

U.S. Department of Education
2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [] Title I [] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Ms. Leena Varghese

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Academic Leadership Charter School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 677 East 141st Street

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Bronx City NY State 10454-2815 Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Bronx County

Telephone (718) 585-4215

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Web site/URL https://www.alcsbronx.org/

E-mail lvarghese07@gmail.com

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Norma Hurwitz

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail nhurwitz@alcs.org

District Name Academic Leadership Charter School Tel. (718) 585-4215

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr. James Sander

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

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. 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, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 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.
3. 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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 (2018-2019) 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, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	36	55	91
1	38	38	76
2	22	33	55
3	30	27	57
4	30	26	56
5	25	24	49
6	28	24	52
7	18	22	40
8	20	18	38
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	247	267	514

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 50 % Black or African American
 - 47 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 2 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: 10%

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, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	4
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	45
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	49
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	514
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.10
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 10 %
53 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Ewe, Arabic, Spanish, Mandinka, Fulani, Twi, Malinke, Soninke, Wolof, Hausa, French, Bambara

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 91 %
Total number students who qualify: 468

8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %
48 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>0</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>11</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>33</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</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: 6
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	3
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	20
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	0
Student support personnel e.g., school 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 25:1

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

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	96%	94%	94%	94%	94%
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 2018.

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.

Academic Leadership Charter School's mission is to develop in students the ability to exceed New York State performance standards in all major academic areas in a safe and nurturing environment. In partnership with parents and the community, our students will be empowered to become leaders and take an active role in their learning while exhibiting good character.

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

Students are chosen to attend our charter school by random lottery selection. Siblings of current students are given first preference, local district children (district 7) are given second preference, and English Language Learners are given third preference.

PART III – SUMMARY

Academic Leadership Charter School (ALCS) is located in the South Bronx, an area with few educational options, high poverty, and a high number of immigrants and second language learners. 94% of our students qualify for free and/or reduced lunch. Our educational program is specifically developed to meet the needs of this student population, as we believe all children regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background can achieve academically. We work diligently to recruit and retain students in our local community who are English Language Learners (ELL), those in need of Special Education Services, and those who qualify for free and reduced lunch. Year after year, we have been able to better meet the needs of these students. Academic Leadership Charter School is committed to a rigorous curriculum for all of its students within a caring and supportive learning environment. We promote the development of critical thinking, perseverance, ethics, character, and leadership.

Since its beginnings in 2009, Academic Leadership Charter School has set very high academic performance goals for our students and has striven to meet those goals by providing a strong and differentiated instructional program. Our main focus is to provide our students with a quality educational program that helps them to develop and demonstrate college and career readiness by meeting or exceeding NYS Common Core Standards through a strong curriculum. It is our belief that all students can achieve academic success in a nurturing and academically rigorous environment. Our students have continuously outperformed schools in our local district (CSD 7), as well as city and state averages. On the 2017-2018 New York State Standardized Exams, 75% of our students were proficient in English Language Arts (ELA) and 72% were proficient in Mathematics. This is significantly higher than our local district which was at 28% for ELA and 27% for Mathematics, New York City proficiency rates which were at 47% for ELA and 44% for Mathematics, and New York State proficiency rates which were at 45% for ELA and 44% for Mathematics. 93% of our students at levels 3 and 4 (Meeting Proficiency and Exceeding Proficiency) on the 2018 New York State Standardized Science exam. Based on our Accountability Report and analysis provided by The State University of New York (SUNY) for the 2017-2018 school year, our effect size for ELA and Mathematics was “Higher than expected to a large degree.” Our school has been deemed “In Good Standing” each year by New York State.

For the 2017-2018 school year, we received “Reward School” status by the New York State Education Department.

