

**East Link Academy: *A Chinese Language Immersion School***  
Executive Summary

**The mission of East Link Academy is to prepare students to be language and cultural links between the West and East in order to meet the global challenges of their lifetime, by providing a rigorous education in math, science, social studies, and language arts in a bilingual English-Mandarin environment.**

East Link Academy (ELA) proposes to be the second Chinese Language Immersion School in South Carolina, located in Greenville County. Founded on the success of East Point Academy, in West Columbia, South Carolina, ELA will support President Obama’s “One Million Strong” initiative – a campaign to grow the number of American students learning Mandarin to one million by 2020. ELA will strive to achieve this goal through excellence in academics, with a particular focus on Mandarin language proficiency.

The focus of East Link Academy’s educational philosophy is that through early and sustained immersion in the Mandarin language with culture integrated throughout, students will achieve proficiency in both English and Mandarin, academic excellence, and develop sensitivity and tolerance for other cultures. ELA recognizes the value of the whole-school language immersion model as the most efficient platform for children to achieve bilingual proficiency. We firmly believe that allowing children the opportunity to learn a second language while they are young not only produces stronger students academically, but also teaches them the value of their global citizenship.

East Link Academy's education program requires the use of different and innovative teaching methods. Unlike traditional teaching methods, at ELA, the target language acquisition and content studies occur at the same time and both English and Chinese become the medium of instruction for academic content. Research and data show that a child's first language does not suffer by participating in an immersion program and that bilingual students gain additional cognitive, academic, and social benefits beyond facility with a second language. Examples of these additional advantages include increased mental flexibility, improved divergent thinking, broader cultural diversity awareness, and even higher scores on measures of verbal ability in the students' native language. Furthermore, combining best practices from Western and Eastern education philosophies and methodologies happens within this unique school environment. The school's teaching structure is departmentalized and all subjects are taught by content specialists. The teaching methods employed at ELA also require a close partnership between the English-speaking and Chinese-speaking teachers.

Greenville County School District has a long history of supporting language acquisition (i.e., the Spanish and French programs at Blythe Academy) and understands the benefits an immersion experience can afford its students. East Link Academy will enhance the opportunities by bringing a new dimension to the students of Greenville County – Mandarin immersion. Immersion programs have generally produced better second-language proficiency results than traditional foreign language teaching strategies. The ELA Primary/Elementary whole school immersion program uses a 75/25 (Mandarin/English language) model in 4K through grade one, and a 50/50 model in grades two through six. The intensive early exposure to the target language will allow

students to reach the level of second-language proficiency required to study other subjects in the new language.

Research shows that learning a second language stimulates a different part of the brain; therefore, children in language immersion programs, in general do better academically, specifically in mathematics (Cohen, A. D., and Johnson, C. E., Ellison, F. P., & Flores, J. S.) and science (Kessler, C., & Quinn, M. E.) than children who speak only one language. Bilinguals demonstrate more mental flexibility and perform better on tasks requiring mental manipulation. They are original in verbal expression, demonstrate non-verbal intelligence and can answer open-ended questions more freely than monolinguals. Per Judith Kroll, an expert on bilingualism, “Bilinguals are more efficient in resolving mental competition. They are able to keep languages separate while keeping them both available and active in their minds at the same time.” After successful completion of grades kindergarten through eight, students will have had an estimated 5,700 contact hours with the Mandarin language. Their target level of proficiency at that time is expected to be Intermediate-High as determined by the ACTFL proficiency guidelines.

East Link Academy will seek teacher candidates who demonstrate proficiency in the language and culture. To assist ELA will partner with the Confucius Institute (CI) of Presbyterian College to recruit teachers to teach at ELA. One such opportunity is the partnership between the CI and the Beijing Language and Culture University (BLCU) in Beijing, China in which Chinese teachers are trained to teach Mandarin to nonnative speakers. This partnership could supply volunteer teachers on an annual or bi-annual basis who will serve as classroom teachers or assistants and provide the language and cultural experiences to the students. Not all Mandarin teachers will be part of the CI partnership, but each year a few teachers will.

