

Part I – Eligibility Certification

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2018 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2012 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
10. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
11. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 1 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	14	6	20
1	8	12	20
2	9	13	22
3	10	12	22
4	9	13	22
5	7	15	22
6	14	8	22
7	9	13	22
8	10	12	22
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	90	104	194

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 6 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 3 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 29 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 61 % White
 - 1 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2016 – 2017 school year: 2%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	1
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	4
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	185
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 50 %
Total number students who qualify: 97

8. Students receiving special education services: 15 %
29 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <u>4</u> Autism | <u>14</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>12</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>15</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>9</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>2</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 16
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	9
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 22:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	94%	98%	97%	94%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2017.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school’s mission or vision statement.

The mission of Anansi Charter School is to develop the academic potential and emotional intelligence of each learner. We strive to promote the love of learning through student engagement, innovative educational practices, and family and community partnership.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

The Anansi Charter School conducts an annual non-biased lottery process for any openings in the school. The school requests a commitment to return form from all currently enrolled families to determine potential openings in the school. The school makes weekly public announcements regarding the timeline and process for its lottery. The school provides lottery application forms and an announcement to every Head Start, public pre-kindergarten programs, and preschools in the community prior to the lottery drawing. In addition the school participates in a kindergarten information night for families to learn about kindergarten options in the Taos community prior to the lottery. Lottery applications are available on the school website: anansicharterschool.org or at the school site. The lottery application process begins at the end of January and runs through April with a public lottery selection process which is conducted with a bingo number tumbler. Siblings of currently enrolled students are admitted if there is a spot for the grade level the sibling is eligible to attend for the upcoming school year.

PART III – SUMMARY

The Anansi Charter School conducts an annual non-biased lottery process for any openings in the school. The school requests a commitment to return form from all currently enrolled families to determine potential openings in the school. The school makes weekly public announcements regarding the timeline and process for its lottery. The school provides lottery application forms and an announcement to every Head Start, public pre-kindergarten programs, and preschools in the community prior to the lottery drawing. In addition, the school participates in a kindergarten information night for families to learn about kindergarten options in the Taos community prior to the lottery. Lottery applications are available on the school website: anansicharterschool.org or at the school site. The lottery application process begins at the end of January and runs through April with a public lottery selection process which is conducted with a bingo number tumbler. Siblings of currently enrolled students are admitted if there is a spot for the grade level the sibling is eligible to attend for the upcoming school year.

The Anansi Charter School is located in a rural low-income community about ten miles north of Taos, New Mexico. It is located in pasture land at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in the Taos valley. Taos is a destination resort blended with Spanish Land Grant settlements and the ancient Taos Pueblo which has been occupied for over 1,000 years. The greater community is comprised predominantly of three cultures which include Hispanic or Latino backgrounds, Native Americans with a Taos Pueblo background, and Caucasian non-Hispanic backgrounds. Many of the current families of the Taos community are a blend of two or three of these cultures. The Anansi Charter School community is also somewhat tri-cultural; however, it has a higher rate of white non-Hispanic students than the greater community of Taos. Approximately half of the Anansi families are low income while the remaining families are moderate to high middle income. The families that seek out an Anansi Charter School education value a safe, caring small school setting where the whole child is educated.

Anansi was approved and established as a public charter school in 2001, and it initially focused on the unique learning needs of the primary grade child serving children in grades kindergarten through second. Due to the school's success, the students and parents attending the school requested that the school expand to include the elementary grades through fifth. In 2007, the Anansi Charter School was approved to amend its charter and begin its expansion. The school added third grade for the 2008-2009 school year, fourth grade for 2009-2010 and completed the expansion by adding fifth grade in 2010-2011. In the 2010-11 school year the school completed the renovation and expansion of its facility to accommodate its growth. The Anansi Charter School was approved in August of 2012 to add the grades 6th through 8th to the school by adding one grade per year. ACS added sixth grade in 2014, the seventh grade in 2015, and completed the middle school in 2016 with the addition of eighth grade. ACS now endeavors to maintain its campus and continues to polish and improve upon the programs and educational experience that it offers.