We believe that parent participation is a key component for student success and the school keeps parents actively involved in their child’s education by maintaining regular, ongoing communication with parents. Working closely with our families allows us to provide a quality character education program to help develop students who are problem solvers, critical thinkers and able to solve conflicts peacefully. Our extended day program offers 33% more instructional time than public schools and our instructional focus on Literacy and content area knowledge, in order to develop conceptual understanding in all academic areas has greatly benefited our students. At ALCS, instruction beginning at 7:45 a.m. and ends at 4:00 p.m. This allows us to offer a 15 minute enrichment period each day. The goal of this period is to teach students about various themes (across the span of one or two weeks) to add to their general knowledge base to help bridge the gap that exists between middle class and high poverty children. Then, we offer four periods of Literacy instruction inclusive of a comprehensive writing component. This consists of analyzing various fiction and nonfiction texts and writing about them. We offer two periods of Mathematics, one period of Social Studies one period of Science, and one specials period (Art, Music or Physical Education) daily. Offering all of these classes each day helps our students develop into well rounded individuals with a broad knowledge base and an appreciation for learning. For all humanities-based subject areas, ELA, Social Studies, and Science teachers carefully select and use authentic literature. A variety of fiction and nonfiction trade books, along with magazine articles are used during every lesson. Our instructional program uses research-based anthologies that are thematic based.

Our school’s weekly professional development led by the school principals in conjunction with lead teachers gives our teachers the opportunity to refine their practice in each major subject area: Literacy, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies and also assists our teacher’s to further develop their own content area

knowledge.

In addition to our extended school day, we offer a summer program for three weeks each school year. The program is targeted to help struggling and mid-level students, as well as students who are new to the school. This is a half day, rigorous academic program designed to help students move forward. We also use this program as an opportunity to train newly hired teachers before they begin with us in September. Our school has an Executive Director and two Principals, one for the elementary school and one for the middle school. During the summer program, new teachers teach alongside our more experienced teachers and are coached by our Principals so they are ready to begin the new school year with us.

Another key feature of our model is having two teachers in many classrooms. We have a Lead Teacher and an Associate Teacher who functions as a co-teacher. Both teachers plan their own lessons, aligned to Common Core Standards to meet the needs of all students in the classroom. Our two teacher model ensures students are receiving differentiated instruction based on their needs. The classroom teacher and Associate Teacher plan their own lessons tailored towards the groups they work with which vary from period to period.

In addition to our focus on providing students with a meaningful academic program, we devote time to ensuring our students develop into well rounded citizens. Our character education program reinforces exemplar citizenship for our students. Star students who best portray these traits are selected from each class monthly. Some character traits included within our yearly list of traits are honesty, friendship, and perseverance. Classroom teachers and cluster teachers teach character education within the classroom setting using a variety of fiction and nonfiction books to help students better understand each concept.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

Since literacy is the foundation of an elementary school education, we devote four, 45-minute periods daily to its implementation. The literacy program is devoted to broadening our students understanding of their world using high interest and age appropriate literature to hook students to learning with interesting and engaging stories and textual content-based materials. The literacy program is made up of several components depending on the grade being taught, including phonics, word blending, vocabulary in context, and introduction to the day's story by the classroom teacher of the key features of the day's story. Listening and reading comprehension strategies are a central aspect of our literacy program. This portion of the literacy period is scheduled for approximately one hour to one hour and fifteen minutes. Each lesson contains a series of strategic follow-up activities to reinforce the lesson's goals and objectives. Students participate actively at all times and work independently or in small groups with the teacher and teacher associate depending on the identified need of the lesson and the students. Teachers give extra time to those students who require more extensive review. We currently utilize SRA Imagine It!, Pearson's Readygen, Pearson Literature and supplemental fiction and nonfiction story books, short stories and articles during our ELA block. Our articles are drawn from reputable children's magazines, such as the Cobblestone series of magazines- Cricket, Spider, Faces, etc.