Because language is best learned at an early age, East Link Academy will open with 4K through grade four: three 4K classes, with 72 students total; and four Kindergarten classes, four 1<sup>st</sup> grade classes, and two classes each in 2<sup>nd</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> grades, totaling 336 students. ELA will then grow one grade-level each subsequent year, until it reaches full capacity in 2025-2026 with grades 4K through grade eight, totaling 936 students.

In 2014, a group interested in the creation of a Chinese Language Immersion School in the Greenville area, along with representatives from the Confucius Institute (CI) at Presbyterian College visited East Point Academy in West Columbia, SC, the first and only current Chinese Language Immersion School in South Carolina. After this visit, the Greenville Chinese Culture Association (GCCA) and the CI met to discuss the partnership that would be needed to create a Chinese Language Immersion School in the Upstate. Having qualified teachers who are native speakers of the target language is an essential element of the school. The CI worked with the original Charter Committee and discussed providing access to teachers from China for the school if available. The Charter Committee has gathered persons with expertise in opening and serving as board members from other charter schools, reviewing and making recommendations for charter applications, school finance and school facilities.

East Link Academy is not working with an EMO or CMO for the operations of the school.

Appendix Items: No documents.

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## I. EDUCATIONAL PLAN

### 1. Mission and Vision

#### a) Mission Statement

**The mission of East Link Academy is to prepare students to be language and cultural links between the West and East in order to meet the global challenges of their lifetime by providing a rigorous education in math, science, social studies, and language arts in a bilingual English-Chinese environment.**

Using a rigorous one-way language immersion program, aligned with state and national standards for language learning, East Link Academy (ELA) will provide a learning environment where students develop proficiency in both English and Mandarin as well as academic excellence as evidenced by successful student achievement on state assessments. To fulfil its mission and the purpose of the Charter School Act, ELA will:

**1) Improve student learning:** Immersion programs have generally produced better second-language proficiency results than traditional foreign language teaching strategies. The intensive exposure to the target language is important because it allows students to reach the level of second-language proficiency required to study other subjects in the new language. The East Link Academy whole-school immersion program, in which students are exposed to the language and culture across their school day, will use a 75/25 (Mandarin/English language) model in 4K through 1<sup>st</sup> grade, and a 50/50 model in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade through 8<sup>th</sup>. This intense exposure to the target language is critical for learning the Chinese language as it is one of the most difficult languages for Westerners to acquire.

**2) Increase learning opportunities for students:** East Link Academy will join a list of approximately 30 whole-school language acquisition programs in the nation and will be the second

whole-school Mandarin language immersion school in South Carolina, but the first in the Upstate. While children have several options for learning Spanish and French in the Upstate, ELA will be the only school to offer Mandarin in an immersion setting thus adding to the variety of opportunities for Greenville area students. The only Mandarin language programs are at private schools, or hosted through organizations such as the Greenville Chinese Culture Association.

**3) Encourage the use of a variety of productive teaching methods:** East Link Academy will use a variety of teaching methods including hands-on, inquiry and problem-based instruction. The use of content-based instruction (CBI) as the basis for immersion teaching and learning will allow students to learn the target language (Mandarin) through its use in learning new content (math and science). The theory behind CBI is that when students are engaged with more content, intrinsic motivation will be promoted. Students will be able to use more advanced thinking skills when learning new information and will focus less on the structure of the language. This approach is very student-centered as it depends entirely on the students' ability to use the language.

**4) Establish new forms of accountability for schools:** East Link Academy will use the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards and assessments to inform and measure the effectiveness of the program for language proficiency. ACTFL is a national voice representing language educators and sets expectations that will result in high quality language programs. National assessment tools will be used to assess student progress toward proficiency of the Mandarin language, such as the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) for both elementary and middle school students, and the Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL) for 5<sup>th</sup> grade and 8<sup>th</sup>. These assessment tools are aligned with the South Carolina World Language Standard.

