the application process.

### **Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA) Federal Grants**

These monies will directly impact preschool, elementary and middle school instruction and staffing, and it is expected that the amount of these grants will exceed \$100,000.

### **U.S. Department of Education Discretionary Grants**

The ASL Academy will apply for grants for the 2010-2011 school year which directly reflect the mission of the school and needs of the students, family and school-community. Examples of grants offered for the 2009-2010 year that would be applicable to the ASL Academy include:

- Magnet School Assistance Grant
- Parental Assistance and Local Family Center Grant
- Star Schools Program Grant
- Reading is Fundamental – Inexpensive Book Distribution Program Grant
- Public Charter Schools Grant
- Arts in Education Grant
- Physical Education Grant
- Early Childhood Education

The ASL Academy is aware that these specific grants may change for the 2010-2011 school year, and therefore, the ASL Academy will review all grant offerings and work within the prescribed processes established by the U.S. Department of Education in order to access this additional revenue.

#### Community Schools Program Grant

A joint effort between the County of Bernalillo, Albuquerque Public School District, and the City of Albuquerque, this grant provides funding for family and community programs. It is expected that the amount of this grant will exceed \$10,000.

#### The New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons (NMCDHH)

Monies allotted by the Commission will directly impact instructional programs and student needs. The amount of this funding is estimated at \$50,000.

#### Title I Funding

Since the purpose of this school is to meet the educational needs of low-achieving children with disabilities, the ASL Academy will complete all documentation necessary to establish itself as a Title I school, and therefore access Title I Federal Grant funding which will directly impact educational programming at all levels. The amount of this grant will be determined by needs of the school as indicated in the application.

#### Legislative Appropriations

The ASL Academy will lobby the New Mexico State Legislature for additional funds to address programming needs for the school. Such funds are expected to exceed \$100,000.

#### Capital Outlay

The ASL Academy will lobby the New Mexico State Legislature for Capital Outlay funding which will be used for improvement of school facilities. Such funds are expected to exceed \$100,000.

- *Provide a detailed narrative description of the expenditure assumptions for these other revenue sources.*

#### **Revenue and Expenditure Assumptions**

The ASL Academy recognizes that the SEG funding formula was not intended to support the additional programming that a specialized school like the ASL Academy requires. Indeed, the ambitious mission of the school, which will not only serve a specific population of mostly special education students, but which will also serve the parents, families, and community, will require additional funding to do so. The ASL Academy will utilize the additional revenue to ensure that the school's mission and educational philosophy result in the desperately needed improvement in educational outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing students in the greater Albuquerque area. The ASL Academy will utilize the additional funding to maintain and develop strong educational programs as described throughout this application, including:

- Funding of the Family and Community Programs Coordinator position which is critical for developing and overseeing this critical aspect of the school's mission and educational philosophy.

- Intercession programs for students which will allow them to receive additional tutoring services or to participate in specific workshops designed to increase ASL acquisition while building self-confidence and relationships with peers
- Educational programming for parents including ASL classes, workshops on topics of interest including deaf culture, parenting strategies, and special education laws, and opportunities to meet various members of the deaf community in both a professional and social capacity in order to increase awareness of support programs/services and to provide networking opportunities with other families.
- Provide for improvements to the educational program by funding items including professional development, specialized out-of-state training for staff, specialized curriculum, technology, and other educational instruments and programs useful for educating deaf and hard of hearing students.

It is the ASL Academy's intent that all expenditures reflect the goal of achieving its mission and establishing itself as a strong educational entity that serves the deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing community in the greater Albuquerque area in order to significantly improve academic outcomes for all students.

## **B. FISCAL MANAGEMENT**

- *Provide a detailed plan indicating how the charter school will manage its fiscal responsibilities.*

The ASL Academy recognizes the importance of being fiscally responsible, financially knowledgeable, and fiducially diligent. To that end, the Governance Board will be mindful of hiring Trilateral Leadership Members and a Finance Manager who understand the high standard under which the school will operate and possess the skills necessary to make sound decisions which will ensure financial stability. Additionally, the Board will establish strict financial protocol related to all transactions and will audit the school's records annually, at a minimum, to ensure compliance with established procedures. The two key factors in ensuring a successful and financially sound program are an experienced Finance Manager and the ability to develop accurate Budget Projections for the short- and long-term.

### Finance Manager

The ASL Academy Finance Manager will be responsible for managing and overseeing all budgeting, financial, and grant aspects of the school, including short- and long-term planning to ensure the viability of the program. The Finance Manager will possess all necessary New Mexico licenses and endorsements related to such. The Finance Manager will report directly to the Executive Director, and will also provide financial reports to the Governance Board at monthly meetings. The duties of the Finance Manager will specifically include the following:

- Lead the training of all school staff for fiscal responsibility and compliance with policies and procedures which govern all school financial transactions, and monitor that these policies and procedures are followed.
- Facilitate timely and accurate budgeting of ASL Academy resources, and monitor the budget against the actual financial situation throughout the year.
- Ensure all financial transactions are appropriate, necessary, align with financial goals and objectives, and are reflective of the school's mission.
- Attend to daily school operations including payments for goods and services, payroll processing, timely submission of payroll reports and tax payments, properly documenting all transactions, and reconciling the monthly bank statements.
- Assist outside accountant, by providing all necessary reports, documentation, and other information required for the audit of school finances and the preparation of annual tax returns. The Finance Manager will be responsible for processing all W2s and 1099 forms annually.
- Provide accurate and complete financial reports and information to Trilateral Leadership members and Governance Board to assist them in making informed decisions regarding financial matters.
- Processing all new employees and contractors, including completion of required documentation, such as state reporting for new hires, federal tax forms including payroll tax withholding and W9 forms, I9 forms, initiating background checks, enrollment in appropriate programs for benefits processing, etc., and maintaining all personnel files.



### Budget Projections

The ASL Academy's annual budget will be prepared in accordance with statutory requirements by the Executive Director, Academy Administrator, Family and Community Programs Coordinator, and the Finance Manager. The budget will be designed to ensure the mission of the school is met, while being mindful of finances necessary to sustain the school into the future. All sources of revenue will be taken into account in order to construct a viable, balanced budget that will align with the mission of the school, provide for growth and high program standards, and comply with all state and federal laws and regulations. The operating budget will be reviewed and approved by the Governing Board and submitted to the Public Education Department (PED) pursuant to the Public School Finance Act.

Upon completion of each fiscal year, the ASL Academy will determine the actual cash balances for all the funds and will report them to PED by the designated deadline, and will make any budgetary adjustments based on actual data from the prior year. Adjustments which do not alter the total amount of the budget are processed as follows:

- Intra-Budget Transfers: Transfers between expenditure codes within the same function will be presented to the PED for approval. Once all approvals are in place, the change is recorded to the financial management system and as an adjustment to the original budget.
- Inter-Budget Transfers: Transfers between expenditure codes outside of the same function will be presented to the PED for approval. Once all approvals are in place, the change is recorded to the financial management system and as an adjustment to the original budget.

Upon final approval of the annual budget by all necessary bodies, the Finance Manager will record and finalize the budget for the coming year in the financial management system (accounting software). Accurate and thorough budgets are critical in managing the school finances and ensuring future viability of the program.

- *Provide a description of the school's internal control procedures that it will utilize to safeguard assets, segregate its payroll and other check disbursement duties, provide reliable financial information, promote operational efficiency, and ensure compliance with all applicable federal statutes and regulations and state statutes and rules relative to fiscal procedures.*

### **Internal Control Procedures and Safeguards**

The ASL Academy will establish internal control procedures and safeguards to maintain internal controls over all assets and provide reasonable assurance that the school will accomplish its objectives of safeguarding assets, providing accurate financial information, promoting operational efficacy, and ensuring compliance with all laws and regulations. School policies and procedures will be designed to meet all of the requirements of the Procurement Code as dictated in the New Mexico State Statute. The following financial procedures and protocol will be implemented at the ASL Academy, and will be reviewed and approved by Governance Board:

### Personnel and Training

The ASL Academy Finance Manager will thoroughly train all staff members regarding the importance of following specific policy and procedures in handling any school financial matter. Training will occur as part of a staff orientation meeting which will be held before the school

opens for its initial year of operation, and annually thereafter, prior to each new school year to review prior procedures and announce any changes in financial protocol for the new session. Employees who do not follow proper financial procedures will be reported to the Trilateral Leadership members and/or to the Governing Board by the Finance Manager and/or the independent auditor. It is the responsibility of the Finance Manager to ensure that all established procedures are followed prior to payment for goods or services. Any deviation from the established protocol must be sufficiently documented and approved by the Executive Director prior to funds being disbursed. Properly following financial procedures will allow the school to conduct its business transactions efficiently and accurately.

### Segregation of Duties

The assignment of duties to staff members who have access to the financial management system is done with the intent of limiting the ability to cause and conceal errors or irregularities. Within certain limitations, incompatible functions will not be assigned to any staff member. For example, the Finance Manager will be responsible for preparing checks for payment of goods and services, only after those invoices have been verified and approved by a Trilateral Leadership member. The checks will be signed by the Executive Director after supporting documentation is reviewed, and the checks will then be mailed or otherwise disbursed by the Secretary. By segregating duties and providing opportunities for review and oversight, the financial resources of the school are further scrutinized and protected. A similar procedure will be followed for payroll processing, namely that all payroll submissions will be generated by the Finance Manager, but approved and submitted for processing by the Executive Director. It is assumed that payroll transactions will be processed automatically via the Automated Clearing House Network (ACH), however, in the event that an actual paper check is issued, it will be disbursed by the Secretary. Additionally, an independent annual audit of payments and payroll files will provide an additional level of protection and further ensure that procedures are followed and assets are safeguarded. Such an audit is necessary and serves to protect both the school and its employees from fraud or theft.

Additionally, only persons directly responsible for financial operations, the Finance Manager and the Executive Director, will have access to the financial software system (accounting software program). All unused checks, payroll information, financial reports, and employee records will be kept in locked file cabinets which only the Finance Manager and Trilateral Leadership members can access.

### Transactional Procedures

The Finance Manager is responsible for monitoring the budget, making sure that all purchases are appropriate and necessary, and processing all purchase orders. Purchase orders for goods and services must be authorized by a Trilateral Leadership member, or two leadership members if totaling over \$10,000, and the Finance Manager will keep such documentation on file for the annual audit. Trilateral Leadership members may not authorize their own purchase orders and will only have the authority to initiate purchase orders which are for goods and services applicable to their specified position. That is, the Academy Administrator oversees curriculum and school supply purchases, the Family and Community Programs Coordinator oversees all purchases related to community and parent outreach programs, and the Executive Director and Finance Manager oversees all purchases related to school upkeep and business functions. Each of the three Trilateral Team members can initiate a purchase order as related their specific duties,

however another Trilateral Leader will need to authorize that purchase order. Additionally, the Finance Manager must ensure compliance with all applicable federal statutes and regulations, and state statutes and rules relating to financial procedures before purchase orders are initiated. Independent of Trilateral Leadership approval, the Finance Manager is ultimately responsible for monitoring school assets, financial resources, and building usage, and therefore is required to alert the Board to any instances which may be cause for concern.

All transactions will be recorded at the time of authorization by the Finance Manager who is responsible for verifying the amounts, classifying transactions to the appropriate accounts, and attaining proper authorization of all transactions prior to posting them to the accounting software system for processing. All documents used to record transactions will be official, pre-numbered school forms to ensure accountability, and all forms will be accounted for and logged at the time of issue. All voided and unused forms are marked “void” and kept on file for review by the independent auditor.

When goods or services are received the invoice for payment must be verified for accuracy and approved by a Trilateral Leadership member. No payments will be made unless a complete and accurate invoice, approved by administration, is on file. The Finance Manager will compare the invoice to the original purchase order and confirm that figures are accurate and paperwork is properly endorsed, and at that time can release the purchase order for payment. After printing checks for payment of received goods and services, the Financial Manager will attach the printed checks to their respective invoices for Trilateral Leadership members to review and sign. Checks over \$10,000 will require the signature of two Trilateral Leadership members. Then, the invoices and supporting documentation, including the check stub indicating payment, will be returned to the Finance Manager for retention, and the Trilateral Leadership member will give the signed checks to the Secretary for disbursement. All checks must be used sequentially, and voided checks will be marked “void” and kept in the file for the auditor to review. Any “manual checks” must also be documented with appropriate receipts and authorizations. The Finance Manager will post such items to the account software upon their issue.

In order to ensure that all transactions have been properly processed, the Financial Manager will reconcile monthly bank statements, after the Executive Director has initially reviewed them, against the general ledger promptly in order to provide accurate and current financial information to the Board at their monthly meetings. Monthly bank statements, account reconciliations, and financial statements will be reviewed for accuracy and approved by the Executive Director prior to submission to the Board. The Executive Director will be responsible for closing out monthly records in the accounting software once all information has been reviewed for approved.

#### Petty Cash

Petty cash funds are issued upon authorization of the Executive Director. The Finance Manager is assigned as petty cash custodian and is given the responsibility of maintaining the fund. The petty cash fund is intended for small purchases of less than \$100.00. A petty cash voucher is required for all payments made from this fund and receipts documenting all purchases will be submitted to the Finance Manager with a purchase order to allow the fund to be replenished. The Finance Manager will reconcile the petty cash fund on a monthly basis.

### Hiring and Payroll Procedures

The ASL Academy's growth model outlines the anticipated staffing needs that will result from increased student enrollment and expansion of grade levels. Prior to posting new job listings, the Trilateral Leadership members and the Finance Director will ensure that the additional positions are necessary based on student enrollment and are financially feasible. The Trilateral Leadership members are responsible for reviewing resumes and conducting thorough interviews in order to select the best candidates for each position. The Board will then conduct interviews based on the recommendations of the Trilateral Leadership members. The Governing Board will make final decisions regarding job offerings and is responsible for initiating employment contracts. The approved employment contracts and accompanying salary schedules are forwarded to the Finance Manager and posted to the Employee Management System. The Finance Manager will ensure that all necessary paperwork is completed regarding state and federal forms and reporting, and additional items, including benefits are processed. Any additions or changes to payroll payments must be authorized in writing by the Leadership Team and the Governing Board. All insurance and retirement benefits and other deductions are to be submitted to the Finance Manager on the proper forms. Documentation for all payroll transactions will be secured on-site for review by the auditor.