The writing process is an important component of our literacy program. Teachers focus on specific areas of writing, incorporating grammar and language arts skills. Each writing lesson begins with a mini-lesson where teachers model, brainstorm ideas with students, and shared writing opportunities take place. The writing model is generated as a team response between the students and the teacher. Together, the teacher and students formulate writing paragraphs where students take part in adding a sense of voice, the editing process, and adding descriptive words; revising skills. Students then use the learned component in their writing pieces. It is during this section that Special Education, ELL, Title 1 teachers, and other support staff come into classes and work with those students needing their services. We believe in meaningful writing opportunities that draw from the day's readings/stories. Teachers plan writing prompts that allow students to think critically about stories while summarizing them.

Our curriculum has led to great success, with 75% of our students at levels 3 and 4 (Meeting Proficiency and Exceeding Proficiency) on the 2018 New York State Standardized ELA exam.

In addition to classroom observations and analysis of classwork, we use Six Week Assessments and Mock Standardized Tests as indicators to track progress for individuals, classes, and grades throughout each school year by monitoring growth every six weeks. Kindergarten students take teacher created Six-Week ELA assessments which assess mastery of classroom content for periods 1-6, and MOCK standard Assessments which assess broader reading comprehension and writing skills in periods 1-4. The Mock Standardized Assessments are created by the leadership team. Students in grades 1-8 take Mock ELA assessments to assess their reading comprehension and writing skills. The Mock Standardized Assessments assess students' comprehension ability; drawing conclusions, making inferences, identifying cause and effect relationships, understanding of figurative language, and analyzing plot, theme, and mood. These assessments are modeled after New York State Standardized exams and aligned to Common Core Standards.

1b. Mathematics:

Our Mathematics program consists of two 45 minute periods daily for all grades K-8 and is aligned to NYS Common Core Standards for each grade level. Each period is devoted to two algorithms and the development of the concepts along with opportunities to apply understanding. The beginning of each mathematics period is devoted to an eight to ten minute warm up, a routine which allows students to master math facts with speed; addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, and review of previous concepts learned. Each lesson also affords time to review previously taught concepts, thereby giving more

support to students in specific areas of weakness (spiraling instruction). The classroom teacher and teacher associate give special attention to those students who are struggling and provide additional support. Our Mathematics curriculum utilizes a wide variety of research-based programs, with Pearson's Investigations being the primary program at the elementary school and Pearson's Connected Mathematics Project being the primary program at the middle school. We supplement these materials with supplemental materials such as Curriculum Associates Ready NY Mathematics, NYSED'S Engage NY curriculum, and Triumph Progress Mathematics workbooks. Our curriculum has led to great success, with 72% of our students at levels 3 and 4 (Meeting Proficiency and Exceeding Proficiency) on the 2018 New York State Standardized Mathematics exam.

We utilize Six-Week assessments for kindergarten for periods 1-6 to assess classroom content taught. For Periods 4-6, kindergarten students take Mock Standard Assessments to assess overall mastery of Mathematics. Students in grades 1-8 take Mock Standard Assessments which assess mastery of all Common Core Mathematics standards. These assessments are modeled after New York State Standardized exams.

1c. Science:

A 50- minute Science lesson is an integral part of our daily curriculum. A research-based program, Scott Foresman Science, along with the FOSS 'hands on' investigations and experimentation is used to explore nature, plants and animals, water, sinking and floating, and other topics in Science. These baseline programs are used in conjunction with our in-house curriculum and pacing calendars that afford students the opportunity to learn about topics that are not otherwise offered for their grade level. Since we have a longer school day and year and Science is taught daily, the development of our in-house curriculum was a crucial factor in ensuring we were making the best use of each period and lesson. We use supplemental nonfiction trade books, historical fiction books, and articles (From magazines such as Dig, National Geographic for Kids,) in conjunction with Scott Foresman/Pearson textbooks, for every lesson. Students read, analyze, write, and conduct experiments within each unit. Our curriculum has led to great success, with 93% of our students at levels 3 and 4 (Meeting Proficiency and Exceeding Proficiency) on the 2018 New York State Standardized Science exam.