Traditionally, Anansi is known for its balance of rigorous academic and social emotional learning programs. Anansi students are known in the greater community of Taos for their ability to communicate clearly and respectfully, their strong academic writing skills, and their perseverance, stamina and leadership skills as students. The Anansi Charter School is committed to directly teaching social emotional skills through weekly curricular lessons that develop emotional literacy, emotional navigation and management skills, empathy, and mindfulness. Anansi believes that when a child has a firm foundation of emotional intelligence he or she is available to learn and equipped with a mindset ready to meet the high expectations of our rigorous curriculum. One strategy that Anansi uses to develop relationships, advocacy, and empathy amongst the students throughout the school is the cross-grade buddy program. Students are partnered with an older and younger student for a variety of activities that allow them to get to know one another as unique individuals. The cross-buddy program is a component of the Caring School Community, an evidence-based SEL curriculum reviewed and rated by the Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning (CASEL).

In addition, one traditional goal that is written into our charter is to culminate each unit of study in all grades with a celebration of learning that may involve service learning, a presentation or performance of their synthesized knowledge, and/or a forum or debate. The units of study integrate all subject areas with an

overarching theme, enduring understandings, and learning targets. The students use writing, the arts, performance, technology, and speaking skills as vehicles to present their learning to an audience of peers, adults, and community members. Parent and community attendance is requested for each celebration of learning. There are generally three student-centered culminating learning events/celebrations of learning per year per grade level.

In order to guarantee the academic success of each learner, Anansi uses both an inclusion and pull out intervention model to assure that all students have access to grade level curriculum and targeted instruction to fill any gaps or skill deficits that have been identified through interim assessments, observations, and classroom performance. The ACS intervention model provides support in the core curricular tier 1 classroom, and additional support through small group and individual pull out sessions to re-teach material, provide additional practice, and allow students to practice with supplemental software programs that focus on the specifically identified area of need for the students. The classroom learning environment utilizes whole and small group, partnered, and individualized instruction to provide varied appropriate learning settings matched to the instructional activities. Students are taught through all modalities, taking a multi-sensory approach to new concepts. The Anansi instructional model then progresses with a gradual release of responsibility beginning with teacher modeling/direct instruction then guided practice, and then followed by independent practice. Our goal is student ownership of their learning in order to apply their knowledge to solving problems.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The Anansi Charter School core curriculum is aligned to the Common Core standards adopted by the state of New Mexico. The scope and sequence of curriculum is then vertically aligned from kindergarten through eighth grade to ensure that all students are receiving a thorough and comprehensive education in the four core subject areas.

The English Language Arts curriculum begins in the elementary grades with a focus on building the foundational skills for becoming a proficient reader, writer, and communicator through systematic and structured instruction of phonics, comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, speaking and listening skills. As the foundation is built, the curriculum moves toward a systematic and sequential curricular focus on literature and text comprehension, analysis, and critical thinking, vocabulary development, writing in the genres of persuasive essay, narratives, informational writing, and poetry, and speaking and listening skills. This program includes extensive reading for purpose and enjoyment, writing to communicate ideas, creativity, information, and thinking, and speaking skills are developed through discussion protocols and presentations to share thinking and learning, persuade others, and to inform through verbal, multi-media, and dramatic presentations.

The Anansi mathematics curriculum is standard-based and research-based for effectiveness. Instruction begins with concrete visual and manipulative models and moves to the abstract application when understanding is developed. Anansi uses a spiraling approach to instruction that is foundationally rooted in the Everyday Math curriculum for grades kindergarten through sixth. In sixth grade the transition begins toward the use of Connected Math and the MidSchool Math curricula through eighth grade. Anansi chooses this approach due to its alignment to the Common Core standards and the evidence of its effectiveness; however, calculation fluency is benchmarked vertically to assure student mastery, and multi-step problems that require application of mathematical concepts are woven throughout the curriculum through a variety of online resources. In addition, Anansi uses supplemental software programs such as Khan Academy and IXL.com to support student practice.