### Contracted Services

The ASL Academy Secretary will be responsible for documenting employee attendance, and reports regarding use of "paid time off" will be forwarded to the Finance Manager for monitoring and payroll purposes. Any leave taken without sufficient balances will be docked from the employee's pay. The ASL Academy will contract services with regard to substitute instructional needs. The Academy Administrator will schedule and monitor substitute teachers when they are needed, and will review and approve all invoicing related to substitute teaching services and part-time contractors used for ancillary services and teaching positions. The Executive Director will be responsible for maintaining and implementing contracts with outside service agencies, including teachers, ancillary services, and substitute staffing, although collaboration with the Academy Administrator will be a critical component of this process.

### Accounts Receivable

The accounts receivable system is maintained centrally. The Finance Manager is responsible for billing and monitoring the collection of all amounts due from outside agencies. The Finance Manager is responsible for tracking and verifying the cash balances for all federal, state, and other grants and contracts awarded to the school. When applicable, the Finance Manager prepares the required cash receipts, reimbursement reports, and invoices necessary for the collection of amounts due for various programs.

### Special Revenue Funds: Flow-Through and Direct Grants

All proposals prepared by school staff for special funding require administrative approval from the Trilateral Leadership Team, and are then presented to the Governing Board for approval. Upon receiving an award notice, a budget document is prepared and submitted by the Finance Manager for review and processing. New award budgets are configured and sent through administration, through the Governing Board, and ultimately to the NM Public Education Department for approval.

Upon final approval, the special revenue budget is returned to the Finance Manager and entered into the Financial Management System. The Finance Manager monitors the new budget according to all previously stated duties. The Executive Director acts as a control agent and is responsible for monitoring compliance issues.

#### Cash Receipts

In the event where the school receives payment for fees, activities, etc., all monies received will be accepted by an authorized member of the school, such as the Secretary, Finance Manager, Trilateral Leadership Member, or Classroom Teacher, using pre-numbered, triple-ply receipts. The pre-numbered receipts will serve to record payer/student name, date, amount, description of payment, and signature of person receiving payment. The original receipt will be given to the payer, a second-ply copy will be returned to the Finance Manager with the actual payment, and the third ply copy will be retained by the Secretary. All funds received will be given to the Finance Manager by the next business day for verification and prepared for deposit. Bank deposit slips will be verified by the Secretary against her receipt slips, and kept with her files for auditing purposes, and funds will be deposited to the bank account within 24 hours.

#### Travel Expenses

All travel plans for ASL employees must be pre-approved by a Trilateral Leadership Member and proper documentation, including dates of travel, expenses authorized and the anticipated or maximum cost of such expenses, must be given to the Finance Manager. Employees and Board Members of the ASL Academy are entitled to reimbursement of registration fees, mileage, per diem and other costs associated with authorized trips for official school business, including professional development training. All reimbursements are processed in accordance with the Per Diem and Mileage Act, as outlined in the Department of Finance Administration (DFA) regulations. Itemized receipts are required for all out-of-pocket expenditure reimbursements.

#### Interest Earned

The ASL Academy will account for all monies placed in interest-bearing accounts by fund. The amount of interest earned and paid by the financial institutional will posted as a journal entry in the Financial Management System (accounting software). Interest revenue will be included in annual budgets and will be used to pay for operating expenses.

#### Fixed Assets

Fixed asset inventory records are maintained by the Executive Director, who is responsible for the facility management. The inventory database includes information such as asset number, description of item, item serial number, purchase number tied to item, acquisition date of item, and item funding code

An annual physical inventory will be taken and verified by Executive Director. All requests for removal of surplus items, including discards and deletions, must be approved by the Executive Director. Equipment must not be removed or discarded without proper authorization.

### Insurance

The ASL Academy will participate in the New Mexico Public School Insurance Authority (NMPSIA) to provide health, dental and other personal insurance to its employees, and property and liability insurance for the school. The Executive Director and Finance Manager will review the insurance offerings annually when such information is provided by the NMPSIA.

### Reporting of Financial Information

The Finance Manager will provide any and all financial reports deemed necessary to the Board at their monthly meetings. Such reports will be kept on file by the Board Secretary and will be audited annually to ensure that all information provided to the Board is complete, reliable, and accurate.

- *Provide a description of the manner in which the annual audit of the financial operations of the charter school is to be conducted.*

### Annual Audit

The ASL Academy will enlist an independent auditor to conduct an annual review of procedures and operations to ensure that the school is operating in compliance with all laws and regulations, established protocol is being implemented properly, and that no financial inconsistencies exist. The auditor will review payments for goods and services, payroll transactions, bank statements and reconciliation reports, financial reporting to the Board, voided checks and purchase order forms, and will interview staff as needed. The comprehensive report, detailing any inconsistencies and recommendations, will be given directly to the Board upon completion.

The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy will comply with all requirements set forth by the following legislation:

- Public Schools Finance Act, sections 22-8-1 through 22-8-42
- NMSA 1978 Budget Preparation and Maintenance Standards
- SBE Regulation 6 NMAC 2.2 Public School Accounting and Budgeting Supplement
- Manual of Procedures – New Mexico State Auditor Rules and Regulations pertaining to audits of state and local government divisions.

**SECTION VII.**  
**GOVERNANCE/MANAGEMENT PLAN**

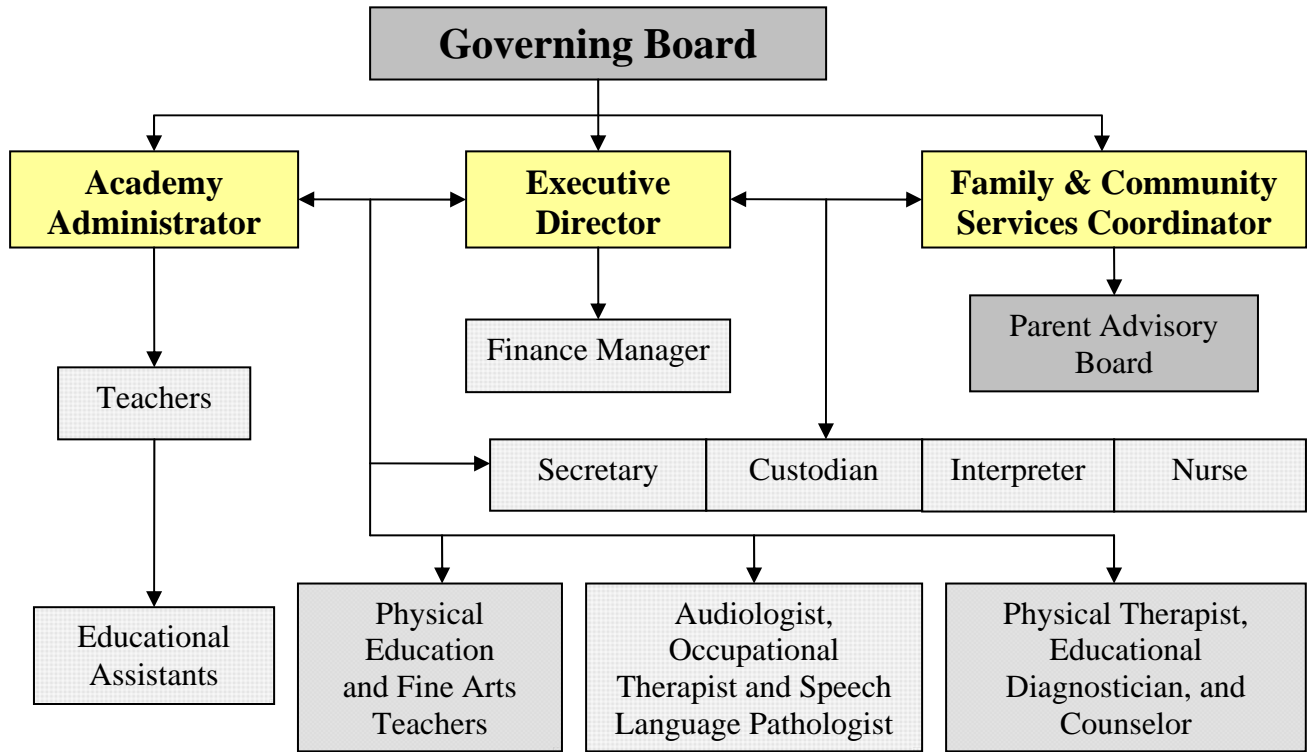
**A. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

- Describe how the school will be governed.

It is the intention of the charter school founders to ensure that members of the ASL Academy Governance Board are active participants in the development of the school, will ensure that the educational and cultural philosophy of the school are preserved, and will advocate for deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing children and their families. The Governance Board will be the ultimate decision making body of the ASL Academy and will hire and oversee the school’s Finance Manager and also the three management positions, collectively referred to as the Trilateral Leadership Team. Together, the Academy Administrator, Executive Director, Family and Community Programs Coordinator, and Finance Manager will ensure positive collaboration and representation on all aspects of the school. All members of the Trilateral Leadership Team will sit on the Governance Board as non-voting participants, and will report monthly to the Board regarding school matters. Additionally, each will be responsible for managing staff and programming for a designated aspect of the school, thereby ensuring that the ASL Academy will fully achieve its mission.

- Provide an organizational chart for the school and a narrative description of the chart that explains the proposed school site-based personnel reporting structure to the governing body and the relationship of the governing body to the school’s leader and administration.

**The ASL Academy Organizational Chart**



## **Organization Narrative**

The ASL Academy's organizational structure directly reflects the educational philosophy of the school which recognizes the importance of providing support for the child and their family, while building community connections. The Governance Board will be the ultimate decision making body of the school and will oversee the three management positions. Equal authority is distributed to school leadership, business leadership, and community and family program leadership in order to determine, create, and oversee quality programs and practices. This Trilateral Leadership Team, composed of the Academy Administrator, the Executive Director, and the Family and Community Programs Coordinator will ensure positive collaboration and representation on all aspects of the school. The Trilateral Leadership Team will interview for staffing positions and will make their recommendations to the Governance Board for those positions. The Board will then complete final interviews and make hiring decisions. Thereafter the Trilateral Leadership members will oversee the staff that relate directly to their program. The Teachers and Educational Assistants will report directly to the Academy Administrator, however they will additionally collaborate with the Executive Director and Family and Community Programs Coordinator, respectively, for items related to employment contracts and ensuring the family ASL class curriculum corresponds to the student curriculum. The Trilateral Leadership Team will similarly utilize all non-educational staff members, including the custodian, secretary, interpreter, and Finance Manager, although certain Leadership Team members will be directly responsible for overseeing and performing evaluations of those positions. The Family and Community Programs Coordinator will be directly responsible for overseeing the Parent Advisory Board, however that Board will additionally collaborate with the Academy Administrator, Teachers and Governance Board. The roles and responsibilities of each entity are carefully accounted for and it is acknowledged that collaboration of all parties will be necessary for the educational philosophy and mission of the school to be fully realized.

- *Delineate the roles and responsibilities of parent councils, advisory committees, and/or community groups in relation to the governing body.*

The educational philosophy of the ASL Academy incorporates working closely with parents to ensure an educational experience that meets the needs of their child academically, socially, and emotionally. Parents are respected as their child's first teacher and their involvement in the educational process and in the school setting will be encouraged and appreciated. To fully achieve the mission of the school, and to ensure that parents remain a constant and influential part of the development and success of the ASL Academy, the school will open with two important mandates in place: a Parent Advisory Committee and two Governance Board positions reserved specifically for parents. As parents grow in number and collectively understand how important their involvement is to the success of a charter school, it is anticipated that parents will develop additional programs based on need and interest.

### **Parent Advisory Committee**

The ASL Academy will establish a parent advisory committee, representative of the language and culture of the students, to assist and advise in the development, implementation, and evaluation of school programs. Not only is this a program requirement of a bilingual, multicultural school, but it aligns squarely with the ASL Academy's mission to establish strong connections to family and community. This organization, consisting of five to seven parents



who are representative of deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing children, will be organized and lead by the Family and Community Programs Coordinator. The intent of this committee is to allow parents to make significant and real contributions to the development of the over multi-cultural school program.

#### Governance Board Parental Mandate

Voting positions of the Governing Board must consist of no less than two parents of current or former ASL Academy students at all times. Furthermore, the Board may receive input from parents and community by requesting to be added to the Board's regular meeting agenda or to speak during the "open comments" portion of each meeting. This will provide additional opportunities for parents to work collaboratively with Trilateral Leadership and Board Members in order to improve educational outcomes for all ASL Academy students.

- *Provide policies and procedures by which the governing body will operate in compliance with all applicable statutes and regulations, including the open meetings act. Policies and procedures will address: board powers and duties, the criteria and the process that will be used to select the school's head administrator, budgeting and operation of the school, and how decisions will be made.*

#### ASL Academy Governing Board

The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy will secure a Governing Board within two months after the charter school is approved by the New Mexico Public Educational Department. The board members will be selected from those individuals who have been advocates of the founding committee and are aligned with the operating mission of the school. It is crucial that the board be comprised of qualified individuals whose expertise and experience provide a solid foundation for the healthy growth of the school. The ASL Academy Governing Board will:

- create an organizational leadership structure consisting of a Board Chairperson, Board Vice Chairperson, and Board Secretary
- clearly define board member responsibilities and expectations,
- adopt and follow prescribed procedures and guidelines, namely Robert's Rules of Order, in order to assure efficient and effective organizational leadership,
- follow all prescribed procedures related to majority vote decision making,
- by using sample bylaws as a template, define and solidify the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy Governing Board Bylaws which specifically reflect the mission of the ASL Academy Governing Board.
- adopt a board member appointment process and committee structure that will assure equal and democratic representation of all stakeholders,
- create a meeting timeline that will result in successful school-policy making and which adheres to New Mexico state statutes,
- ensure that all board meetings will be announced in compliance with the Open Meetings Act (Chapter 10, article 15 NMSA 1978)

- diligently dictate school policy that reflects the mission and vision of the school, not including day-to-day operations,
- establish a process for negotiating with the NMPED and/or surrounding school districts concerning any ASL Academy related dispute or conflict stemming from any education related issue,
- submit documentation to NMPED with regard to state related procedures including, but not limited to, SEG funding, Adequate Yearly Progress, and Federal Grants received.
- ultimately provide objective and informed management oversight to ensure that the school complies with all laws and regulations.