Students in grades 1-8 take Six-Week Assessments to assess their mastery of Science concepts. Students in kindergarten and 1st grade also complete projects that are part of their assessment. Teachers create parent/student review packets for these assessments. This helps parents be an active part of their child's learning and gives them an opportunity to learn the content as well.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

Social Studies is also an important part of the daily curriculum to which students devote one 45-minute period daily. A thematic interdisciplinary approach provides a cohesive lesson to engage students in reading or being read to depending on their grade level or whether the individual student has become an independent reader. Picture books and other visual aids are used to help children learn about people and their physical environment (geography), and how people coexist in a given community by making use of their resources to meet their needs. As the program progresses through the grades, a historical perspective is continuously developed. We use SRA McGraw-Hill as our baseline social studies curriculum. We then have an in-house curriculum. Students learn about many topics within one to two week periods. We use supplemental nonfiction trade books, historical fiction books, and articles (from magazines such as Cobblestone, Faces, and Time for Kids) in conjunction with McGraw-Hill textbooks, for every lesson. Students read, analyze, write, and complete projects within every unit. We utilize thematic units with six-week cycles and one-week mini units within each cycle to ensure that students are exposed to various topics.

This is particularly important since most of our students enter kindergarten and first grade with a very limited language base and vocabulary. Students in grades 1-8 take Six-Week Assessments to assess their mastery of Social Studies Studies concepts. Students in kindergarten and 1st grade also complete projects that are part of their assessment. Teachers create parent/student review packets for these assessments. This

helps parents be an active part of their child's learning and gives them an opportunity to learn the content as well.

1e. For secondary schools:

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Academic Leadership Charter School's curriculum consists of research-based publisher developed materials and in-house materials which we have designed based on Common Core Standards. We offer an extended school day, with instruction beginning at 7:45 a.m. and ending at 4:00 p.m. This allows us to offer a 15 minute enrichment period each day building on the topic or theme over the course of one to two week period. The goal of this mini-period is to teach students about various themes to add to their general knowledge base.

Students participate in a 45-minute Specials lesson, daily, intended to supplement and enrich the core curriculum. Subjects and opportunities include Physical Education, Art, and Drama/Music. Our goal is to have our students become well-rounded citizens and future leaders and Specials play a critical role within our academic program.

Students learn a variety of sports techniques in addition to the importance of/how to maintain a healthy lifestyle through exercise and healthy eating habits. Students learn teamwork, cooperation, listening and speaking skills and gain much needed confidence. Our Physical education teachers provide exercise and sports instruction in our gymnasiums and health instruction within these lessons, but also within the classroom. Students read a variety of articles and analyze healthy lifestyle choices.

Art is an integral part of the curriculum for students at Academic Leadership Charter School. Students strengthen their abilities to make observations in regard to theme, setting, and mood within works of art. This ties in with the school's literacy curriculum and enhances a student's ability to ascertain "the bigger picture" within complex content. Along with the ability to make keen observations, students learn about the historical context of both artist and art works as well as historical references through observing and more importantly making art. Students learn about major genres and styles that span from cave paintings, where they learn the basic concepts of overlapping and scale, to the great modernists such as Picasso and Matisse who teach about activism, form, color, and space. Students also learn about contemporary artists of today. While learning art history and making observations is of great use to the students, we ensure that our students enjoy art and have the opportunity to paint, draw, and create their own works of art. Students generate higher self-esteem by creating works of art as well as honing-in on their ability to problem solve and overcome obstacles.

The art curriculum strives to make for a well-rounded education. Students take trips to museums such as The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters, as well as The Guggenheim Museum where they draw, write, and discuss the works they've seen in class as well as participate in an array of incredibly enriching workshops offered by these wonderful institutions. These experiences build character and equip students to make strong inferences in school as well as their everyday life.

Every year, we host multiple shows/performances where our students get to showcase their talents and hard work. These performances also provide an opportunity for our parents, teachers, administrators, board members, and entire school community to come together. Teachers and students replicate famous movies and plays such as The Lion King, Annie, and Grease. We also have classes turn their favorite story books into plays. Each skit is turned into a musical. Our students build great confidence and really enjoy these performances.