**5) Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site:** Creating a language immersion school requires high quality teachers who are proficient in the target language as well as content area expertise with special teaching techniques. Teachers in immersion schools cannot teach in isolation of each other and successfully achieve the standards or meet the goals of the charter. Cooperation and collaboration are essential to creating unique opportunities for professional development within the school. East Link Academy teachers will be required to participate in extensive professional learning focused on immersion teaching strategies and student proficiency determination. Through ELA's professional development strategies, classroom teachers will develop the skills and experience to adapt the curriculum resources themselves, a practice which is most likely to result in materials that respond best to student needs and abilities. The Academic Director and Immersion Coordinator will provide guidance to teachers in the selection of these materials and in the implementation, and ensure lessons-learned and ideas are shared school-wide to enhance collaboration. Specific opportunities include daily or weekly grade-level team meetings to review and plan for instructional needs of students; one Friday a month for professional learning communities (PLCs) to learn new innovative methods for curriculum, assessment and instruction; and participation in a week-long summer experience specific to learning immersion strategies.

**6) Assist South Carolina in reaching academic excellence:** Designed to promote academic excellence in mathematics, science, English, social studies, and Mandarin language acquisition through early and sustained immersion in the Chinese language, East Link Academy will provide a nurturing one-way language immersion environment for educating children who do not have prior knowledge of the Mandarin language to enter the program. ELA's one-way

Mandarin language immersion program is informed by the Utah Language Immersion (<http://www.utahdli.org/>) for the elementary and middle grades programs.

**7) Create new, innovative, and more flexible ways of educating children within the public school system, with the goal of closing achievement gaps between low-performing student groups and high-performing student groups:** Research shows that learning a second language stimulates a different part of the brain; therefore, children in language immersion programs, in general do better academically, specifically in mathematics (Cohen, A. D., and Johnson, C. E., Ellison, F. P., & Flores, J. S.) and science (Kessler, C., & Quinn, M. E.) than children who speak only one language. Bilinguals demonstrate more mental flexibility and perform better on tasks requiring mental manipulation. They are original in verbal expression, demonstrate non-verbal intelligence and can answer open-ended questions more freely than monolinguals. Per Judith Kroll, an expert on bilingualism, “Bilinguals are more efficient in resolving mental competition. They are able to keep languages separate while keeping them both available and active in their minds at the same time.”

#### *Development of the Mission*

During the original committee meetings, the development of the information to be given to the public centered around the mission of the school, specifically what it truly meant to be a link between the East and West in language and culture. The actual name of the school was a result of this discussion – that the school wanted to be a bridge between East and West. Several mission statements from other Chinese Immersion schools across the US were reviewed. The committee received input from a local public relations professional who spoke to them about how to manifest what the students learned from the East and West to solve the problems that will occur in their

future lifetime. After months of discussion, the committee settled on the mission statement as written here.

The East Link Academy logo was created by ELA committee member, Freda Sue. The iconic image of the Greenville Liberty Bridge is used in the logo to depict the link between the two cultures, reaching out from Greenville through East Link Academy. The Chinese phoenix, or Feng-Huang, was chosen specifically for its symbolism in Chinese culture and relevance to ELA's mission:



*“The Feng-Huang over the years has been seen as a symbol of power, prosperity, grace, and virtue. ... The Feng-Huang was at times seen as the sacred symbolic joining of male and female, commonly seen as the Yin-Yang symbol. The Yin is female, the Yang male, and when combined, such as in the combination of Feng and Huang, it is representative of opposite forces meeting into a union that produces harmony and balance.”*  
[\(\[http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Feng-huang#cite\\\_note-hou-1\]\(http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Feng-huang#cite\_note-hou-1\)\)](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Feng-huang#cite_note-hou-1)