The Board will have authority only when acting as a board in regular or special sessions. The Board will not be bound in any manner by any statement or action by an individual board member. No individual board member will speak for or represent the entire board unless authorized by the majority of the board. Board members must maintain the highest standards of ethics and conduct. Board members will not engage in any activity that violates federal, state, or local laws, thus directly affecting the integrity of the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy. Nepotism is prohibited in accordance with state statutes.

Following is a draft copy of the Governing Board Bylaws which will be revised, if needed, and ultimately adopted by actual board members upon approval of the charter school. Once the bylaws are in place, the Board will immediately take action to recruit, interview and hire appropriately qualified persons for the Trilateral Leadership Team and Finance Manager positions, and will develop a plan of action in order to ensure that the school will commence operations for the 2010-2011 school year.

### **Albuquerque Sign Language Academy Governing Board Bylaws**

1. **Mission Statement:** The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy Governing Board is committed to creating an involved learning community that empowers all stakeholders to embrace the interconnection between the mission of the ASL Academy and the Deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing communities.
2. **Equal Opportunity:** The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy affirms its commitment to providing equal treatment of all of its students, parents and employees. Neither the ASL Academy nor the Governing Board shall discriminate against any student, parent or employee on the basis of race, age, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, physical or mental handicap, serious medical condition or sexual orientation or gender identity with respect to his/her rights, privileges, programs, activities, and/or in the administration of its educational programs and athletics/extracurricular activities.
3. **Governing Laws and Policies:** The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy must comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations as well as the terms and conditions of its charter. Governing council members will, as part of their council orientation program, familiarize themselves with the following key provisions of New Mexico laws:

- Charter School Act (NMSA 1978 §§ 22-8B-1 et seq.)
- School Personnel Act (NMSA 1978 §§ 22-10A-1 et seq.);
- Procurement Code (NMSA 1978 §§ 13-1-1 et. seq.);
- Open Meetings Act (NMSA 1978, Sections 10-15-1 et seq.);
- Public School Finance Act (NMSA 1978 §§22-8-1 et seq.); and applicable rules and regulations issued by the New Mexico Public Education Department (“PED”) (contained in Title 6 of the New Mexico Administrative Code).
- In addition, to the extent the Council has not specifically requested and been granted a waiver from a particular New Mexico Public Education Department (“PED”) those policies which have not been waived, shall apply.

The Governing Board has a responsibility to ensure that the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy cooperates in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations, and meets its commitments to its authorizer, the PED, the community it serves, as reflected in its approved charter.

4. Governing Board Powers and Responsibilities: The primary powers and duties of the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy Governing Board are to:
  - A. Develop educational and operational policies;
  - B. Recruit, oversee and evaluate the Executive Director, Academy Administrator, and the Family and Community Programs Coordinator annually;
  - C. Review, approve and monitor implementation of the annual budget;
  - D. Acquire, lease and dispose of property, both real and personal to the extent permissible by laws applicable to public schools;
  - E. Initiate lawsuits or take all necessary steps to protect and safeguard the reputation and interests of The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy;
  - F. Authorize the repair and maintenance of all property over the amount of \$10,000.
  - G. Enter into contracts consistent with the approved budget for any service or activity that is required to perform in order to carry out the educational program described in the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy program and as otherwise in accordance with the New Mexico Charter School Act as amended;
  - H. Adopt rules and policies pertaining to the administration of all powers or duties of the Governing Board;
  - I. Accept or reject any charitable gift, grant, devise or bequest. Each particular gift, grant, devise or bequest accepted shall be considered an asset of the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy;
  - J. Approve amendments to the Charter prior to presentation to the authorizer for approval;

- K. Make application to the Public School Capital Outlay Council for capital outlay funds.
  - L. Acquire and dispose of property;
  - M. Amend procedures provided for in the Bylaws from time to time consistent with the mission of the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy;
  - N. Delegate to the Trilateral Leadership Team the authority to implement the charter, policies and procedures, facilities plans, budget and such other directives and policies adopted by the Governing Board from time to time. To the extent reasonable, the Governing Board shall not be involved in the day-to-day operations of the school;
  - O. The Governing Board will have primary responsibility for the development and review of all major policies; be a resource for problem resolution escalated to the General Board by any or all of the Trilateral Leadership Team to the Governing Board according to policies, procedures and appropriate protocol; and review recommendations submitted by the Trilateral Leadership Team and other Governing Board Advisors. Examples would include, but not be limited to, curriculum, budget development, and final approval of contracts;
  - P. Promote a cooperative relationship with its charter authorizer; to function in accordance with the New Mexico Charter School Act and resolve any dispute, which may arise between the School and its charter authorizer and the Public Education Department to the mutual benefit of the operation of the Charter School and its authorizer;
  - Q. Such other powers and authorities as provided for by law.
5. Representation by Individual Members: The Governing Board will not be bound by any statement or action on the part of any individual Governing Board member, unless the Governing Board, by majority vote in a properly convened meeting, delegates authority to that individual member to speak for or represent the entire Board. Unless acting pursuant to said express-delegated authority from the Board, no Board member shall undertake any individual action to implement any plan or action of the Governing Board. In the event a Governing Board member is assisting the Trilateral Leadership Team to implement school policies, programs or other directives of the Team, the Governing Board member shall be considered a volunteer and have no special authority beyond that of a volunteer.
6. Amending Governing Board Bylaws: Any section or subsection of the Governing Board Bylaws may be altered, suspended or revoked only by a majority of a quorum vote of the Governing Council unless specifically addressed otherwise by section or subsection.
7. Board Membership:
- A. Positions on Council
    - 1. The Governing Board shall have no fewer than 5 (five), but no more than nine (9) voting members. The voting members of the Council shall consist of no fewer than

- two (2), but no more than four (4) qualified parent members and no fewer than three (3) and no more than five (5) qualified business or local community members. The Board shall determine, prior to February 1 of each election cycle, whether the make-up of the Council shall be increased or otherwise changed. However, in no event shall the number of voting Council members be less than five (5).
2. Three additional positions shall exist as ex officio members of the Governing Board to serve as advisory to the Board but shall have no vote. The three ex-officio members of the Governing Board shall be the Executive Director, the Academy Administrator, and the Family and Community Programs Coordinator, each carrying the inherent responsibility of each position.

#### B. Qualifications

1. The candidates for positions on the Governing Board shall be considered based upon professional skills and areas of expertise including but not limited to legal, financial, real estate, education, business, workforce development.
2. Potential members must also demonstrate collaborative and problem-solving skills and attitudes, an ability and willingness to devote substantial time and energy to serving on the Board (including the requirement that each Board member shall chair and regularly participate in the activities of at least one Board or school committee), and a willingness and ability to devote their time and energy to acting in the best interests of the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy as a whole, rather than the interests of any particular group.
3. As much as possible, Governing Board members shall reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity that makes up the state of New Mexico and the ASL Academy. Therefore one voting Board position is specifically designated for a deaf or hard of hearing professional or parent.

#### C. Staggered Terms

Terms and Board seats shall be staggered so that the Governing Council will not lose more than 60% of its members at any one election. Each position will be elected for a 3-year term. Council members may run subsequent terms.

#### D. Nominating and Recruitment Committee

The Board shall appoint a standing Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall solicit applications, recruit potential candidates, and screen applicants and recruits for each of the positions on the Board to be filled.

#### E. Nominating Petitions

1. Any person, who desires to be considered for one of the Elective Positions on the Board, shall submit a letter of interest to the Board. At a Board meeting to be decided by the Board, the Board shall vote to approve or disapprove, as a whole, any

candidates for any open position(s). If approved, all such candidates shall be seated as members of the Board for the relevant terms.

2. If the Board as a whole disapproves such candidates, the Council shall reconvene the Nominating Committee to develop a new slate of candidates for the uncontested positions and hold another election.
3. Those members whose position is expired shall serve until their positions are filled. If there is more than one candidate for any Elective Position, then the Council shall interview and appoint members to the Council.
4. The term of the “appointed seat” shall be for one year or until filled during a regularly scheduled election. If the seat is subsequently filled by an election, the position shall only be for the duration of the term for that position.

#### F. Restrictions on Council Members

In no event shall any of the voting members of the Board be employees of The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy, which shall for this purpose include persons receiving compensation as an independent contractor, or spouses of another Governing Board member.

#### G. Automatic Removal of Certain Council Members

1. Termination of the ASL Academy Board Member: A Board member who occupies a Board position by virtue of his or her employment relationship to the ASL Academy (e.g., administrator, faculty or adjunct faculty member, parent/guardian of a ASL Academy student, etc.), will be deemed to have automatically resigned from his or her position on the Board upon termination or severance of his/her relationship with the school.
2. Termination of Independent Contractor Status: any candidate for board membership, who may be otherwise qualified except for his/her status as an independent contractor to the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy, must choose either to withdraw his/her candidacy or terminate his/her contractor status.

#### H. Recall of Elective Council Members

1. If at any time the Board shall receive a recall petition with respect to any member serving in an Elective Position, signed by at least seventy-five percent the school community, the Board shall arrange for a recall election to be held within thirty (30) days thereafter.
2. Constituents eligible to vote for such a position shall vote by ballot in such a recall election, and such member shall be recalled and removed from office if more than fifty percent (50) of the votes cast in such election are cast for removal.

#### I. Vacancies

1. A vacancy on the Board caused by a member's resignation, removal by vote of the Board, a recall, death, refusal to serve, or incapacity, will be filled by majority vote of the remaining Board members, unless the Board elects to convene a Nominating Committee to fill the vacancy.
2. In the event the Board elects to convene a Nominating Committee, Elective Positions may be subject to election as provided above.

#### J. Attendance

1. Governing Board members are expected to regularly attend Board meetings. If a Council member anticipates that he or she will not be able to attend a meeting, the Board member shall notify the Chairperson or designee of the Board of his or her impending absence in advance of the meeting.
2. If a Board member, as a result of an emergency or illness, is unable to notify the Chairperson or designee of the Board in advance that he or she will be unable to attend a meeting, the Board member shall notify the Board Chairperson or designee in a timely manner following the meeting of the reason for his or her absence

#### K. Removal from Board

Board member may be removed by a majority vote of the remaining Board members for the following reasons:

1. If a member of the Governing Board misses two consecutive regular meetings or two out of six consecutive regular meetings, the office of such member may be declared vacant by a vote of a majority of the remaining members of the Board.
2. If a member of the Governing Board knowingly violates any policy or procedure adopted by the Governing Board, the office of such member may be declared vacant by a vote of a majority of the remaining members of the Board.
3. If a member uses his or her position to gain from the school, financially or otherwise.

#### L. Filling Vacancy Upon Removal

1. Any vacancy of an office on the Governing Board created pursuant to this section shall be filled in the same manner as other vacancies on the Governing Board are filled.
2. Any member of the Governing Board who has his or her office declared vacant or vacated pursuant to this section shall not be eligible for appointment or election to the Governing Board until the term for which he or she was originally elected or appointed has expired.

As used in this section, "regular meeting" means a meeting of the members of the Governing Council about which notice has been published. No office of a member of the Governing Council shall be declared vacant under this section for any absence or other event that occurred prior to the date of adoption of these Bylaws.

## 8. Conflict of Interest Policy

### A. General Principles

1. All Board members have a duty of loyalty and a duty of care towards the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy. It is the responsibility of all Governing Board members to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of integrity, honesty, and fair dealing to preclude conflict between the interest of the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy and the personal interests of the Governing Board member.
2. Likewise, it is the responsibility of the school to conduct all its business and operations impartially in accordance with all laws and in conformity with the highest ethical and professional standards.
3. All hiring and other transactions imposing financial and/or legal obligations on the school shall be made with the best interests of the school as the foremost consideration.

The Board also recognizes that the ultimate success depends upon the active participation, cooperation and collaboration of parents, volunteers, employees, Governing Board members and students. Sometimes the best interests of the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy may involve the creation of relationships that might create an appearance of impropriety or potential for abuse of position, if not carefully evaluated by disinterested parties. The Board therefore has established this policy to guide Governing Board members in their actions or relationships, so that they will avoid the appearance of having their judgment or the performance of their duties compromised.

### B. Conflict of Interest Definition

1. A conflict of interest occurs whenever a Governing Board member permits the prospect of direct or indirect personal gain (or gain to a relative or Related Entity) to influence improperly his or her judgment or actions in the conduct of the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy.
2. It is not practical to specify every action that might be considered to raise a conflict of interest. Consequently, Board members should immediately disclose to the Board any circumstance that may give rise to the appearance of a conflict of interest. The following situations have the potential for being an actual conflict of interest and must be avoided unless the Board member has brought the issue before the Board for consideration and the Board voted to approve it in an open meeting:
3. Hiring a Governing Board member's relative as an employee, whether full-time or part-time.



4. Acquiring, leasing, selling any property, facilities, materials, or contract services (e.g., financial, legal, public relations, computer) under circumstances in which there is direct or indirect compensation to a Governing Board member, or his/her relative or a Related Entity of the member.
5. Using confidential information acquired by virtue of their associations for their individual or another's private gain.
6. Requesting or receiving and accepting a gift or loan for themselves or another that tends to influence them or appear to influence them in the discharge of their duties as Council members.
7. Influencing or having the appearance of influencing business with suppliers, which results in the financial benefit to a Governing Council member, his or her relatives or a Related Entity.

#### C. Deliberations and Voting on Conflict Issues

1. In order to avoid conflicts of interest and the appearance of impropriety, Board members shall not participate in open meeting or Closed Session deliberations or votes relating to the discipline of (i) himself or herself; (ii) any relative of the Board member; or (iii) any transaction between the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy and any Related Entity of the Governing Board member. "Closed Session" shall mean any portion of a Governing Board meeting that is properly closed to the public in accordance with the provisions of the state Open Meetings Act.
2. The Trilateral Leadership Team shall not authorize (by approval of a Purchase Order or otherwise) or enter into any proposed transaction described in Paragraph B unless and until the transaction has first been evaluated and approved by the Governing Board. The Governing Board may, but shall not be obligated to, approve a proposed transaction (including the hiring of a Governing Board member's relative or any Related Entity, if the Board concludes, after review of all pertinent data, that:
  - a. The transaction is financially no less favorable to the school than would be available in an arm's length transaction between unrelated parties;
  - b. no Governing Board member will be in a position to influence decisions relating to the employment, supervision, compensation or discipline of a relative;
  - c. no Governing Board member will be in a position to influence decisions relating to any transaction between the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy and any Related Entity; and
  - d. the benefits to the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy outweighs any appearance of a conflict of interest.