Anansi is currently transitioning its science curriculum to the Next Generation standards and the recently adopted New Mexico science standards that mostly align with the Next Gen standards. Anansi's goals with their science curriculum is for its students to become scientifically literate, to become familiar with the diversity and interdependency of the natural world, to understand scientific core ideas and the interdisciplinary concepts, to reason scientifically and to apply science and engineering practices for personal and social change purposes. The science curriculum requires inquiry based, hands-on experimentation in the elementary grades, while in middle school the curriculum moves toward project-based assignments that require the application of scientific concepts to reform or consider solutions to real world scientific issues and dilemmas.

Anansi has developed a project based social studies curriculum integrating geography, economics, local and world cultures, arts, science, history, literature and music. Each curriculum map begins with the learning outcomes and essential questions the unit seeks to explore and understand. In the elementary grades the social studies focus is on seeing the human connections of ourselves to other cultures and history through geography, resources, environment, and life styles. The upper intermediate grades and middle school students first study the settling of America and then the establishment of the United States through history and government, then the curriculum branches into the impact of world history. The social studies curriculum is rooted in understanding what it means to be human and how our choices impact the environment we are part of. The studies are first very concrete and understanding basic concepts of human communities, and then move toward the perspectives and impacts of government, resource management, economics, religion, and historical events such as war. The students demonstrate their learning through the creation of artifacts, participation in debate, mock trials, written essays, performance, and service projects.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Anansi Charter School takes an integrated approach to the visual and performing arts in all grades kindergarten through eighth. Each student has an hour of visual arts instruction weekly with the art teacher in order to learn about mediums, techniques, and methods of expression. However, the core curricular grade level teachers collaborate and plan with the visual arts teacher to build ideas that bridge the arts as a vehicle of expression of their comprehension of concepts in the core subject areas. Visual arts and performing arts are used in language arts to illustrate literature and student writing, to demonstrate comprehension, and to synthesize ideas generated through literature. The arts are used similarly in social studies units. The arts play an important role in mathematics at every grade level by providing visual representation of challenging mathematical concepts, such as the golden ratio of a rectangle, the role of symmetry and pattern in mathematics, the arch in quadratic equations, and more. Furthermore, these representations often then help students see connections to science and the natural world. Art plays an essential role in building student understanding of complex concepts. Performing arts are not offered as a formal separate class but rather woven into instruction of core subject areas as a vehicle for the expression of learning content throughout the school year.

All grades participate in physical education classes three times per week for thirty minutes each. Our approach to physical education is to engage the students in life long physical activity by educating them about the benefits of physical fitness, developing routines that include stretching, warming up the muscles through walking or running, engaging in a game or skill building activity, setting goals for physical improvements in a fitness program, and developing skills to participate in athletic activities. Health and nutrition are taught in the kindergarten through sixth grade through integrated activities in the self-contained classroom throughout the school year. The seventh and eighth grade students participate in a health class for one semester. The topics of their formal health class, include: nutrition, anatomy, sex education, mental wellness, substance use/abuse, media literacy, and suicide. The course is taught by a certified health teacher and guest speakers from the community which include a nurse practitioner/instructor, and mental health professional.

Spanish language is taught in all grades, kindergarten through eighth, as a heritage language course. The course is taught four days per week for all students. Currently, all students enrolled in Anansi are proficient in English and are learning Spanish as a second language. The program is aligned to the American Council of Foreign Languages standards focusing on the development of listening, reading, speaking, and writing in Spanish. The goal of the program is for students to graduate with intermediate Spanish Language skills, learn about and experience the cultures of Spanish speaking countries, and value and understand Spanish as the heritage language of their greater community.