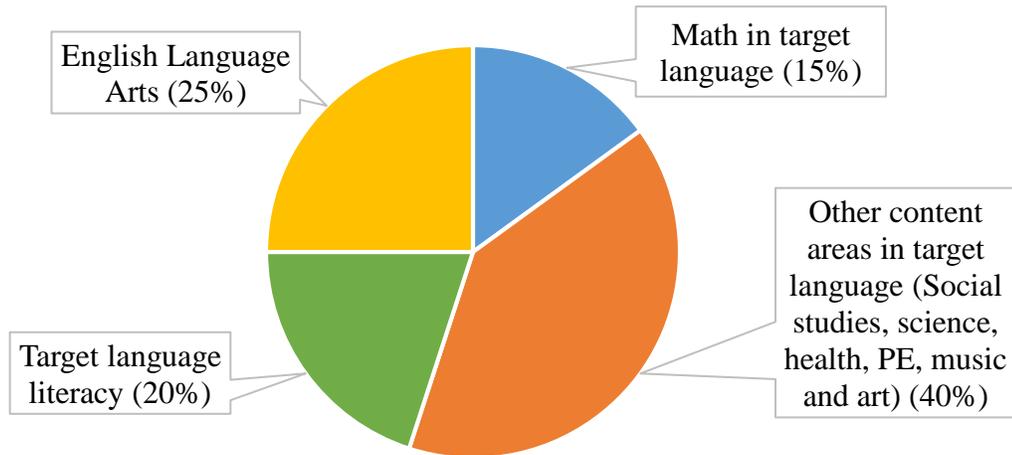
The symbol of the Feng-Huang speaks directly to the values and beliefs of East Link Academy, and the culture to be fostered within the school. ELA strives to be a link between cultures, sometimes opposing and sometimes agreeing, meeting together to produce harmony and balance between both.

*One Page Graphic Organizer of Proposed Educational Design*

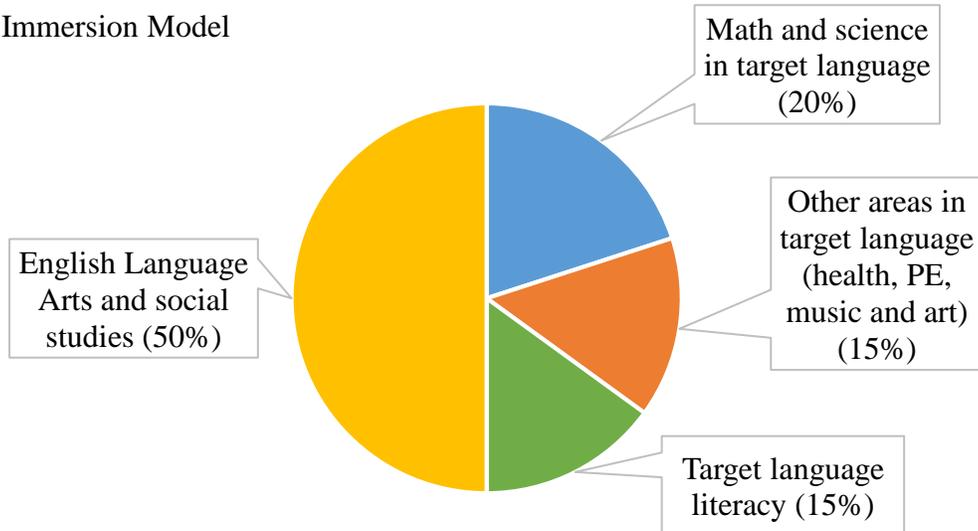
The East Link Academy immersion philosophy follows four immersion-related goals:

- 1) to achieve proficiency in the target language (listening, speaking, reading, and writing);
- 2) to acquire comparable English Language Arts skills as peers in traditional schools;
- 3) to reach cultural competency in surface features and deep features of cultural perspectives, practices, and products; and
- 4) to gain mastery in content areas compared to peers instructed in a traditional school.