#### D. Violation of Conflict of Interest Policy

1. Upon discovery of a possible infraction of the established the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy conflict of interest polices, the discovering party is required to immediately notify the Governing Board Chairperson, Trilateral Leadership Team,

and all Board Members. A Special Governing Board Meeting must be immediately scheduled to consider the matter.

2. In the event the Governing Council decides that a Albuquerque Sign Language Academy employee, Governing Board member, or volunteer has violated the conflict of interest rules or otherwise abused or attempted to abuse his or her position at the ASL Academy, the Board shall recommend appropriate action.

#### E. Transactions with Interested Council Members

1. The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy shall not enter into any financial transaction with any Board member, any relative of a Board member, or any other person or entity in which the Board member or relative of the Board member has a direct or indirect financial interest unless during a public meeting:
    - a. the nature of the direct or indirect financial interest is fully disclosed to the Board;
    - b. the transaction is expressly approved by a majority of the Board members present at such meeting who have no direct or indirect personal financial interest in the transaction, provided a quorum of the full Board is present at such meeting.
  2. A written contract or other written memorandum shall evidence all such interested transactions approved by the Board, and be reflected in Board Minutes. Each Board member shall be responsible for disclosing to the Board the existence of any such direct or indirect interest. Failure to make such disclosure shall be grounds for voiding the transaction, at the discretion of the Board.
  3. Nothing in this procedure shall prevent the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy from paying compensation to a Board member for reasonable expenses incurred. All such compensation shall be paid in compliance with the New Mexico Per Diem and Mileage Act.
9. Nepotism: The Board will not employ or approve the initial employment in any capacity of a person who is a Board member (unless the offer of employment is contingent upon such member's resignation from the Board), the spouse, father, father-in-law, mother, mother-in-law, son, son-in-law, daughter, or daughter-in-law, or sibling of any Board member. The Board may waive the nepotism rule for family members of a head administrator. The Board shall carefully consider the potential impact on the integrity, efficiency, discipline and public perception in the employment of any person who is the parent of a student. Nothing in this section shall prohibit the continued employment of a person employed on or before the adoption date of these Bylaws.

#### 10. Misuse of Position

- A. No Board member will use his/her position to attempt to influence the decision of any employee to grant special treatment to:
  1. the child or ward of such Board member,
  2. any relative of such Governing Board member,

3. any "Related Entity".
  4. For purposes of these Bylaws, a "Related Entity" is a business enterprise, nonprofit organization or other entity with respect to which such Governing Board member, or a relative of such Governing Board member (i) has a direct or indirect financial interest; (ii) is an officer or director; or (iii) is otherwise in a position to control the management or decision-making of such entity.
- B. Every Board member and every Albuquerque Sign Language Academy employee who is a parent or ward of an ASL Academy student shall inform his or her child that he or she is required to follow all rules, policies and procedures applicable to ASL Academy Charter School students, that he or she is not entitled to special treatment by virtue of the relationship with a Board member or employee, and that any attempt to seek such special treatment may result in disciplinary action.

#### 11. Board Committees

- A. The Board may establish standing committees, which may consist of Board members and non-Board members. Committee assignments and chairmanships will be determined by action of the entire Board, provided that at least one Board member shall serve on each committee.
- B. Standing committees of the Board shall include a finance committee and nominating committee. The time and place of all Committee meetings shall be announced to the Board.
- C. All Board members may attend any committee meeting if the meetings are properly noticed pursuant to the Open Meetings Act. In addition, the Leadership Team is empowered to establish committees within the school that report to the Administration or, if necessary, report to the Governing Board.
- D. The function of committees will be fact-finding, deliberative, and advisory, rather than legislative or administrative. Committee recommendations that require school-wide policy changes must be submitted to the Board.
- E. The responsibility of each committee shall be reflected in a memorandum approved by the Board and filed with these policies.
- F. The Board may appoint ad hoc advisory committees when and as determined to be necessary or advisable by the Board. Ultimate authority to make decisions will continue to reside with the Board.
- G. All committees shall keep written minutes of their meetings, and shall periodically present written reports to the Board containing committee recommendations.
- H. Committees shall comply with the Open Meetings Act, when applicable. At no time shall a Governing Board Committee act or vote on behalf on the Governing Board without prior written approval to do so.

12. Board Organizational Meeting: Within two months of charter approval, the Board will hold its initial organizational meeting at which time officers shall be elected. The offices of the Board to be elected include a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, and a Secretary. Responsibilities of these offices shall be those ordinarily incumbent thereon. Thereafter, the regular Board meeting in October will serve as the annual organizational meeting to elect/replace all outgoing officers and members.

13. Regular Board Meetings

- A. Regular meetings of the Board will be scheduled for the second Tuesday of each calendar month. The date and time of regular meeting may be changed by action of the Board, provided notice of the change has been properly published as required by the Open Meetings Act. Board meetings will be held at a location determined by the Council. A special Board meeting may be called by the Council President, or by a quorum of Board members. Advance notice of a special meeting will be given to all Board members in accordance with the Open Meetings Act (NMSA 1978, Section 10-15-1).
- B. The Board shall consider at least once annually what constitutes reasonable notice for all regular, special and emergency meetings as contemplated by the New Mexico Open Meetings Act and, thereafter, pass an appropriate resolution adopting policies and procedures for complying with the Act. The Resolution shall be posted for public information.
- C. Additional notification of meetings shall be sent to all school representatives, the PTA/PTO parent organization executive, and posted on the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy website for community access in accordance with the New Mexico Open Meetings Act.

14. Board Agenda

- A. The Chairperson or Chairperson's designee sets Board agendas.
- B. A request to have an item placed on the agenda must be submitted to the Chairperson at least 24 hours prior to the required time the agenda must be posted. A request to have an item placed on the agenda must be made in writing and include all documents and materials the person anticipates presenting.
- C. The Chairperson shall have the discretion to add agenda items up to the time the agenda must be posted. The Chairperson or designee shall provide a copy of the agenda and all documentation to be considered by the Board at the meeting to each Board member at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.

15. Board and Committee Deliberations

- A. All Board members shall work collaboratively with each other, with the sole goal of achieving the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy's educational mission. The Board has been constituted so as to include a broad spectrum of experience and perspectives, and every Board member shall be afforded the opportunity to express his or her opinion in a

professional manner about matters before the Board. Board members shall refrain from non-constructive or personality-based comments that do not advance the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy mission. Because the Board makes decisions as a deliberative body, it is expected that, except in extraordinary circumstances, Board members will voice their opinions to other Board members about Board matters in the context of Board and/or committee meetings, rather than in private communications amongst Board members.

- B. Board members shall be expected to keep confidential any deliberations or discussions that take place in the closed session meetings. It is expected that Board members will raise concerns or share information about closed session meetings within the context of Board and/or other committee meetings with other members of the Board and appropriate staff members only. Until such decisions are ready for public comment, such information will not be shared with the school community at large.

#### 16. Addressing the Board

- A. An individual may speak at a Board meeting on any item(s) that appears on the adopted agenda after being recognized by the Chairperson, or in his or her absence, the acting chair, of the Board. All presentations should be brief and each individual speaking on an agenda item will be limited to three (3) minutes, unless otherwise instructed by the Chairperson.
- B. Complaints about individual employees will not be heard at Board meetings or at community meetings, but should be raised pursuant to the general complaint policy adopted by the Board.

17. Board Minutes: A record of all actions of the Board will be set forth in the official minutes of the Board. The minutes and recordings will be kept on file pursuant to New Mexico record retention requirements at a minimum. The Board will maintain a separate handbook of its minutes and resolutions passed by the Board.

18. Board Minutes and Records: The Board Secretary shall take the minutes of all Board meetings, and provide a written copy thereof for approval at the next Board meeting. The Board Chairperson shall supervise the handbook of resolutions passed by the Board and the indexed record of action. A draft copy of the minutes shall be made available for public review by no later than 10 days after each meeting of the Governance Board. Minutes shall be approved at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board.

#### 19. Parliamentary Authority/Quorum

- A. Roberts' Rules of Order, newly revised, will govern the Board, except when in conflict with applicable laws or regulations, which then prevail. Although most items are handled by appropriate motion procedures, consensus action is also used.
- B. Unless otherwise specified by Board policy, procedure or resolution, a quorum shall consist of a simple majority of Council members in office, and any action may be taken upon the approval of a majority of those members present, provided a quorum is present.

20. Alternative Dispute Resolution Programs: The Board recognizes the existence and effectiveness of alternative dispute resolution programs. Use of alternative dispute resolution programs can result in the early, fair, efficient, cost effective, and informal resolution of disputes. Appropriate use of alternative dispute resolution methods is hereby determined to be in the best interest of the charter school. The Governing Board shall publish a thorough and concise set of dispute resolution policies and provide them in the appropriate School policy publications as they apply.

21. Policy Adoption

A. Adoption of new policies or the revision or repeal of existing policies is solely the responsibility of the Governance Board. Proposals regarding policies may only originate with a Board member, Board advisors, or committees formed by the Board for the purpose of investigating and developing policy. Staff members, students, civic groups, parents or other interested citizens may request that a Board member or a member of the Trilateral Leadership Team sponsor a proposed policy.

B. The Board will adhere to the following described procedure in considering and adopting policy proposals to ensure that such proposals are thoroughly examined before final action.

1. After review, the Governing Board will make such proposed policies available for public comment by staff members, students, civic groups, parents or other interested citizens, for a period of at least seven (7) days.

2. Notice of such proposed policies shall be included in the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy newsletter, the school's website, and/or posted in a prominent location at the school.

3. Upon request, the Executive Director or Family and Community Programs Coordinator shall make copies of the proposed policies available to interested parties. Comments on the proposed policies must be submitted in writing to the Board Chairperson by the deadline specified by the Board. The public comment process shall apply to all policies proposed by the Board after the date these Bylaws are adopted by the Board.

4. Following such public comment period, the Board shall consider any comments received and determine whether changes to the initial draft policies should be implemented. After such consideration by the Board, and adoption of any recommended changes, the Board shall present its final recommended policies or revisions.

22. Signatory Authority: Unless otherwise revised by a Governing Board resolution, all contracts entered into by the Charter School shall be signed by the Board Chairperson and/or the Executive Director with the consent of a quorum of the Board members. The Board members shall from time to time establish the dollar limits of checks and contracts requiring the signatures of more than one authorized person. The Governing Board may by a majority

vote, delegate authority to sign contracts within a certain dollar amount as described by resolution, to the Executive Director.

23. Insurance, Borrowing Authority, Fund Deposits, Miscellaneous

- A. Insurance: The school shall purchase and maintain insurance for all past or present employees, volunteers, and Board members for their activities while acting on behalf of or in the service of the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy.
- B. Authority to Borrow, Encumber Assets: No Governing Board member, officer, agent or employee shall have any power or authority to borrow money on the school's behalf, to pledge its credit or to mortgage or pledge its real or personal property.
- C. Deposit of Funds: All funds shall be deposited to the credit of the school in such banks, trust companies or other depositories as the Governing Board may approve or designate, and all such funds shall be withdrawn only in the manner or manners authorized by New Mexico Public School Finance Act, or other applicable law or regulation.

24. Dissolution: If deemed advisable by the Board that the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy should be dissolved, the charter school in collaboration with the Public Education Commission and the New Mexico Public Education Department shall devise an appropriate plan for closing the school and transferring assets as required by applicable statutes and regulations.

**CERTIFICATE OF ADOPTION**

The undersigned officers hereby certify that these Bylaws were duly adopted by the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy Governing Council on \_\_\_\_\_, 2009.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Governing Board Chairperson**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Governing Board Member**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Governing Board Vice Chairperson**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Governing Board Member**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Governing Board Secretary**

## **Hiring Process and Criteria for Trilateral Leadership Team and Finance Manager**

Upon charter approval of the Bylaws, the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy Governing Board will recruit highly qualified and experienced candidates for the Trilateral Leadership Team and Finance Manager positions. The Governing Board will immediately post complete job descriptions, containing information related to required educational degrees and certifications, work history, bilingual requirements, and salary offerings, online and as otherwise deemed necessary to recruit qualified candidates locally, state-wide, and nationally. Job postings will remain active until a candidate is selected and hired. The Board will thoroughly review resumes, check references, and conduct extensive interviews in order to employ a candidate who is adequately qualified for each position. All applicants will agree to complete a background check and a TB test prior to hiring. Minimum qualifications for each position include the following:

### Academy Administrator

- Masters Degree
- Administrative Certification
- Teaching Certification including Special Education
- Prior experience working directly with deaf or hard of hearing populations in the classroom setting.
- Proficient in ASL and English

### Executive Director

- Masters Degree
- Must be a certified teacher or have a PhD
- Prior experience working directly with deaf or hard of hearing populations
- Prior experience in grant writing processes, governmental processes and/or business management.
- Proficient in ASL and English

### Family and Community Programs Coordinator

- Masters Degree in Education or other applicable field
- Prior experience working directly with deaf or hard of hearing populations in the education setting, or with family/community-based programs
- Proficient in ASL and English.

### Finance Manager

- Level 2 School Business Official License

Although these four key positions will be filled as soon possible following approval of the charter, the Governance Board will remain actively involved in the planning and management of multiple aspects of the project to ensure the ASL Academy opens in 2010 as intended. Upon opening, the Trilateral Leadership Team and the Finance Manager will be collectively responsible for managing the day-to-day activities of the school. Additionally and of utmost importance, the ASL Academy's annual budget will be prepared in accordance with statutory requirements by the Executive Director, Academy Administrator, Family and Community Programs Coordinator, and the Finance Manager. The annual operating budget will be reviewed and approved by the Governing Board and submitted to the Public Education Department (PED) pursuant to the Public School Finance Act.