Technology is incorporated into our classrooms and instructional program. Teachers utilize programs such as I-ready to enhance our ELA and Mathematics instruction. Students are given opportunities to engage in online reading and math activities through this program and teachers can track their progress. This program also allows us to differentiate instruction as specific lessons are generated based on student levels. Students also use technology to type essays, create PowerPoint presentations, chart/graph data, and for projects/research.

Our Character Education Program has been outlined in our summary and school culture/climate sections. Each class also participates in trips to art and science museums, the Museum of Natural History, the Bronx Zoo and other sites in NYC.

3. Special Populations:

Our school has established a school culture where every stakeholder is encouraged to contribute and is engaged as a learner including the school's leadership, teachers, teacher associates, students, and parents. Establishing a calm, safe, and supportive learning environment for students and staff is fundamental before teaching and learning can flourish in a school. All students, including those served under IDEA guidelines, English Language Learners (ELL), or those considered "at-risk" must meet the same high expectations set forth at Academic Leadership Charter School. We support a school culture that celebrates learning diversity. Teachers and all other support staff engage in regular dialogue on multiple intelligences and learning styles as part of the professional development efforts so they may understand the strengths of all of our students, especially those with special needs. All students are expected to excel and reach their fullest potential. Our school data supports our goals and ELL and Special Education students excel at the same rate of growth as the regular education students as are boys and girls performance well matched. Academic Leadership Charter School's general strategy for providing targeted services is through small group instruction and our response to intervention programs in literacy and mathematics. Several classrooms consist of a two-teacher model enabling each teacher to target instruction based on students' weaknesses and strengths. Each program in literacy and mathematics is paired with re-teaching, skills practice re-building, contextual vocabulary instruction, explicit instruction supported by progress monitoring, frequent assessment opportunities, and strong inquiry higher-order thinking activities. We provide many opportunities for children to reinforce contextual reading and analytical strategies for more in-depth understanding of topics and themes.

The lead teacher and teacher associate provide small group instruction for each academic area which promotes meeting the needs of our ELL and Special education students. ALCS provides special education services, an inclusion model within the regular classroom setting. Collaborative Team Teaching and Special Education Teacher Support Services provide a learning environment that is least restrictive for our students, where they continue their education in the classroom. For the Special Education students and English Language Learners, we disaggregate data to specifically track how they are performing in each classroom enabling us to provide additional support and modify our groups and instruction accordingly. Our multifaceted Literacy remediation program includes Title I, Special Education, and ELL teachers "pushing in" to the classroom to work collaboratively with the classroom and associate teachers to provide cohesive instructional programs to meet the needs of each of the targeted students by working with small groups in the classroom and following our detailed Literacy curriculum. This allows us to give students tailored attention according to their needs. Our ELL immersion program serving English Language Learner students uses a similar structure.

The Title I teacher "pushes in" to each classroom daily during Literacy and Mathematics to provide those students who need additional support. Our Special Education students and English Language Learners outperform their peers on New York State Standardized Exams. Our English Language Learners also consistently show growth and move up levels within the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT).

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

We strive to develop an environment where students wake up every morning and want to come to school and do not do it just because they have to. Our students' parents continuously tell us how eager their children are to attend school and we strive to ensure that our students keep this mind set. Our approach to student discipline has a positive focus and centers around recognizing students for positive behavior in order to prevent negative behavior.

The discipline policy is explained in our Student and Family Handbook and distributed to parents at the beginning of each school year so they can work with us to ensure that our discipline policy is adhered to. We provide a safe environment where effective teaching and good citizenship are the standard. We believe that values, respect, citizenship, and the incentive to work hard must be instilled in each student. To achieve this, we have established clear, high expectations, a system of discipline, and a uniform policy. Parents receive calls, notes, and awards to praise their children for doing well. Parent participation is actively sought as part of the ongoing process of improving each child's performance and behavior at school.