75 / 25 Immersion Model



50 / 50 Immersion Model



b) Vision

The vision of East Link Academy is to become an enthusiastic and diverse community of learners who are confident in their abilities to listen, speak, read, and write in both Mandarin and English and are grounded in intercultural understanding and respect as they become language and cultural links between the West and the East. This will expand the opportunities to communicate with others, to work in an increasingly competitive world economy, and to understand the diversity of cultures. To achieve this vision, the school goals are:

- 1) To develop students' oral and written proficiency in Mandarin
- 2) To maintain and extend students' proficiency in English
- 3) To develop high levels of academic attainment, meeting or exceeding national and state standards, through rigorous study and instruction aligned with the South Carolina Academic Standards
- 4) To develop students' understanding of other cultures and the ability to interact successfully with others whose language and/or culture differs from their own

c) School Values & Beliefs

The focus of East Link Academy's educational philosophy is that through early and sustained immersion in the Mandarin language with culture integrated throughout, students will achieve proficiency in both English and Mandarin, academic excellence, and develop sensitivity and tolerance for other cultures. Language learning takes place through a process that links the language to meaning and can be attained by all students. ELA believes that all students can:

- 1) Achieve in all academic subjects, including English Language Arts and mathematics;
- 2) Gain mastery in content areas compared to peers instructed in a traditional school;
- 3) Achieve proficiency in the target language (listening, speaking, reading, and writing);

- 4) Acquire a cultural understanding of China and other countries of the world so they may be a positive participant in a global society; and
- 5) Develop empathy and respect for others in the school and local and global communities.

East Link Academy charter committee believes that Chinese, spoken by one in five people worldwide, is an important language for American students to learn, especially as U.S. economic and political connections to China become increasingly intertwined. In addition, ELA will provide students with global competencies to prepare them for success in the real world. By learning core academics (math, English language arts, science, social studies,), physical education, music, the arts, and cultural learning activities during their formative years (4K – grade 8) through the Mandarin language, our students will acquire the skills needed to achieve academic success in high school including language proficiency in two languages and develop the knowledge and skills needed to make future contributions to their world. ELA believes in the value of the whole-school language immersion model as the most efficient platform for children to achieve bilingual and biliterate proficiency. We firmly believe that allowing all children (including students with special needs and English Language Learners) the opportunity to learn a second language while they are young not only produces stronger students academically, but also teaches them the value of their global citizenship role.

We value the importance of preparing all students to be global citizens as language and cultural links between the West and East.

*The core values of East Link Academy are:*

- 1) **Safety 安全** – An emotionally and physically safe environment at school is fundamental to the academic success of students.

- 2) **Speak Chinese Fluently** 说中文– Students achieve literacy and oral proficiency in Mandarin and speak, read, and write Mandarin as much as possible
- 3) **Learning** 学习– Academic challenges and high levels of achievement in all subjects honors the unique gifts of individual students
- 4) **Global Citizenship** 世界公民– A respectful environment, which builds concern about the good of others and the ecosystem, grows awareness of the public good and nurtures citizens for a global society.
- 5) **Community Involvement** 社区参与 – The support and talents of parents in the educational process of the students enhance their learning and academic success
- 6) **Virtue** 美德 – Compassion, honesty, respect, understanding, and trustworthiness lead to an honorable person

d) School Culture

The core values listed above will be the basis for creating a school culture that promotes understanding of two world cultures simultaneously and strives to foster an environment of cross-cultural exchange and understanding. With a focus on learning math and science through Mandarin, students will become bilingual and biliterate and through studying the value the cultures of both America and China. We currently live in a world where our knowledge about other cultures, languages, and traditions is extremely important to foster understanding and mutual respect. Therefore, through the observance of key Chinese holidays such as the Mid-Autumn (Moon) Festival or Chinese New Year, East Link Academy will help students develop their own culturally sensitive skills to be successful in our diverse, multicultural, and global world, enriching not our school, but our nation as well.

East Link Academy will graduate students in 8th grade with high proficiency in both Chinese and English, and high levels of academic achievement, including success on the state and national assessments. By integrating Chinese culture in coursework across the curriculum and

instructing its mathematics courses in the Mandarin language, ELA's students will gain in-depth exposure to another culture. ELA will provide students with an education that includes Eastern and Western cultural perspectives. ELA will create a safe and nurturing learning environment and instill in all students an appreciation of Chinese cultural perspectives, including the value of hard work, global citizenship, community involvement, and the virtues of compassion, honesty, respect, understanding, and trustworthiness. Students will be prepared to be honorable citizens and productive members in today's global economy.