## **B. DESCRIPTION OF THE GOVERNING BODY**

- *Provide a description of the responsibilities and obligations of the governing body as a whole, individual members, and officers of the governing body.*

The initial ASL Academy Governing Board will consist of five voting members whose qualifications fall within prescribed requirements as listed in the bylaws with regard to parent representation, legal aptitude, financial understanding, educational expertise, and deaf and/or hard of hearing status. Each member has an interest in improving educational outcomes for deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing children while also providing support for families and fostering multi-cultural community interactions. The Board realizes that in addition to the two-year commitment of monthly meetings, as initial Board members for a new charter school, they are further committing their time and resources to ensure that the school opens in 2010 as intended and will be fully operational at that time. Individual Board members will be valued for expertise and respected for their knowledge and insight. Again, as with all aspects of the ASL Academy, collaboration among members will be instrumental in the success of the school.

Officers of the Governing Board shall include a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Secretary. These positions will be solidified upon the approval of the charter application and as per procedures specified in the bylaws.

- The responsibilities of the Chairperson shall include coordinating all orders and resolutions of the Board. The Chairperson shall execute contracts approved by the majority vote of the Board. The Chairperson shall further act as the liaison between the Board and the Trilateral Leadership Team. The Chairperson, along with the Trilateral Leadership Team, shall create the agenda for each Governing Board meeting.
- The responsibilities of the Vice Chairperson lay in assuming all powers and duties of the Chairperson in the event of absence, resignation, or incapacity.
- The Secretary shall keep full meeting minutes of the Governing Board in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. The Secretary shall act as the clerk thereof and provide copies of the meeting minutes to the public upon request. The Secretary shall assure that all meetings are properly noticed and agendas are duly made available to the public in accordance with the Open Meetings Act and the Governing Board's annually approved policy.

Additionally, the Board Officers will be responsible for scheduling all necessary meetings upon charter approval, including the initial meeting to approve bylaws and subsequent interviews for key administrative and management positions, and will additionally coordinate, implement, and oversee other factors tied to the opening of the school. The Officers will attend to the business of the school as direct by the Board regarding working with the County of Bernalillo to secure a facility, overseeing contractors hired to deliver specific goods and services, and managing other school business as needed. Upon establishment and implementation of the Trilateral Leadership Team and the Finance Director, and the opening of the school, the Board Officers will not be involved in day-to-day school operations and will revert to their regular duties and responsibilities as indicated above.

- *List each of the members of the school's governing body.*
- *Provide a brief description of the qualifications of each governing body member.*

### **Initial ASL Academy Governing Board Members**

#### **Raphael Martinez**

Mr. Martinez has sixteen years educational experience as a teacher, coach, and administrator. He is currently serving as Dean of Students at West Mesa High School. He has a rich background in working in innovative programs that address the needs of at risk students. Mr. Martinez is a founder of the ASL Academy, and the father of two children, including a hard of hearing son, Benjamin, who wish to attend the school.

#### **Kimberly Silva**

Ms. Silva is currently serving her second term as Commissioner for the Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons, and is also a member of the New Mexico Deaf and Hard of Hearing Educational Task Force. Ms. Silva is a founder of the ASL Academy and the mother of a deaf son, Thomas, and hearing twins, Nicholas and Gracie, who wish to attend the school.

#### **Carla Weeaks**

Ms. Weeaks has over 30 years experience as a deaf educator, working with preschool, middle school and high school age children in New Mexico. Additionally she worked for 13 years as the Deaf Role Model Program Coordinator and as a Deaf Role Model for Step\*Hi. She is currently working as a Deaf-Blind Specialist for the Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (COPD) in Albuquerque.

Ms. Weeaks is an active member of the community and is currently involved in the following organizations: Chairperson, New Mexico Transitions for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Chairperson, Task Force for the Deaf and Blind; Secretary, Deaf Cultural Center Strategic Planning Committee; Member, New Mexico Association of the Deaf.

#### **Jane Cavanaugh**

Ms. Cavanaugh is currently the Director of Business Software for REDW Business & Financial Resources, LLC (REDW Technologies, LLC) where she has worked for 25 years. She holds a Bachelors Degree in Business Administration from the University of New Mexico. Ms. Cavanaugh is a Certified Public Accountant and member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the New Mexico Society of Certified Public Accountants.

#### **Dana Grubestic**

Ms. Grubestic was admitted to the New Mexico State Bar in 1992. She is a former Director of the New Mexico Children's Cabinet and is currently in private practice. At present, Ms. Grubestic is a Board Member for the Jewish Community Center and the Albuquerque Academy Parent's Association.

### **Additional Non-Voting Board Members**

Academy Administrator

Executive Director

Family and Community Programs Coordinator

- *Describe the plans for governing body member recruitment and selection, including the orientation process for new members and ongoing professional development.*

### **Recruitment of Governing Board Members**

Upon approval of the charter application, the ASL Academy will secure its Governing Board consisting of the initial members listed above. This founding Board will appoint a Nominating Committee in order to provide an on-going list of potential Governing Board members. The Nominating Committee shall recruit candidates, solicit applications, and screen applicants in preparation for any vacated Board position. Names and resumes of viable candidates will be kept on file and by the secretary of the Board and revisited upon any Board vacancy

Should a Board vacancy occur, the Nominating Committee shall submit a list of feasible candidates to the remaining members of the Governing Board. This list will include one or more candidates for each specific Board position(s) to be filled. The Nominating Committee will publicly announce its list of recommended candidates during a regularly scheduled meeting. If there is more than one qualified candidate for the open seat, the Board will then vote in an open meeting in order to fill the position. In the event of a tie vote, each of the Trilateral Leadership members will then be allowed to cast a vote. If there is no viable candidate recommended by the Nominating Committee, the Board will then appoint an individual who meets the requisites of the open seat. The term of the “appointed seat” shall be for the duration of the term.

- *Explain the nature and extent of staff, families, and the community involvement in the governance of the school, and how they will be notified of the opportunity to participate in the school governance.*

The ASL Academy is founded upon the philosophy of parents, schools and communities working together to provide educational, social, and emotional benefits to deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing children. Therefore, the school governance process will seek to include the school community in a variety of ways: by requiring at least two parents be members of the Board, by designating a Board position of a deaf or hard of hearing person, by establishing a Parent Advisory Council and encouraging their involvement with Board meetings, by designating three Board positions to critical school leadership team members, and by providing an open meeting forum which will allow for direct interaction with the Board by any member of the school community. All scheduled Board meetings and meeting minutes will be posted in a timely manner to the schools website and will additionally be made available upon request. The ASL Academy fully appreciates all persons willing to expended their time and talents in order to make the charter school a success.

## **C. PARTNERSHIPS**

- *If the school has identified a partner organization that is essential to the existence of the charter school, its governance, key instructional, and/or management functions, provide the following information: name of the partner organization, name of the contact person at the partner organization and that person's full contact information, a description of the nature and purpose of the school's partnership with the organization, an explanation of how the partner organization will be involved in the governance of the school, if applicable, and evidence (in the form of a letter of support or intent to partner) that the school has a formal partnership agreement with the partner organization.*

The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy intends to develop strong relationships with various organizations in order to achieve its mission and to assist other organizations in achieving their mission. To that end, the ASL Academy will develop mutually-beneficial relationships with the organizations listed below and will also pursue additional partnerships upon charter approval.

See *Appendix X* for letters of support and intent to partner.

### **County of Bernalillo**

#### **Ms. Julie M. Baca, Deputy County Manager for Community Services**

Bernalillo County

One Civic Plaza NW, Suite 10111, Albuquerque, NM 87102

(505) 468-7000

The founders of the ASL Academy and Ms. Baca are currently working together to improve educational outcomes for deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing children in the greater Albuquerque area. The County is currently in negotiations to secure an appropriate facility for the ASL Academy and will serve as Fiscal Agent and Project Administrator for the facility.

### **Youth Development Inc.**

#### **Mr. Chris Baca, President & CEO**

Youth Development Inc.

100 Roma Ave., NW, Albuquerque, NM 87102

(505) 242-7306

As a nationally recognized youth service organization that provides educational, developmental and humanitarian assistance to children, youth and families in central and northern New Mexico, the mission of Youth Development Inc. (YDI), to work with our community to create and effectively implement a results-based continuum of services assuring that children, youth, and families achieve their full potential, is compelling to the ASL Academy founders. Many YDI programs, including tutoring, after-school activities, family counseling services, and youth sports, address the needs of ASL Academy students and are important to the achievement of the ASL Academy's mission. The ASL Academy and Youth Development Inc. will work together to see how mutually-beneficial programs, services, and referrals can be fully utilized to improve the lives of deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing children in the greater Albuquerque area.

### **New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons**

#### **Barbara Jean “BJ” Wood, Interim Executive Director**

State of New Mexico Commission for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Persons  
2500 Louisiana Blvd NE Suite 400, Albuquerque, NM 87110  
(505) 881-8824 V/TTY  
(866) 755-0240 VP  
(800) 489-8536 Toll Free within NM  
(505) 881-8831 Fax  
BarbaraJ.Wood@state.nm.us

The mission statement for the State of New Mexico, Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons, which is to provide “effective leadership, education, advocacy and programs to reduce barriers to the social, economic, educational, cultural and intellectual well-being of Deaf and Hard of Hearing New Mexicans and their families, friends and colleagues,” speaks directly to the children and families the ASL Academy will serve. It is the intent of the ASL Academy to work directly with the Commission in order to meet the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing community in the greater Albuquerque area with the intention of improving educational outcomes and creating a multi-cultural community supportive of families.

### **New Mexico Chapter of Hands & Voices**

#### **Priscilla Shannon Gutierrez, Executive Director**

P.O. Box 90813, Albuquerque, NM 87199  
(505) 505-992-1975  
pgutpgut@msn.com

Part of a strong national organization, the New Mexico Chapter of Hands & Voices shares with the ASL Academy the common goal of supporting families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing by providing the resources, networks, and information necessary for improving communication access and educational outcomes for their children. The Hands & Voices philosophy further promotes that parent-professional collaboration will allow children to reach their highest potential. The ASL Academy looks forward to continued support from the wonderful parents and professional at Hands & Voices as both organizations strive to further develop community-based programs for deaf and hard of hearing children and their families.

### **Additional Potential Partnerships**

Upon charter approval, the ASL Academy will pursue additional partnerships with the following organizations: The New Mexico School for the Deaf, Albuquerque Public Schools, Presbyterian Ear Institute, The University of New Mexico, The Deaf Cultural Center, and local school district surrounding Albuquerque, and other agencies and groups serving deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing persons. The potential for partnering with any organization lies within the possibility of a mutually beneficial relationship. The ASL Academy recognizes this and will strive to establish reciprocally advantageous programs in order to address the community’s unique needs.

## **D. SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

- *Based on the organizational chart provided under subsection A. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE above, describe the site-based management structure at the school. Include job descriptions that identify key roles, responsibilities and accountability for each position listed on the organizational chart.*

### **Trilateral Leadership Team**

The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy will adopt a leadership model where the Academy Administrator, the Executive Director, and the Family and Community Programs Coordinator share the responsibility of daily operations, program development, and school expansion. While each position focuses on one aspect of the school, as further detailed in the schedule of responsibilities listed below, it is essential that all leaders understand the symbiotic nature of the organizational model which embodies collaboration and teamwork. The school cannot achieve its potential without all three components operating tirelessly toward the common vision of serving students, parents and community.

After much thought and debate, it was determined that the trilateral leadership model possessed many more strengths than the typical model in which one school leader maintains control of all aspects of the school. Primarily, the founders are devoted to ensuring that the educational philosophy of the school not be undermined by cultural agendas which commonly polarize deaf and hard of hearing children and their families. Historically, deaf education has been the topic of much debate focused on deaf culture, use of ASL, and oral/aural methods of instruction. The tradition of institutional education has further impacted many deaf persons and affected their beliefs and relationships with their hearing families and their view of the hearing world. Understandably, both hearing and deaf adults carry many beliefs and prejudices based on their own personal experiences and educational outcomes, and the resulting emotional impact. It is important that the ASL Academy take steps to safeguard against personal and cultural agendas which could distract and divert attention from the intended philosophy and mission to serve deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing children and their families in a bilingual, multicultural environment focused on high expectations, supportive of families, and respectful of family culture. The trilateral leadership model will protect against unilateral decisions based on personal or cultural agendas, while providing a forum for personal experiences to be shared in the context of sound educational research. The ASL Academy will remain stalwart in the belief that by working together as a community respectful of diversity and supportive of each other, deaf and hearing children and adults will experience a better educational option than those historically and currently available.

Additionally, the school's educational model of child, family and community is critical when the statistics and research of deaf and hard of hearing children are considered. The academic program must be carefully and thoroughly constructed every year as the needs of the students change. Additionally, the majority of the student population will require special education services, thereby increasing the complexity of programming and requiring additional documentation and oversight. The family and community aspects will be given high priority and such programs must be fully developed and integrated with the school curriculum to affect necessary change in academic outcomes. The business aspect of the school must be constantly monitored to ensure a sound financial foundation with proper oversight, management, and long-

term planning in order to ensure the future success of the school. These three positions, each devoted to a critical aspect, will ensure full development of each component of the school, thereby achieving the mission of the ASL Academy and creating a strong, thorough, and thoughtful learning environment.

The importance of this trilateral leadership model cannot be overstated both in terms of providing for collaboration and also for ensuring checks and balances of power. As demonstrated in the benefits listed below, the trilateral leadership model will:

- specifically address the complexity of developing an educational program to service deaf, hard of hearing and hearing students and their families
- allow for consistent leadership while subsequent grade levels increase student enrollment
- utilize specific duties and personal strengths to ensure programs dedicated to different aspects of the school’s mission are thoroughly developed and implemented in order to provide a complete educational experience for children and their families
- ensure that through the collaborative process, personal agendas and cultural politics do not interfere with the educational philosophy of the school.

The Trilateral Leadership members will be held accountable to the ASL Academy Governing Board for sufficiently performing their duties, as listed in the following chart, in order for the school to fully achieve its mission.