Technology is part of every classroom, rather than taught as a separate class. The students in kindergarten and first grade are introduced at first to the iPad to build proficiency at inputting their responses through use of a touch screen, while also learning to use a Chromebook. The ratio of devices in these classrooms is one device per four students. In second grade, the students increase their use of the Chromebook for input, research, writing, and keyboarding skills. There is one Chromebook per two students in the second-grade classroom. From third grade through eighth grade every student has their own computer and its use becomes an integral part of the instructional school day. Google classroom is used to manage instructional assignments and communication with students. Media literacy is integrated in the elementary classrooms and taught as a part of advisory, health, and language arts in middle school. Kindergarten through second grade students have library instruction and visits for one hour weekly, while the third through fifth grade students attend the library every other week. The middle school students have access at open library times and through classroom focused activities.

Additional courses, that are offered to the middle school students, are offered through two days per week one-quarter enrichment courses, which include: computer programming and web design, speech and debate, robotics, drawing, music and voice, yearbook, and next step planning for high school. All students in grades kindergarten through sixth have a thirty-minute weekly music class. All students have social emotional learning activities woven into their week. A minimum of one hour of social emotional learning is required in the curriculum. The goal of this program is to build emotional literacy, personal management of emotions, consequential thinking, optimism, intrinsic motivation, and empathy in our students. The students are engaged in mindfulness practices, self-science experiments, self-reflection, and kindness activities.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Instruction at the Anansi Charter School is dynamic and student centered; teachers seek to hook the students at the onset of each lesson with one or more of the following strategies: key information, a photograph, a micro experience, a quote, a video clip, a “do now”, or a math message. These examples are just a few of the many strategies used to bring student attention immediately to the focal point of the instructional lesson. Anansi believes that student engagement is critical to student internalization of concepts. Each instructional block follows a framework that includes: an instructional hook that focuses the students on the learning targets/objectives of the lesson, direct instruction, guided practice, and independent practice. The direct instruction encompasses a multi-disciplinary approach, incorporating visual models, auditory instruction, and interactive manipulation of materials to provide a first-hand experience with concepts. Within the instructional framework the guided practice provides that gradual release opportunity for students to begin synthesizing their learning to produce their own models. During this process, there is dynamic interaction between teacher and students and student to student as they together try their hands at applying their learning. At this point, the teachers will gather students who are in need of instructional support for a mini re-teach of the lesson or additional guided practice, while students ready for independence are able to proceed to independent practice or assignments. Each instructional block is then closed with some form of an exit ticket that assesses whether each student has captured the gist of the learning target or needs additional instruction. Within the tier one core instructional block, teachers differentiate the lessons through flexible grouping for specific instructional purposes and student needs. The grouping of students for instruction provides the opportunity for the teacher to provide needed scaffolds for skill acquisition and varied pacing for work completion for the students. Higher achieving and faster processing students may have the opportunity for a challenge extension within the instructional block. Supplemental software programs are used to provide additional targeted practice on specific skills for identified students in need and to allow higher performing students to extend their learning beyond the grade level expectations.

Assessment is an integral part of the instructional process at Anansi. Formative assessment is used daily to guide the instructional planning and pacing within each classroom in each subject area. The curriculum follows a standards-aligned, school developed pacing matrix to set and guide the teachers’ instructional planning for the long-range view of the school year. Together, these tools assist the teacher in making daily instructional decisions to support student success. For the lower performing students, formative assessment is used to determine immediate interventions and/or the need for re-teaching a skill. While for higher achieving students, formative and unit summative assessments are used to compact curriculum and provide opportunities to advance their skills through independent study and/or increased complexity or depth with concepts.

At the same time, the students participate in interim assessments to inform teachers of specific gaps in student knowledge of the Common Core standards for language arts and mathematics. The first through eighth grade students take the NWEA MAP Growth assessment at the beginning, middle, and end of the

year to track their growth toward the standards in a nationally normed adaptive assessment. The beginning of the year data is used to identify students performing in the fortieth percentile or lower so that Response to Intervention (RTI) plans can be developed for the students of greatest need. The NWEA learning continuum recommendations are then used to guide the analysis for instructional goal selection for the RTI plans. The RTI plan will involve instructional strategies within the core curricular block and will also involve small group or one on one pull out groups for intensive specific interventions. In addition, in the intermediate and upper grades, an extended school day is used to provide thirty-minute instructional support blocks at the beginning and end of each school day. Students are assigned specific days so that the teacher is able to target the needs of the students strategically and maximize the impact of the interventions. Progress is then checked every two or three weeks depending on the instructional goal and growth target.