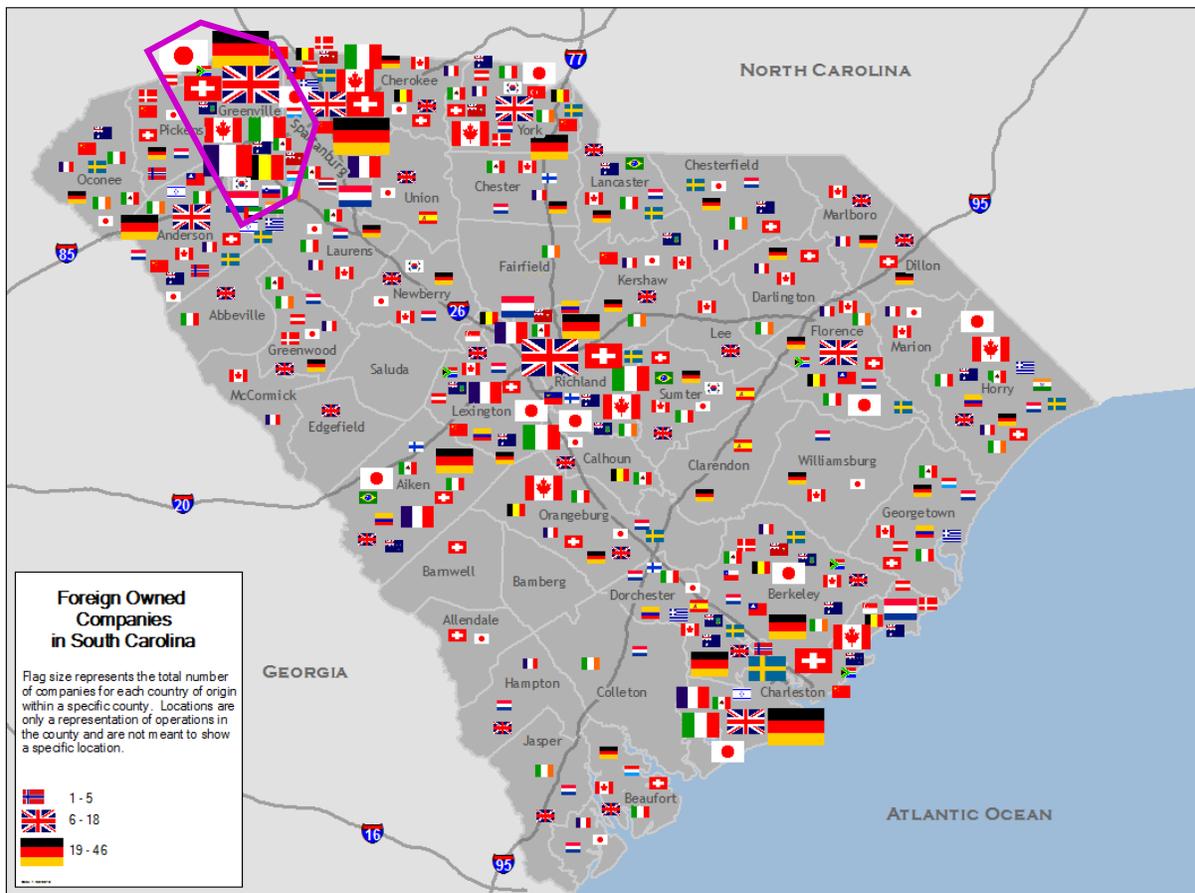
Appendix Items: No documents.

## **2. Evidence of Need and Support**

In September of 2015, President Obama, along with President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China, announced the "One Million Strong" initiative, aimed at having one million American children learning Mandarin in K-12 schools by 2020. This initiative, led by the US-China Strong Foundation (<http://uschinastrong.org/initiatives/1-million-strong>), extends the 2009 "100,000 Strong" initiative from universities to elementary and secondary schools. As stated by President Obama at the announcement of this initiative, "if our countries are going to do more together around the world, then speaking each other's language, truly understanding each other, is a good place to start." Approximately 300 million Chinese people are learning to speak English (the equivalent of the entire population of the USA). While Chinese is one of the most difficult languages, more than 20% of world population speaks Chinese with approximately 200,000 K-12 students currently learning Mandarin in the United States.