Teachers, administrative staff, and leadership are encouraged to hand out ALCS tokens for good behavior in the classrooms, hallways, and shared spaces and the classes with the most tokens are rewarded with ice cream parties. We also motivate and celebrate hard work with an end of year carnival. Tickets are awarded and distributed to those students who perform well during vocabulary contests, submit weekly book reports, wear full uniform, and implement character education towards their peers, as an incentive for an end of the year carnival. The carnival has been a great way to bring our entire school community together and reward our students for their hard work. In addition to positive reinforcement, we teach character education, and by starting with kindergarten students, we hope to set the tone early and have older students' model good behavior for younger students.

Each month of the school year is centered on a different character education theme and the two students from each class who best exhibited that theme are announced to the school. Students also receive certificates and get their picture posted on our "Star Students" bulletin board. Our Character Education program focuses on monthly themes such as friendship, trustworthiness, perseverance, citizenship. Students are rewarded for exhibiting behavior that reflects these traits. Discussions on ethical decision making are tackled throughout the curriculum and the school day as students reflect on how their actions impact their lives and others. Teachers also engage students in projects using a variety of books around a topic to further explore areas of concern to students.

The aforementioned efforts help us support our teachers by allowing them to focus on teaching and learning in a calm environment.

Teachers foster meaningful relationships with students and families. The school and leadership's efforts around maintaining a culture where everyone take responsibility for their actions, helps ensure our staff members do the same. All of our teachers work with the common goal of student success in mind. As teachers get to praise each others' classes and award tokens, our school community as a whole is brought together.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

We believe that partnering with parents is pivotal to student success. At Academic Leadership Charter School we make every effort we can to involve parents in their child's education and to be part of our school community. The classroom teacher sends notes home both praising each student's progress and seeking parent participation in any area of concern, especially as it relates to the instructional program and the student's general social development in school. Teachers provide their cell phone numbers and email addresses to parents to encourage them to play an active role in their child's education.

Attendance and punctuality, homework, and the student's day-to-day growth are addressed to ensure open lines of communication and active participation from parents. The school has an open-door policy for parents. We promote parental and staff involvement in school governance by establishing committees to discuss all areas of the school's program and get feedback on how we can improve our methods in implementing the school's mission together. We have a number of formal structures in place to promote parent engagement. Each year, we have a new student orientation to discuss the school's curriculum, schedule, and other school-related guidelines including the discipline policy, school calendar, the assessment program, attendance requirement, uniform policy, and other areas in the Student and Family Handbook. Every September, we hold "Curriculum Night" which provides parents with the opportunity to meet their child's teacher, learn about the grade's curriculum, and walk away with strategies for helping their child at home. Three report cards are given to parents and their child at the time of the formal parent-teacher conferences in November, again in March, and the last report card is given in June. Parents also chaperone school trips which allow them to be part of their child's learning and our school community. We have several school musicals/shows each year and parents assist with costumes and enjoy watching their children perform. Our end of year carnival is a community building event where parents and siblings/family members are invited to attend and partake in a day of games and fun, celebrating everyone's hard work.

Letters are sent home informing parents of events at the school including upcoming meetings, the assessment schedule, and individual assessment results, which are given to parents as soon as they are scored. In addition, teachers send home weekly memos and parents are invited to set up a meeting with their child's teacher to review the Six Week Assessment results and discuss additional options in the event that further follow up is warranted. Parents are also welcome to sit in on classes to see what a day at school is like for the children to help them create an effective learning environment for their children at home. All communications are in English and Spanish. Our school has also formed strong relationships with local daycare centers. Each year, we hold several recruitment and information sessions to inform parents about our school and their school choices within their local community. Many parents are unfamiliar with the lottery process for charter schools and these sessions have been beneficial for the community.

3. Professional Development:

Our school's professional development plan is multifaceted, actively involving classroom teachers and teacher associates in the learning process as each refines their knowledge of the standards, curriculum content, data driven instruction, and differentiation of instruction to serve the diverse populations in the school including the Limited English Proficient (LEP), Special Education, and the other at-risk students (those scoring at Levels 1 and 2).