In the kindergarten through third grade the students participate in the state required assessment of IStation and the school selected assessment, DIBELS Next. These assessments are used to identify students who are performing below the standard needed to assure reading fluency and accuracy by third grade. The results of these assessments are used to determine the needed instructional interventions to support the identified students' reading acquisition skills. Anansi has a literacy coach and reading interventionist assistant to support the kindergarten through third grade classrooms reading instruction program. The specialists assist the teachers in analyzing data, identifying and setting instructional goals, and selecting the best interventions for the RTI plans. They also assist instruction in the kindergarten through third grade classrooms during the core block and pull small intervention groups in the afternoons to provide targeted additional instruction needed to acquire the necessary skills.

Finally, the PARCC assessment is used for two purposes at the Anansi Charter School to analyze the micro and macro nuances of curriculum, instruction, and student achievement. The trend data derived from the assessment informs the instructional team of the strengths in our curriculum and instructional practices and also the potential holes or gaps in our program. We are then able to leverage our strengths, while we work to remove any gaps or weaknesses in our program through professional development, collegial focus groups, and curricular improvements. We then analyze the results of individual students to determine areas of growth and areas of concerns. Teachers use this individual summative data to set their first probes at the onset of the school year.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The overall climate and culture of the Anansi Charter School is one of warmth and inclusion, where students feel at home in their environment. The students are taught from the beginning years the concept of inclusion of all peers in their work and play. Each classroom develops a class charter at the onset of each school year where together the students and teachers consider how they want to feel when they come to school, what type of environment they will need to create to promote those feelings, how they will handle disagreements and negative feelings, and how they will promote positive feelings and their successes in the classroom and at their school each day. This is a tool adapted from the Yale University RULER social emotional learning program. Each class charter is collaboratively developed, agreed upon, signed by every student and teacher, and then used as a cornerstone to guide their behavior and choices in the classroom and on the campus. Teachers and students hold each other accountable to their agreements to promote a safe, respectful, and positive learning environment. Personal reflection is used as a self-evaluation tool in the academic and social emotional learning that takes place in the classroom.

At Anansi, we believe it is critical to have an environment that fosters respect and safety so that students and faculty can take the essential risks involved in a rigorous learning environment. The school's policies and rules are developed to promote respect and learning rather than punishment, ridicule, or fear. Students are taught the responsibilities of being an "upstander" on their campus and are encouraged to speak in support of social justice and mutual respect. The use of the cross-grade buddy program promotes the development of relationships across grade levels so that students get to know one another and look out for one another in the school environment.

In addition to looking after the well-being of our students, Anansi builds in time for teachers to reflect, collaborate, and build collegial relationships with their fellow teachers. Each year begins with a retreat day to build connections, focus, and goals for the year ahead. Much like the students, the faculty work together to create a faculty communication agreement to guide the hard work they engage in throughout the school year. Time is taken to review our successes and celebrate the work and achievements that we have had. We review areas of concern and work to solve problems together for continuous improvement. As a result, Anansi has a very low turn-over rate with its staff which builds a consistent professional team that works well together.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Annually, Anansi schedules specific activities for parent engagement and learning at the school. Prior to the start of each school year, the school hosts a family orientation day where parents and students learn about the goals of the year ahead and participate in community building activities. The orientation sets the initial tone for the school year. Within the first four weeks of school, a "Back to School Night" is held. The purpose of this event is for students to teach their parents about their classroom and their first projects at school. The parents then have a more in-depth presentation about curriculum, their role in supporting student learning, and the grade level instructional goals of the year ahead. Anansi then holds a literacy night for the kindergarten through third grade families, school-wide science exploration opportunities, and math events. Each of these events foster fun effective strategies that help parents learn how to support and engage their children. Anansi invites parents to participate in various "Celebrations of Learning" throughout the year. Some of the topics are: New Mexico History and Culture, Civil Rights Forum, North America, Spanish Culture, and Science Forum.