**Trilateral Leadership Team Schedule of Responsibilities**

<b>Academy Administrator</b>	<b>Executive Director</b>	<b>Family and Community Programs Coordinator</b>
Coordinate IEP Process	Supervise Finance Manager	Develop and Implement Weekly Parent Groups
Coordinate PLP Process	Government Relations	Develop and Implement ASL Classes for Adults
Member of SAT and MDT	Non-Instructional Staff Evaluations	Develop and Implement Education Workshops for Families
Coordinate Special Ed. Services	Coordinate Transportation Services as Required in IEPs	Develop and Implement Intercession Programs
Student Discipline	Grant Writing and Fundraising	Grant Writing and Fundraising
Teacher and EA Evaluations	Employee Recruitment and Human Resources Duties	Organize and Oversee School-Community Events
Ancillary Staff Evaluations	Liaison to Outside Districts	Attend IEP and PLP Meetings
Oversee Short Cycle Assessments	Establish and Oversee Contract with Sub Service Organization	Coordinate with Community Organizations to Develop Symbiotic Relationships
Supervise Teachers and EAs.	Facility Management	"Learning for Life" Facilitator

Professional Development	Advertising / Marketing	Multi-Cultural Class Facilitator
Supervise Intercession Programming	Supervise Intercession Programming	Supervise Intercession Programming
NMSBA Coordinator	Assist with NMSBA	Assist with NMSBA
Title I Coordinator	Title I Coordinator	Shared Reading Project Director
Ancillary Service Coordinator	School Web-Site updates	Parent Advisory Committee Chairperson
Maintenance of EPSS	Maintenance of EPSS	Maintenance of EPSS
Facilitate Staff Collaboration	Curriculum Development	
Monitor Student Progress	Food Services Coordinator	
Curriculum Development	Student Recruitment	

### **Finance Manager**

The ASL Academy Finance Manager will be responsible for managing and overseeing all budgeting, financial, and grant aspects of the school, including short and long-term planning to ensure the viability of the program. The Finance Manager will report directly to the Executive Director. The duties of the Finance Manager will specifically include the following: training of all school staff for fiscal responsibility and compliance with policies and procedures, facilitate and monitor all aspects of budgeting resources, perform all financial transactions accurately and per established protocol, assist with annual audit and preparation of tax returns, process payroll and related tax payments, completed payroll related federal and state forms on a monthly, quarterly and/or annual basis, provide accurate and complete financial reports to administration and the Board, and attending required professional development to remain in compliance with Level 2 Certification requirements.

### **Teachers**

All ASL Academy teachers, whether contracted or full-time employees, will report directly to the Academy Administrator and will be responsible for ensuring that they are providing an academically stimulating environment that is accessible to all students and promotes parental involvement. In order to meet the needs of the ASL Academy's diverse student population, all teachers will be fluent in ASL and English, and dual-certified in general and special education. Additional endorsements will also be encouraged.

Teachers will be required to: properly assess and document student progress, ensure the classroom curriculum is aligned with standards and benchmarks, attend meetings including PLP/IEP, weekly staff meetings, parent-teacher conferences and professional development training (if full-time employees), ensure their classroom is reflective of the school-wide theme and incorporate the theme as appropriate, attend school-community events (if full-time employees), work cooperatively with other teachers and educational assistants, address student needs related to deficiencies in progress or potential need for special education services as appropriate, advocate for children and teach them to advocate for themselves, and participate in annual curriculum and student placement planning (if full-time employees).



### **Educational Assistants**

ASL Academy Educational Assistants (EAs) play a critically important role in the classroom and they are instrumental in creating an educational environment that fully addresses the needs of all students. Educational Assistants will be fluent in ASL and English, and will be expected to fully support the teachers and students by: documenting their observations regarding student progress, attend meetings including PLP/IEP, weekly staff meetings, parent-teacher conferences and professional development training, assist the teachers will creating a classroom environment that is reflective of the school-wide theme, assist students in small group sessions in order to reinforce and restate lessons, attend school-community events, work cooperatively with other teachers and educational assistants, consult with teachers in order to address student needs related to deficiencies in progress, advocate for children and teach them to advocate for themselves, and participate in annual curriculum and student placement planning.

### **Ancillary Services Providers**

All Ancillary Service Providers, whether full-time employees or contractors, will report directly to the Academy Administrator. Ancillary services are critical for student achievement and must be provided in accordance with Individualized Education Plans as required by law. Ancillary service providers will be required to: provide services to students as indicated in the IEP and required by law, document all services on a daily basis, properly assess and document student progress, attend meetings including PLP/IEP, weekly staff meetings, and professional development training (if full-time employees), attend school-community events (if full-time employees), work cooperatively with other teachers and educational assistants, address student needs related to deficiencies in progress, advocate for children and teach them to advocate for themselves, and participate in annual student placement planning (if full-time employees).

### **Non-Educational Support Staff: Secretary, Custodian, Interpreter, Nurse**

Non-educational support staff will report directly to the Executive Director and will be responsible for assisting all members of the school educational staff.

The Secretary will be responsible for daily operations including monitoring the front desk for safety and security, tracking employee and student attendance, assisting with duties related to segregation of financial matters, answering the phone, mail services, and providing support services to the Trilateral Team Members and educational staff. The secretary must be fluent in sign language. The position will be for 40 hours per week, with an abbreviated intercession schedule.

The Custodian will be responsible for ensuring the school environment, including the outside walkways and playground, are clean and safe at all times. The Custodian will likely be needed for small-scale maintenance duties as well, including addressing plumbing issues or replacing light bulbs. The position will be for 40 hours per week.

The Interpreter will be utilized by Deaf members of the Trilateral Leadership Team and will also be utilized during parent, staff and Board meetings to assist employees or parents who are not fluent in sign language, and are not required to be, such as the Finance Manager, Nurse, and Custodian, or for any persons requiring Spanish interpreting. The Interpreter will additionally translate school flyers and materials related to Family and Community Programs into Spanish.

The ASL Academy Nurse will be responsible for maintaining accurate and complete records as required by the NM Dept. of Health. The Nurse will ensure all students require nursing services have those services administered appropriately and timely. The Nurse will be required to remain current with required certifications and necessary training in order to effectively care for students, and to attend the IEP meetings of all students with medical issues which require the monitoring and involvement of the nurse on a regular basis. The position will require working during the regular school session.

- *Provide a staffing plan for each year of the first charter term, including the proposed pupil-teacher ratio to support the educational plan.*

The following chart illustrates the student population and staffing of teachers and educational assistants per year at the ASL Academy. Pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) is dependent upon the number of special education students, the classification level (A, B, C or D) of special education students, the number of regular education students in each class, and the number of teachers and educational assistants in each class. The formula used to determine inclusion PTR requirements is included in *Appendix Y*.

For calculation purposes, the following assumptions were made:

- 60% of the student population is classified as “D” Level special education,
- 25% of the student population is classified as “C” Level special education
- 15% of the student population is classified as “A” and “B” Level special education and Regular education students
- Teachers are all certified to teach both special and regular education (dual-certified)
- Educational Assistants count as 25% of a Teacher in the formula

### **ASL Academy Calculation of Annual Pupil:Teacher Ratios**

<b>Year of Operation</b>	<b>2010-2011</b>	<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>
Estimated Student Total	40	56	64	72	80
<u>Student Breakdown</u>					
"C" Level	10	15	16	18	20
"D" Level	25	33	40	44	50
"A", "B", and Regular	5	8	8	10	10
Number of Teachers	4	5	6	7	8
Number is EAs	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Max Pupil:Teacher Ratio</b>	<b>12:1</b>	<b>11:1</b>	<b>11:1</b>	<b>12:1</b>	<b>12:1</b>
Allowed School Capacity	47	56	68	84	97

The ASL Academy Trilateral Leadership Team and Non-Educational Staff will accommodate the needs of students without increasing in size over the five year period. Ancillary staff, both full-time employees and contractors, will be increased as required, depending on student needs. The contracted teachers for physical education and fine arts classes will also increase the number of classes they teach as student population increases.

## **E. EMPLOYEE RELATIONS**

- *Provide an explanation of the relationship that will exist between the school and its employees, including evidence that the terms and conditions of employment will be addressed with affected employees and their recognized representatives, if any.*

The ASL Academy shall operate in accordance with the provisions of the School Personnel Act, 22-10A-1 NMSA 1978, and will employ teachers, staff, administrators and instructional personnel that hold the appropriate NM educational licenses, and/or are otherwise qualified by the New Mexico State Department of Education Licensing Division.

- *Provide a description of the school's personnel policies and procedures that comply with all applicable federal statutes and regulations, including the School Personnel Act.*

### **ASL Academy Personnel Policies and Procedures**

The ASL Academy Employee Handbook (*See Appendix A*) details all personnel policies and procedures, and complies with the School Personnel Act and all federal and state requirements. The Executive Director will review the Employee Handbook annually, prior to the start of each school year, and will advise the Governance Board of any changes that may be necessary. Upon approval of the charter school, the Governance Board will thoroughly review and amend the Employee Handbook as needed.

The ASL Academy does not intend to have an employee bargaining unit. However, in the event that one is organized and certified, the Board will negotiate a collective bargaining agreement as dictated by the Public Employees Labor Relations Act.

### **Equal Employment**

Albuquerque Sign Language Academy is an equal opportunity employer. Discrimination violates state and federal laws; therefore, the ASL Academy prohibits discrimination because of age, beliefs, color, creed, gender orientation, national origin, political affiliation, race, or sex, and harassment, sexual or otherwise, in all facets of employment. The ASL Academy will be governed by all applicable state and federal laws, including without limitation the New Mexico School Personnel Act. The Governance Board and Administration at the ASL Academy will adopt and follow these policies and procedures. Reasonable accommodations will be made for employees with a disabling condition, as defined by ADA, which affect his/her abilities to perform the essential functions of her/her job. The request may be made through any form of communication, written or otherwise. Documentation may be requested from the employee regarding limitations that arise from the disability that requires reasonable accommodations. Requests for accommodation should be made to the Academy Administrator or Executive Director.

### **Advertising of Positions**

All full and part-time positions will be advertised in order to recruit highly qualified candidates locally, state-wide and nationally. For each position opening, there will be at least one public notification made via one or more of the following methods: posting on the ASL Academy website, advertisement in a metropolitan newspaper of general circulation; advertisement in online or printed publications that serve the Deaf community; postings at other Deaf/bilingual

schools and/or teacher training programs; written notice to individuals who have previously indicated interest in like positions and have not been disqualified from being hired for such positions.

If an applicant for a newly created or vacant position has already been employed by the ASL Academy in a related capacity, and the Governance Board determines that advertising such position would, due to time delays, negatively impact the ability of the school to carry out its mission, the Board and administration may waive the necessity of advertising.

#### Hiring Process

The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy will seek the most qualified employees and contract personnel. Following the solicitation of applications for any given position, the ASL Academy Trilateral Leadership Team will require the following from each applicant:

1. Completion of an application
2. Submission of references
3. A writing sample
4. A test or alternative assessment of ASL and English proficiency
5. A background check
6. A thorough interview, or interviews, as deemed necessary

After the completion of this process, the Trilateral Leadership Team will recommend a candidate or candidates to the Governance Board. The Board will then conduct a panel interview of all viable candidates before extending an offer of employment. The Board may add conditions to any offer of employment, on post offer submission to appropriate medical testing, including drug testing. If any Board member feels that he or she cannot be fair and objective in connection with any hiring decision, such member shall excuse him or herself from the deliberations.

#### Issuance of Contracts/Compensation

All full-time, part-time, certified, non-certified and at-will employees will be approved by the Governance Board. The Academy Administrator is authorized to hire substitute teachers, and temporary employees, provided all such hiring complies with ASL Academy procedures and applicable laws.

The Board will approve the annual salary schedule for all employed positions at Albuquerque Sign Language Academy, including substitute teachers and other temporary employees. The employee will enter into a written contract with the ASL Academy, which will be signed by the employee, the Executive Director, and a designated officer of the Governing Board. Employment contracts will comply with the School Personnel Act, NMSA 1978, Sections 22-10-1 et seq. and expressly set forth salary, and employment period. Copies of the employee's contract shall be placed in the employee's personnel file.

In addition to salary, the ASL Academy will provide the following benefits: health insurance (which may include medical, dental, optical or other benefits), liability insurance, life insurance and PERA pension contributions (which includes coverage for long-term disability), and leave as specified in the Employee Handbook. By following prescribed procedures as described in the Governing Board Bylaws, the ASL Academy Governance Board may provide additionally employee benefits as deemed appropriate.

- *Provide proposed salary schedules for all employees that comply with the minimum salary requirements as identified in the School Personnel Act.*

**The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy Salary Schedules**

Beginning Salary	Trilateral Administrator	Albuquerque Sign Language Academy Pay Schedule - Ancillary					
	\$62,000.00	Level I		Level II		Level III	
		MA	PHd	MA	PHd	MA	PHd
		\$33,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$44,000.00	\$46,000.00	\$55,000.00	\$57,000.00

Beginning Salary	Albuquerque Sign Language Academy Pay Schedule - Teacher			
	Level I	Level II	Level III	Natl. Board Cert.
	\$33,000.00	\$44,000.00	\$55,000.00	\$55,000.00

Beginning Salary	Nurse	Secretary	Custodian	Educational Assistant
	\$50,000.00	\$32,000.00	\$21,000.00	\$17,000.00

- *Describe the evaluation process for staff that will include evaluation of teachers by a licensed school administrator.*

**Staff Evaluations**

Teachers and other certified staff will create an annual Professional Development Portfolio in compliance with the New Mexico three-tiered evaluation system in accordance with NCLB. Educational Assistants will be highly qualified.

**A. Confidential Personnel File**

The school shall maintain a confidential personnel file for each employee. The personnel file will contain the evaluation documents discussed in this section, as well as any other employment related documents or correspondence. Involved parties will have signed all documents placed in the personnel file.

**B. Professional Development Portfolio**

All instructional and professional staff will create and maintain a Personal Development Portfolio containing the goals and outcomes of the school, the employee's personal plan for meeting those goals and outcomes, and the employees plan for continuous improvement.

After an initial meeting between the Academy Administrator and employee where mutual goals are reviewed and a professional growth program is developed, the employee will create the portfolio and will include samples of classroom or school work, personal reflections, and any other material deemed appropriate as evidence of continuous improvement.