ALCS creates an environment that encourages and supports learning for all adults and students. Teachers are encouraged to share their knowledge and expertise while seeking guidance and support from their peers and the leadership team. Teachers conduct inter-visitations that allow them to learn from each other as well as provide feedback to each other. This allows more senior teachers to help with their newer peers in a collegial fashion as well as for all teachers to gain different perspectives and reflect on their own practices. The school Principal makes every effort to facilitate the learning process for teachers ensuring that the school offers meaningful and differentiated professional development, tailored to individual needs similar to the differentiation which takes place in individual classrooms.

Teachers are scheduled for common preparation periods where they confer with their colleagues on the grade and plan collaboratively, sharing effective instructional and classroom management techniques to increase 'time on task'. They plan units of study and corresponding lesson plans, with differentiated activities and assessment tools, building a community of thinkers and learners reflected in the quality of instruction in their own classrooms. Exemplary lessons and units of study in each subject area are submitted to the grade level leader or Principal to be later shared with the whole staff during the weekly professional development sessions. Grade level leaders are teachers who have been identified by administrators and their peers as individuals who are willing to take risks within their own classrooms and have had a success rate in adapting the school's instructional program within their classrooms. These teachers serve as a resource for their peers and are often the "go to" person for communication amongst

grade level members and between administrators and grade level members. This additional level of leadership is a vital component of our school's growth and expansion.

During weekly professional development sessions, administrators model and teach the staff effective methods to differentiate instruction and how to create corresponding assessments to address the needs of at-risk students. Teachers in turn share effective teaching strategies they have noticed which work well and move students forward. The leadership team also discusses how to use test results to modify instructional methods and explore ways to integrate learning across the curriculum. The school requires that the instructional leaders and the teaching staff reflect on their own practice and seek feedback from colleagues and others, creating a collaborative model to sharpen their observational skills. We provide different methods that help improve teaching and learning and encourage teachers to visit colleagues and observe lessons in specific areas of interest.

We also introduce teachers to successful strategies to help students to master skills and help them identify those students who need further support. Furthermore, we arrange for common preparation times within the grade to encourage the sharing of ideas and lesson planning as teachers collaborate to refine subject area unit plans with related activities. Our professional development plan fosters a cooperative and collaborative approach to professional growth between the school's leadership and the staff. Each session focuses on a specific topic to help the instructional staff refine instruction in the classroom and then give each teacher the needed support so that they may develop effective systems to differentiate instruction tailored to each student's level of performance to help them meet the school's high performance standards. A professional development action plan may recommend varied strategies geared to individual needs in order to give students support in a small group setting and show teachers additional methods that may be used in reviewing a lesson or arranging additional help for those students still lagging behind.

The success of the professional development program is measured by formal and informal observations by the Leadership Team, staff feedback on all professional development initiatives, and by monitoring assessment results in each subject area corresponding to the professional development provided and analyzing trends. We also have grade meetings to review whether there is a need for follow-up and refinement in the professional development program in a given area. The focused walkthroughs, or informal observations, explained previously give a snapshot of the degree to which a strategy is being implemented throughout the school, thereby stimulating collaborative professional conversations about teaching and learning through the gathering of evidence related to instructional expectations/focus. One-on-one teacher conferences are also a measure of the success of our professional development program. Revising pacing calendars and lesson plans to incorporate Bloom's Taxonomy and the Common Core Standards was the main focus of professional development sessions during the earlier years of our school's charter and revisions to our curriculum continue to be made each year. School leaders continue to model ways to meet various levels of questioning and standards within a lesson and teachers work to create their own based on the modeling done. Coaching is provided to teachers as they apply this within their classrooms. Revising assessments and analyzing student assessment data continues to be a main component of professional development sessions. Mathematics and literacy charts are developed to see what students are struggling with and how instruction can be modified and what needs to be reflected in future assessments. Classroom teachers also model and share exemplar lessons and units that are working well, leading to ongoing conversations and examinations of best practices. Inter-visitations allow teachers to learn from each other as well as offer feedback to each other in a collegial manner.