All parents are informed about their students' progress four times per year through progress reports. Parent teacher conferences are held two times per year to review the first and third quarter progress reports, and

parents are encouraged to request a parent conference any time they have a question or concern. Anansi builds time at the end of each day for parents to conference or visit with teachers in the classrooms. In the middle school student led conferences are held in lieu of the parent teacher conference, and the teachers are present to support the student-parent conversations. When a student is performing below grade level expectations, parents are called in for a meeting to discuss the areas of concern. They are informed of the plan, given the opportunity to provide input on strategies that work well for the student at home, and, when appropriate, are asked to assist with at home intervention strategies. Follow-up meetings are held every six weeks to determine effectiveness of the plan and the need for adjustments to the strategies.

Since Anansi is a charter school, it is site-based managed by a volunteer governance council board. The board is comprised of parents and community members and meets regularly to oversee the program, policies, budget, and effectiveness of the school. In addition, the school has a Friends of Anansi Charter School foundation which serves as the parent advisory council, fundraising entity, and property owner for the school. Their mission is to support the educational programs and enrichment opportunities at the school. The Friends organization collaborates with the student council to provide school-wide family “Let’s Move” events three times per year, that include a fall hike day, winter tubing or ice skating, and a spring bike day. In addition, they sponsor two annual fundraisers to support the student winter sports program so that every student can select a winter sport they want to learn regardless of economic status.

Finally, Anansi partners with the University of New Mexico (UNM) Nursing department to supplement instruction in the health curriculum; local social services programs to provide counseling for students; the local museum organization to support the arts and social studies curricula; the SOMOS group to bring in storytellers and writers; the STEM play based not-for-profit Twirl in makerspace nights and the “Invent Event”; and, a local outdoor education program, “FITTaos” (Field Institute of Taos) to provide adventure and science related field trips in the community.

3. Professional Development:

Anansi’s approach to professional development is two-fold, school-wide initiatives and teacher/grade band specific goals. All professional development is aligned to the school’s goals and is responsive to prior year data. For school-wide initiatives, the school leadership team analyzes student data (assessment, attendance, discipline, intervention), teacher collaboration meeting feedback, and overall school performance trends to select school-wide professional development focal points. The Director then seeks the best professional development options to meet the identified needs that were prioritized with the leadership team. Anansi has six professional development days prior to the start of school; therefore, two of these days are dedicated to the school-wide targets. After the professional development, the grade band teams meet to develop their implementation strategies as a result of the professional development and the data they will use to analyze and track their effectiveness.

The second approach to professional development is more individualized and is focused upon the teacher evaluation process. The teacher and the director meet one on one to look at personal professional goals, prior year student data, and observation data to determine the priorities and opportunities for growth. These professional development plans may involve a grade band priority so that a team of three teachers are working together, instructional coaching and/or mentoring within the school faculty and outside contractors, attendance to specific trainings that meet the teacher’s professional goal, and observations of best practices on campus and at other identified school sites. The director and teacher meet a minimum of three times per year to review progress, adjust plans, and reflect on potential next steps.

Anansi also schedules four professional days during the school year to analyze student interim assessment data, collaboratively develop intervention plans and intervention schedules, and progress monitoring schedules. The second and fourth of these professional development days also provide time to write first and third quarter conference reports for the students. We find having a full day to reflect, think, and plan for student needs is far more effective, and it leaves the weekly collaboration block for school-wide professional initiatives and grade band specific focal points.