C. Employee Observations

The Academy Administrator, using both formal and informal observations, will assess and document employees on an ongoing basis. Formal observations will include a pre-observation conference as well as a post-observation conference. First-year (Level 1) employees shall have at least two formal observations prior to the three-month review outlined in Section D. Prior to the six-month review, described in Section D, at least two additional formal or informal observations will be conducted for first-year (Level 1) employees. Returning level 2 and 3 staff will have three formal or informal observations prior to the six-month review, described in Section E. Results of formal observations, consisting of the Academy Administrator's observations and recommendations, will be put in writing and included within the employee's Personal Development Portfolio and the school's personnel file. Nothing in this section limits the Academy Administrator from conducting other observations of an informal or unannounced nature.

D. Formal Reviews – Level 1 Employees

For all Level 1 employees, there shall be a formal review three months after the start of the school year. The purpose of the three-month review is:

- to review the employee's self-assessment,
- to review the job description, areas of responsibility, and progress toward goals and outcomes,
- to note particularly good work, areas for improvement and skill development,
- to point out areas of improvement, deficient work, or substandard conduct,
- to develop a clear plan for improvement.

In addition, at the three-month review, the employee will provide feedback to the Academy Administrator on their own perceptions related to their job performance. Any written feedback or self-assessment materials may be placed into the employee's personnel file. Six months from the start of the school year, a second review will be held to determine improvement plan progress. At that time, the Academy Administrator will inform the employee and report to the Governance Board whether the school intends to continue employment for the subsequent school year. Results of these reviews will be put in writing and placed within the employee's Personal Development Portfolio and the school's personnel file.

E. Formal Reviews - Returning Employees (Level 2 &3)

For returning staff, there shall be a formal review six months after the start of the school year in order to evaluate progress toward the employee's personal plan and professional growth program described in Section B. At that time, the Academy Administrator will inform the employee and report to the Governance Board whether the school intends to continue employment for the subsequent school year. Results of these reviews will be put in writing and placed within the employee's Personal Development Portfolio and the school's personnel file.

F. Tri-Lateral Team Evaluation

The Academy Administrator, Executive Director, and Family and Community Services Coordinator shall be evaluated by the Governance Board prior to the end of each year's contract based on criteria set forth by job responsibilities. Additionally, teachers will have the opportunity to provide feedback on each of the team member's performance. Results shall be in writing and included in the employee's Personal Development Portfolio and personnel file.

G. Response to Observation and Review Findings

All employees shall have the right to make written objections to the observations or review findings within one week of receipt by stating areas of disagreement. These objections will be attached to the observation and/or evaluation and kept in the employee's personnel file.

- *Explain the school's staff discipline process that provides for due process.*

The policies set forth in the ASL Academy Employee Handbook will conform to the New Mexico School Personnel Act, in accordance with NMSA 1978 Section 22-10A-24.

**Employee Dismissal, Discipline, and Termination**

- A. All employees will be hired on the basis of annual contracts and their terms expire at the end of their annual contract. Contracts of employment shall be renewed by affirmative vote of the Governance Board in public session or by appropriate action of administration. An employee may only be terminated by vote of the Governance Board in public session.
- B. Any member of the Trilateral Leadership Team may recommend terminating or suspending the employment of any employee if s/he determines that the employee has failed to fulfill the duties and responsibilities and/or demonstrate the qualities outlined in the job description, or if other good cause exists. Sufficient documentation must be provided to the Governing Board as to the necessity of the employ's release. In the event the school finds it necessary or desirable to terminate an employee's employment before the end of the school year, the school will attempt to give the employee written notice at least 10 calendar days before termination, unless any Trilateral Leadership member determines that the employee poses a threat to the health, safety, or welfare of the school or students, in which case the employee will be terminated immediately.

Provisions in the Employee Handbook indicate causes for discipline or discharge and are meant to give employees warning regarding behaviors that will result in serious consequences. The Governance Board or Trilateral Leadership Team may also choose, in its sole discretion, to utilize informal counseling, written reprimands, suspensions or other actions as a response to employee misconduct, in lieu of termination. Such alternative measures are not required and use of such measures establishes no precedent for tolerating employee misconduct.

- C. In the event of termination of employment prior to the end of an employment contract, the employee shall be entitled only to the prorated salary and benefits earned through the last date of employment.
- D. In the event an employee finds it necessary to resign during the school year, the employee shall give written notice to the Academy Administrator or Executive Director as soon as possible and at least 10 calendar days before the effective date of resignation.
- E. Any employee may submit a grievance regarding dismissal, discipline, and termination pursuant to the grievance process (See Grievance Policy Section).

### **At-Will Employment**

Unless otherwise approved by the Governance Board, all employees of the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy shall be hired on an 'at will' basis, and can be dismissed at any time with or without cause, pursuant to NMSA 1978, as will be indicated in the employment contract. Any employee who has been employed by the ASL Academy for three consecutive years may not be terminated without just cause.

### **Grievance Procedure**

In the event of a dispute involving employment or the implementation of the personnel policies, and after a good faith effort with their supervisors to thoroughly resolve the dispute, all employees may submit their complaint following the procedures outlined below. The good faith effort will include problem identification, possible solutions, selection of resolution, timeline for implementation, and follow-up. A written summary of the good faith effort will be included in the personnel file. Failure to follow the procedures and timelines below constitutes a waiver of the employee's right to grieve.

1. The employee may submit his/her grievance in writing to any Trilateral Leadership Team member within five days of a failed good faith effort to resolve the dispute.
2. Within ten working days of receipt of the written complaint, the Trilateral Leadership Team shall schedule a hearing, at a mutually convenient time and place, for discussion of the complaint with all parties involved, but no later than 20 days after receipt of the written complaint and after notification to the employee. Trilateral Leadership Team members who are interested parties shall excuse themselves from grievance proceedings if such members have a conflict of interest related to the proceedings.
3. Upon completion of the hearing, the Trilateral Leadership Team shall render a decision, as established by a majority vote, within five working days. Any such proceedings shall be conducted in closed session, unless requested otherwise by the employee. In the event that additional information, investigation, or hearings are necessary after the initial hearing, the hearing may be continued and the final decision shall be made within five working days of the last committee hearing, or as soon as possible. Any additional proceedings shall be completed as soon as possible.
4. The decision of the Trilateral Leadership Team shall be final unless appealed by the employee to the Governance Board, which may review and modify the decision of the



Trilateral Leadership Team if it finds that the Trilateral Leadership Team failed to properly follow the grievance process described above. A request for an appeal may be submitted to the Chairperson of the Board within five days of the decision of the Trilateral Leadership Team. After receiving an appeal request, the Chairperson shall schedule a meeting to consider such an appeal as soon as possible. Any Governance Board member who is an interested party, as defined in the Bylaws, shall excuse him/herself from reviews of Trilateral Leadership Team decisions to the extent permitted under law. Any such proceedings shall be conducted in closed session, unless requested otherwise by the employee.

## **F. STUDENT ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES AND DISCIPLINE POLICY**

- *Describe the school's enrollment policies and procedures, including an explanation of the enrollment timeline.*
- *Describe the school's lottery process that is in accordance with applicable law.*

The ASL Academy is a free public charter school open to all students without any admission requirements. However, because the educational philosophy and program require direct instruction in American Sign Language, it is strongly recommend that students who initially enroll in the program during the second grade and subsequent grades have previous exposure to ASL and a basic level of receptive and expressive sign skills in order to fully understand the curriculum and progress academically. Enrollment will be open to all students without regard to race, color, national origin, creed, sex, ethnicity, behavior, language proficiency, or academic achievement. The plan and timeline for student recruitment and enrollment is as follows:

- Upon charter approval, the ASL Academy will update its website to include a complete description of the educational program and contact information for persons interested in enrolling for the 2010-2011 academic year. Founders will additionally prepare marketing materials, such as flyers, business cards and brochures, for immediate disbursement, and founders will continue to contact community organizations to establish partnerships and develop interest in the school. The website will be updated regularly to keep interested persons apprised of school progress, including listing the school location once it is established.
- November 2009: Enrollment applications will be posted to the website and will be accepted by the Governance Board on an ongoing basis until January 15, 2010. The initial student lottery will held on January 31, 2010 by a designated Board Officer. All students selected through the lottery process at that time will be granted admission to the ASL Academy for the 2010-2011 school year. The sibling(s) of any student chosen for enrollment will automatically be eligible for enrollment pursuant to the Charter Schools Act, Chapter 22, Article 8B NMSA.
- Throughout the enrollment process, the ASL Academy Governing Board will make decisions regarding advertising, depending on the number of remaining openings.
- Thereafter, subsequent lotteries to fill remaining vacancies will be held on the last business day of each month until the school reaches capacity. At that time, any remaining students not selected for enrollment will be placed on a waiting list.
- Upon their child being accepted for enrollment, families will be promptly notified via email, telephone or a letters sent by regular mail. Parents are encouraged to complete and submit all student registration materials within 30 days of their student being accepted in order to secure their child's position for the coming school year. Failure to submit registration materials by May 15, 2010, regardless of the date the child was selected in the lottery, will result in forfeiture of that slot.
- In subsequent years, students already enrolled in the school, along with their siblings will be admitted prior to a lottery draw. All other students will be enrolled via the lottery process.

- *Provide the proposed student discipline policy that complies with the Student Rights and Responsibilities set forth in the Public Education Department rules and regulations [6.11.2 NMAC].*

It is the goal of the ASL Academy to provide a safe environment for student learning, and further to provide students and parents with an understanding of the basic rights and requirements to effectively function in the school community. The ASL Academy Student/Parent Handbook (*See Appendix B*) details the student discipline policy and is in accordance with the rights and responsibilities set forth in the PED rules and regulations [6.11.2 NMAC]. The ASL Academy's proposed Student Discipline Policy is as follows:

### **Discipline/Student Behavior**

Each staff member at the ASL Academy accepts responsibility for maintaining an environment of respectful conduct and the establishment of programs that promote positive relationships among students and staff. A student's actions should reflect high standards of behavior as established by the Academy Administrators and teachers.

The staff requests parental support in helping maintain appropriate conduct in the school. Children's behavior should reflect self-respect and consideration for the rights, feelings, and property of others.

Classroom teachers are expected to maintain discipline in their own classrooms with a specific emphasis on promoting and recognizing positive behaviors among students. Inappropriate behavior that occurs in or outside of the classroom (i.e. during recess) may result in a student receiving a Behavior Slip. This slip is used to communicate discipline concerns among staff, administration, and parents.

When a student receives a Behavior Slip, he/she is called to meet with the Academy Administrator to discuss the behavior. Depending on the number of Behavior Slips a student has received during that trimester or the severity of the child's infraction, i.e. fighting, possession of a weapon, etc., the consequence may result in suspension from school. However, most offenses result in the student attending Redirection during his/her recess time.

The overall goal of redirection is to provide students with an opportunity to reflect on their behavior and to create a safe environment for students that helps to prevent further infractions. The school will consistently address student misbehavior and inform parents of problems that their student is demonstrating at school. The school is also committed to remaining proactive and supportive as we address student safety everyday.

## School-wide Behavioral Expectations and Indicators

<b>Expectations</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
Do what you agree to do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attend school regularly</li> <li>▪ Agree to learn</li> <li>▪ Agree to follow rules</li> <li>▪ Agree to complete homework</li> <li>▪ Agree to dress according to school rules</li> </ul>
Give your best effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Complete tasks given</li> <li>▪ Follow directions given</li> <li>▪ Bring supplies to school</li> <li>▪ Demonstrate self-esteem/pride</li> <li>▪ Do not put others down</li> </ul>
Treat others with dignity and respect at all times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrate respect</li> <li>▪ Demonstrate caring</li> <li>▪ Celebrate success</li> <li>▪ Be honest</li> <li>▪ Communicate openly</li> <li>▪ Make safety a priority</li> </ul>
Have fun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have friends</li> <li>▪ Be happy</li> <li>▪ Get along with adults and peers</li> <li>▪ Be safe</li> <li>▪ Focus on learning</li> </ul>

Behaving appropriately is an essential aspect of learning. Students are accountable for their behavior on school property, on the school bus, at the school bus stops (if applicable), on the way to and from school, and when attending school-based functions.

### Other Disruptions of the Educational Process

1. No portable entertainment/computer devices are allowed during school hours.
2. Possession of pornography or inappropriate materials in any form, including inappropriate use of the internet, will result in suspension and possible expulsion.
3. Students in possession of alcohol, other illegal drugs or inhalants or under the influence of alcohol, other illegal drugs or inhalants:
  - First Violation:
    - a. Parents/guardians will be contacted.
    - b. Student will be placed on Substance Use/Abuse Probation. (While on probation, any violation of school policy will warrant expulsion.)
    - c. Student will be placed on a 5-day out-of-school suspension.
    - d. Police report will be filed on the incident.

Second Violation: Student will be suspended until the end of the session.

The ASL Academy defines possession of alcohol, other illegal drug or inhalant as: on a student's person, in a student's body or bloodstream, in an item belonging to a student, such as but not limited to, a backpack or purse, or being held by another person. Under the influence of alcohol, other illegal drugs or inhalants is defined as having alcohol or drugs in the bloodstream or body and/or other suspicious behavior.

Alcohol, other drugs, inhalants and drug paraphernalia may be described as:

- a. Alcohol is any liquor, wine, beer or other beverage containing alcohol,
- b. Drugs are illegal drugs including marijuana, inhalants, legal prescriptions over the counter drugs used or possessed or distributed for unauthorized purposes, and
- c. Drug paraphernalia is any equipment/apparatus designed for, or used for the purpose of, measuring, packaging, distributing or facilitating the use of drugs.

We encourage a healthy life-style and support our students in being drug and alcohol free. Involvement on or near school grounds with tobacco, alcohol, or drugs in any form is strictly prohibited. ASL Academy is deemed a drug free zone. The ASL Academy Administration hereby makes known its legal authority and intent to search school property, facilities, and student belongings when there are reasonable grounds to warrant such a search.