4. School Leadership:

Academic Leadership Charter School is governed by its Board of Trustees which is comprised of five to seven members. The Board has ultimate authority on school issues, sets all school policies, and is responsible to ensure that ALCS meets its obligation to its charter and remains financially viable. Our Board of Trustees meets about once a month. At these meetings, the Board reviews the school's progress in achieving its mission, monitors student performance, and participates in decision making relative to committee reports. For each meeting, the leadership of the school provides various reports to the Board including, but not limited to, interim academic assessments, student attendance for each month, student safety information, the current school register, and budget information. The Board of Trustees delegates

the management of the school staff to the Executive Director and the school Principal who lead the school and manage the school's overall operation.

The school's Principal manages the school's instructional program and works closely with the Board. The elementary school Principal has a Bachelor's degree in Childhood Education and a Master's degree in Literacy Education. She holds professional certifications in Early Childhood Education, Childhood Education, and Literacy Birth to grade six. Our Middle School Principal has a Master's degree in Childhood and Special Education. She holds professional certification in Childhood Education and Special Education. Our Principals are responsible for the educational, organizational, and supervisory duties of leading the school on a day to day basis. Our school Principals focus on teaching and learning daily. From visiting classrooms to provide feedback, teaching struggling students, to co-teaching whole classes with teachers, our Principals are instructional leaders who ensure that student achievement is the focus of every school day. Co-teaching sessions are particularly helpful as they show teachers that our principals are there to coach and model for them, while helping them impact student achievement. This eliminates the "top-down" environment that can often exist between administrators and teachers. The main focus of school leadership is in on classroom instruction for the majority of each school day to ensure that teachers and students receive the support that they need.

The Executive Director is responsible for providing leadership training to the Principals and collaborating with the Principals on professional development to help maintain our school's high academic and leadership standards. Our Executive Director holds an Ed. D in School Building Leadership and has been a school principal for over 35 years. The Executive Director has a collaborative role with the Principals in leadership, teacher professional development, curriculum, and instruction. The Board oversees the operational and financial sustainability of the school. Each month, monthly financial reports that outline all expenditures and income are prepared and presented to the Finance Committee of the Board for review and oversight prior to each Board meeting. The Finance Committee Chair presents the findings to the Board and the Executive Director makes a full report at the Board meeting.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

One of our greatest successes as a school is the development of our strong curriculum, and instructional program, which centers around active, hands on teaching, and the training of our teachers to implement this program throughout the school. Our instructional program is interactive and engaging and allows students to gain exposure to a variety of topics. Our teachers and leadership look at assessment data to refine our extensive professional development program and teaching practices within the classroom. The success of our curriculum and instructional program is exemplified by our students' scores on the New York State exams as well as their classwork.

During each lesson, teachers ensure that students are reading, thinking critically, discussing, and writing. We avoid having students working independently for an extended period of time. We believe that engagement with their teacher and peers ensure that students are on track and provides them with the support they need. Teachers ensure that students are provided with focus areas and questions before each lesson begins. Making the objectives clear to students and consistently reinforcing these objectives throughout the lesson, helps ensure that we are actively teaching students to meet these goals.

We ensure that each lesson moves forward with a sense of urgency and that teachers are well versed with the content.

In order to achieve the results we want in the classroom, our main focus area is teacher training, which has also led to our success. Each summer, our teachers spend 7-9 days training and developing high quality lessons to start off the school year. Our principals and teacher leaders model exemplar lessons and practices. Teachers then apply these strategies to their own lesson planning. This training is followed by classroom observations, co-teaching (principals with teachers), and our weekly Professional Development sessions every Monday from 4:00-5:30 p.m. School leaders observe classrooms and provide immediate feedback. Further discussions are held during grade level preps and during our weekly professional development meetings. We focus on coaching and providing support, helping teachers master content and each subject area.