4. School Leadership:

At Anansi, the catch phrase for all decisions begins with “What’s best for kids?”; the governance council, the director, the leadership team, and the faculty all agree that our primary purpose is educating and developing students for success now and for their futures. The governance council’s role is to set and approve policy and budget, hire the director, and assure that the school is carrying out its mission as described in its charter. The council works with the school director and receives reports from members of the leadership team and the student leadership committee. The school director holds the school’s mission, keeps the compass on true north for its annual performance goals, facilitates the leadership team, meets with the individual team leaders weekly, allocates needed resources, observes and works in classrooms daily, and oversees all aspects of school. The leadership team is the conduit between the director and the grade band teams, special education team, and specialty teacher team. Each leader communicates directly with his or her team, leads the team collaboration meetings, assures that the school-wide initiatives are being implemented, that student data, student work, and/or instructional strategies are part of every grade band meeting, and communicates grade band needs, questions, and successes to the director. All staff participate in setting the overall school goals and take part in their smaller leadership teams. The students have a leadership council who meet with the school director to bring student interests and concerns forward, start initiatives that capture student interests, and lead student service projects.

An example, of our leadership process is the development of our 90-day plan for school improvement which was facilitated by the school director, involved input from all stakeholders, and implementation strategies from each team. Our first focus is tier one interventions. The planning process involved analyzing the root causes of barriers to the delivery of interventions in the regular core instructional time. The team uncovered that implementing a structure of options and developing student stamina through mindfulness would assist in maintaining an uninterrupted learning environment. All classrooms are now implementing the core mindfulness practice to develop student habits of calming themselves when facing a challenge by increasing self-awareness and self-regulation skills. The team then worked on the vertical alignment of introducing developmentally appropriate strategies to seek assistance when a student is unsure or stuck while completing independent work. The optimal outcome is to increase the amount of interrupted time for delivering tier one interventions in the classroom and for students to develop the mindset for independent problem solving. This process allowed us to keep financial resources for the more intensive instructional needs in tiers two and three, while increasing the functionality in the tier one classroom settings.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The employment of direct instruction and overall attention to social emotional learning skills has had the greatest impact on student achievement over time at the Anansi Charter School due to its underlying effect on school climate and culture for all stakeholders. The Anansi SEL commitment is embedded in the mission of the school which explicitly attends to the balance of developing both academic and SEL skills. The Anansi SEL model addresses school policy and rules, teacher relationships, curriculum, student learning, and parent education. The first layer is that all school policies are written to illicit personal responsibility. Discipline is managed with logical consequences, opportunities to learn from mistakes, and restorative justice. A communication contract is developed to maintain the dignity and respect of all stakeholders and to promote personal responsibility in all forms of communication.

The second layer is the development of teacher knowledge of emotional intelligence and the development of their professional lens for planning, decision making, and teaching with emotional intelligence in mind. Annually, Anansi provides professional development that builds teacher understanding of emotional intelligence and the growth of their own skills. The Anansi faculty then re-visits and renews its emotional literacy contract as a staff. The school director guides faculty understanding of the difference between an environment that fosters students learning from their mistakes rather than hurting from them.

The teachers then build a classroom culture based upon the collaboratively developed emotional literacy communication charter that guides classroom interactions; teacher to student and student to student. The teachers implement social emotional learning into their morning advisory and into direct lessons with the students. The desired outcomes of Anansi's SEL curriculum is the development of students' emotional literacy and vocabulary, understanding their emotional triggers and patterns, managing their emotions, developing consequential thinking skills, intrinsic motivation, optimism, and empathy for others.

The final component is in developing parent knowledge through providing resources, offering parent classes and discussion groups, and parent engagement activities with their children.

The result of the development of this comprehensive school-wide model has been an increase in students arriving to school ready to learn, an increase in instructional time, a decrease in student social issues, and a decrease in student referrals to the director. Some correlated impacts have been increased students' depth of comprehension of concepts in literature and history, increased student willingness to take academic risks in the classroom, and increased focus on learning.

Anansi believes providing a consistent and safe school environment frees the mind to pursue the passion and discovery of curiosity and learning in an unfettered, unencumbered way. The result continues to be student achievement growth and a stable, joyful, committed faculty.