### Harassment

Harassment is unacceptable conduct and will not be tolerated. All supervisors, employees, students and parents should exercise due care to see that the school is free from all forms of harassment. Law prohibits harassment. For purposes of this policy, the term harassment consists of knowingly pursuing a pattern of conduct, which serves no lawful purpose, with the intention to annoy, seriously alarm, or terrorize another person. The conduct must be such that it would cause a reasonable person to suffer substantial emotional distress.

### Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, threatening adverse actions if sexual favors are not granted; promising preferential treatment in return for sexual favors, unwanted and unnecessary physical contact; a pattern of offensive remarks, including unwelcome comments about appearance, obscene jokes or other inappropriate use of sexually explicit or offensive language, the display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures; and unwelcome sexual advances by vendors or visitors if the advances are condoned explicitly or implicitly by the school.

### Parent/Guardian Harassment

Under normal circumstances, a student is not to be deprived of a public education on grounds relating to the attitude of parents or guardians; nevertheless, it is recognized that a situation could arise in which the uncooperative or disruptive attitude of parents/guardians might so diminish the effectiveness of the school in acting in loco parentis (in place of parents) that continuation of the student could be morally impossible. Such situations include, but are not limited to:

1. Any parent, guardian or other person who insults or abuses any faculty/staff or administrator at any time on school premises, or at some place where the faculty/staff or administrator is required to be at that place in connection with assigned school activities.

2. Harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age or disability. Harassment would include verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of one's race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, or disability, or that of his/her relatives, friends, or associates and that has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment; has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with and individuals work/study performance; or otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.
3. Harassment may constitute a form of employment discrimination when:
  - a. Submission to such conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of an individual's employment or status as a student;
  - b. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by individuals used as the basis for a decision affecting the individual's employment or status as a student;
  - c. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with and employee's work performance;
  - d. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work or school environment.

### Suspension

Suspension is a temporary removal of a student from the student body and the loss of all student body privileges. Suspension will be preceded by notification to a student's parents/guardians.

Disciplinary causes leading to suspension and disciplinary probation are:

- a. Any gang-related activity.
- b. Any threat of violence directed toward anyone on school premises.
- c. Possession or Use of Alcohol, Other Drugs, Tobacco, or Inhalants.
- d. Fighting.
- e. Theft.
- f. Vandalism/Use of graffiti.
- g. Repeated/serious misconduct resulting in administration/behavioral detentions.
- h. Possession of weapons (real or look-a-like)
- i. Forgery or use of forged forms, permission slips, notes, etc.
- j. Having inappropriate/ obscene material, including inappropriate use of the internet.
- k. Harassment of another individual.
- l. Possession and/or use of fireworks, lighters or matches.

### In-School Suspension

Students may be assigned to an in-school suspension for discipline. The ASL Academy Administration will determine infraction severity for in and out of school suspension. Typical reasons for In-School Suspension include: infractions of school policies such as, but not limited to, chronic dress code violations, disrespectful behavior against peers and teachers, improper language, theft, cheating, damaging school property, fighting and bullying. This listing could include other infractions dependent upon administrative discretion.

### Expulsion

The expulsion of a student from the ASL Academy will be considered as a sometimes-necessary discipline measure for the common good of the school community. Parents will be notified immediately, followed by a conference with the school administration team. A letter will be provided to the parents and a copy placed in the student's cumulative file outlining the offense(s) and subsequent expulsion. Situations that may warrant removal of a student include:

- a. Major theft or any criminal act.
- b. Chronic and incorrigible misbehavior which undermines school discipline and impedes academic progress of fellow students.
- c. Delinquency and immorality which constitute a menace to others or which may warrant commitment to a correctional institution.
- d. Non-compliance with disciplinary probation, weapon possession, or drug policy.

The Academy Administrator is the final recourse in all disciplinary situations and may waive any disciplinary rule for just cause at his or her discretion.

## **G. FACILITIES**

*If the school site has not been selected/secured:*

- *explain the needs of a facility that will support the implementation of the school's educational plan, including desired location, size, and layout of space,*

### **Facility Overview**

The ASL Academy will establish a 501(C)(3) non-profit corporation for the purposes of complying with requirements necessary to obtain a viable facility. All procedures and regulations mandated through government statutes will be strictly followed. In order to serve students in Albuquerque and the surrounding areas, the ASL Academy will be centrally located within Albuquerque. The facility will accommodate the initial population as well as the anticipated expansion to 80 students over a 5 year period.

### **Outdoor Space**

The site will have sufficient parking for parents and teacher, a safe loading/unloading zone for parents, and a separate loading/unloading zone for buses in order to safely coordinate vehicle and pedestrian traffic. The parking lot will accommodate handicapped parking spaces and emergency vehicle access as required by law.

The site will maintain a safe, secure and fenced outdoor playground facility and outdoor eating space to accommodate recess, lunch (weather permitting), physical education classes, and outdoor classroom activities. The playground will be adjacent to the school in order to ensure safety of all students and ease of access. All playground equipment and outdoor facilities will meet state guidelines for safety and size recommendations for elementary and middle school.

### **Classroom Space**

All classrooms will be designed according to the area description and size guidelines indicated in the New Mexico Public Schools Adequacy Planning Guide. The ASL Academy intends to provide classrooms which are large in size, due to the need for small group work, and will therefore look to the higher end recommendations for net square footage. All classrooms will be designed under the guidelines specific to Special Education settings in order to provide the least restrictive environment possible. Acoustical considerations will be a high priority in order to provide the best learning environment for hearing impaired children. All classrooms for elementary school will be in close proximity to one another to allow for student placement needs. It is anticipated that the middle school classrooms will also be grouped together, but may be separated from the elementary school classrooms in order to facilitate learning and minimize distractions.

Classroom furnishings will follow the recommendations given in the New Mexico Public Schools Adequacy Planning Guide, and will also include any specialized equipment or furnishings necessary for hearing impaired students. Middle school classrooms will incorporate a shared science lab and all required safety equipment/stations.



The ASL Academy intends to provide separate classrooms for dance/music and art, however, depending on space limitations, those classes may be integrated into the regular classroom or utilize the multipurpose spaces as needed.

### **Common Indoor Space**

#### **Gymnasium/Multipurpose**

The ASL Academy will provide a space for indoor physical education classes, ancillary services, including physical and occupational therapy, school assemblies (including morning announcements). This space may also be used as a performance center for fine arts and other school events.

#### **Ancillary Services**

There will be a separate room(s) for one-on-one and small group therapy sessions. This space will also be utilized for testing. It is recommended that this space be separate from the classrooms and other busy areas in order to allow for reduced noise/activity so the children can fully concentrate on their tasks. Offices for full-time staff will be also be provided as well as a “common” work area for use by part-time contractors.

#### **Audiological Lab**

There will be a separate space which will be adequate in size to accommodate all audiological equipment, including a sound booth, and also an adjoining office for the audiologist.

#### **Library/Media Center/Computer Lab**

Upon charter approval and the securing of a facility, ASL Academy Trilateral Team members will devise a plan for the library/media center and computer lab. Space permitting, there will be a separate library/media center and computer lab, however, it may be determined that for instructional purposes such equipment may also be integrated into the classroom setting.

#### **Kitchen**

The ASL Academy will not be preparing food for student breakfast or lunches on-site. However, there will be a kitchen at the facility to allow for special classroom projects, and the kitchen will contain a refrigerator, sink, dishwasher, oven and microwave. It will allow for proper storage of student lunches. The ASL Academy will follow all recommended guidelines for food storage and student safety.

#### **Nursing Station/Student Health Center**

There will be a separate room for students to use which will contain the necessary equipment to provide for student needs in a private manner. The space will contain a workspace, secure record storage, and a secure refrigerator and cabinets for medications and supplies. The space will be adjacent to the administrative offices and other guidelines will be followed as indicated in the New Mexico Public Schools Adequacy Planning Guide.

#### **Restrooms**

There will be restrooms for adult staff/visitors and students, which will meet all state and federal requirements.

### Multipurpose Rooms/Classrooms for Parent Classes

The ASL Academy intends to provide one to three additional rooms to be utilized by parents for ASL classes, parent groups and workshops. The classes will ideally be located separate from student classrooms in order to minimize student distraction. These classrooms will be multipurpose rooms and can also be used for staff meetings, IEP/PLP meetings, parent-teacher conferences, counseling sessions, professional development training, and other uses as needed.

Faculty Lounge: The ASL Academy intends to provide a separate room for teachers and staff to use for lunch, which will be adjacent to the kitchen, and will contain other equipment as suggested in the New Mexico Public Schools Adequacy Planning Guide.

Corridors/Storage/Maintenance: All school corridors and common area pathways will be compliant with specifications listed in the New Mexico Public Schools Adequacy Planning Guide and will state and federal laws in order to accommodate access for individuals with disabilities. The facility will contain adequate storage in all classrooms and administrative offices, as well as storage for gymnasium, outdoor play, special therapy, and physical education equipment. Additionally, a centralized storage room will contain common school supplies to be utilized by all teachers for classroom activities. Building maintenance rooms, including custodian supplies and mechanical/electrical rooms, and computer server closets will be locked at all times to ensure student safety and such rooms will comply with building codes.

### Administrative Spaces

The ASL Academy will have a reception desk at the entrance of the school and anticipates having a security door which will require visitors to be granted access by the school secretary before entering the facility. All staff will have access cards and can let themselves in. All door locks will allow persons to freely exit the building and will comply with fire codes and other safety requirements. Furnishings will accommodate visitors and parents waiting for appointments. The space will contain adequate space for the secretary's desk and also for common area use of items including the copy machine and other office equipment.

The ASL Academy will have administrative office adjoining the reception area including separate offices for the Academy Administrator, Executive Director, Family and Community Programs Coordinator. File cabinets containing confidential student and employee information will be located in the administrative area and will be locked at all times.

- *describe a reasonable plan to identify and secure an adequate facility,*

The ASL Academy has partnered with Bernalillo County, and the County is currently in negotiations to secure an appropriate facility for the ASL Academy.

Once a location has been secured, the ASL Academy will enter into a lease agreement with Bernalillo County. Julie Baca, Deputy County Manager, will serve as Fiscal Agent and Project Administrator for the facility.

Bernalillo County will provide and coordinate all renovations to ensure the facility is in compliance with all ADA requirements and school building codes

- *provide the proposed capital outlay needs for the facility, including projected requests for capital outlay assistance for the school.*

It is anticipated that the initial capital outlay needs for the school facility will be upwards of \$1.5 million dollars. The ASL Academy anticipates \$100,000 will be needed annually for facility improvements.

## **H. OTHER STUDENT SERVICES**

- *Describe the school's plans for meeting the transportation needs of its students and plans for contracting services for transportation, if applicable.*

The ASL Academy will provide transportation for special education students requiring such services as indicated in their IEP.

Other students will be required to provide their own transportation. The ASL Academy will be centrally located to allow for ease of transportation for students living within the city and in surrounding areas.

However, upon approval of the charter school, the Governing Board and Executive Director will work to establish relationships with surrounding school districts with regard to student transportation. The ASL Academy believes that many surrounding school districts will recognize that a mutually-beneficial relationship with the ASL Academy will result in a more cost-effective and superior educational outcome for their deaf and hard of hearing students. Additionally, the ASL Academy will contact Carlos Santiago, Bureau Chief, of the School Transportation Bureau for the NM PED, to further discuss and develop a transportation plan for ASL Academy students.

- *Describe the school's plans for meeting the food services needs of its students and plans for contracting services for food services, if applicable.*

As part of the ASL Academy's philosophy to create a healthy learning environment, food services will be provided through Provision 2 of the National School Lunch Act which requires that all students receive free lunch and/or breakfast at the school. The ASL Academy expects that reimbursements received for qualifying students will render the program financially neutral.

- *Describe the school's plans for providing student access to counseling services and plans for contracting services, if applicable.*

Because social and emotional well-being is a fundamental component of the school's education philosophy, teachers will receive professional development training related to these topics, with an emphasis on screening techniques used to identify students who may require targeted counseling services. Students that require additional services beyond the capacity of the school will be referred to a menu of outside resources created by school administration. Social workers will be contracted by the school for students with IEPs requiring such services.

- *Describe the school's plans for providing student access to health services and plans for contracting services, if applicable.*

The ASL Academy will hire a full-time nurse to provide health services for students. Additionally, the physical layout of the school will provide for a designated nursing station and student health center which will contain necessary equipment for ensuring a safe school environment.

**SECTION VIII.**  
**REQUIREMENTS**

**A. LEGAL LIABILITY AND INSURANCE COVERAGE**

The ASL Academy will participate in coverage by the New Mexico Public Schools Insurance Authority (NMPSIA) and will comply with all applicable rules of that authority.

The ASL Academy founders have already contacted Jackie Munoz with Poms and Associates, Inc., and, upon charter approval, will submit to a completed Risk Insurance Questionnaire in order to obtain an insurance quote for adequate insurance coverage.

**B. WAIVERS**

The ASL Academy is not anticipating seeking any waivers at this time.

**SECTION IX.**  
**APPENDICES**

- A. Employee Handbook (containing ASL Academy personnel policies)
- B. Parent/Student Handbook (containing student discipline policy)
- C. Revenue Projection Form 910B5
- D. Proposed Operating Budget Spreadsheet
- E. Bibliography (References)
- F. Acronyms List
- G. Toward Brighter Futures: 2003 Task Force Report on the Education of the Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing
- H. Articles, Court Documents, and Expert Reports related to sexual abuse at NMSD and other Deaf institutional schools
- I. The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children's Educational Bill of Rights
- J. Breakthrough to Literacy (curriculum information)
- K. Visual Phonics (curriculum information)
- L. Fairview Learning Program (curriculum information)
- M. Manipulative Visual Language (curriculum information)
- N. Achieve 3000 Program: KidBiz (curriculum information)
- O. Illuminations and FASTT Math (curriculum information)
- P. AIMS Educational Foundation (curriculum information)
- Q. Science/Social Studies Matrix
- R. Learning for Life (curriculum information)

- S. Curriculum Alignment Data (*sample*) and Curriculum Map (*sample*)
- T. ASL Curriculum Rubric
- U. Student Assistance Team Manual
- V. Reports Cards (*sample*)
- W. Parent and Child Rights in Special Education: Procedural Safeguards Notice
- X. Partnership: Letters of support and intent to partner
- Y. Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) Calculations
- Z. Select Reference Materials