The "One Million Strong" initiative is not just about increasing the number of Mandarin-speaking Americans, but also helping American students gain a better understanding of Chinese culture and people. China is the second-largest economy in the world, a major strategic power and

the United States' fastest-growing trade partner with all Standard & Poor's 500 companies doing business in China. In the February 2015 Just Right report, the South Carolina Department of Commerce recorded capital investments from Chinese companies totaling more than \$600 million with more than 3,000 employees. In 2007, South Carolina and the Chinese government signed a memorandum of understanding designating South Carolina as a preferred location for Chinese businesses located across the state. The map below, from the SC Department of Commerce, depicts the foreign owned companies in South Carolina, where the flag size represents the total number of companies for each country of origin within a specific county (<http://sccommerce.com/sc-advantage/global-network>).



Another goal of “One Million Strong” is to grow the next generation of American leaders, who have a deeper understanding of China. As stated by Travis Tanner of the US–China Strong Foundation, this new generation of leaders will “create a pipeline of Chinese language and culture-savvy employees in a range of fields.” These leaders will “ensure our trade relationship with China continues to benefit the American economy and that the future generation of American entrepreneurs, business owners, journalists, engineers, scientists, doctors, as well as government officials at both the national and state levels, understand China.” The three pillars of the “One Million Strong” campaign are:

- Endorse widely-accepted Mandarin curricular norms at the K-12 level;
- Increase the number of Mandarin language teachers in the United States through expanded teacher training and teacher certification; and
- Engage technology platforms to ensure the accessibility of Mandarin language learning, particularly in underserved communities around the country.

To achieve the “One Million Strong” initiative more language immersion programs or schools will need to be created in the United States. Immersion programs have generally produced better second-language proficiency results than traditional foreign language teaching models. The school-wide immersion model is the most effective platform for children to learn a second language and the intensive exposure to the target language in the early grades is imperative for students to reach the level of second-language proficiency required to study other subjects in the new language.

East Link Academy will help meet these nation-wide goals. At full build-out ELA will provide an opportunity for students in grades 4K through 8 to become proficient in both Mandarin and English, and provide approximately twenty-five certified Mandarin language teacher positions. Greenville County public schools have foreign language programs in Spanish and

French but none comparable to the school-wide Mandarin language immersion program that ELA will provide for students in the area. ELA will align with the One Million Strong Initiative by using the same curricular materials (Better Chinese) and standards (ACTFL) produced by the US-China Strong Foundation ([www.uschinastrong.org](http://www.uschinastrong.org)).

The East Link Academy Charter Committee visited businesses, day cares, and churches. The Committee set up tables at events, such as the Chinese Moon Festival and the International Red Panda Day at the Greenville Zoo, presented at organizational meetings, such as Michelin's Black Engineers Organization, hung flyers on public boards and started a grassroots movement to promote the creation of a Chinese Language Immersion Charter School. PowerPoints and handouts have been created and collected to survey the public's interest in the school. In addition to the active recruiting activities, ELA has both a website ([www.eastlinkacademy.org](http://www.eastlinkacademy.org)) and a Facebook page ([@eastlinkacademy](https://www.facebook.com/eastlinkacademy)). The web presence gives the public access to updates of the Committee and the ability to declare interest in the school.

The targeted venues for the Charter Committee were those in which many parents with school-age children would be present. In addition, several regional community interest meetings were held at local schools and libraries. The list below is a sample of the places where recruitment information was distributed or meetings were held.

- Our World Festival 2016
- Switch-a-Roos Children's Consignment Sale
- Chinese Moon Festival (2015 and 2016)
- International Red Panda Day at the Greenville Zoo
- NEXT High School, parent information meeting
- International Ballet Academy
- Michelin Mothers' Group
- Michelin's Black Engineers Organization
- General Electric Facility
- Michelin Facility
- Greenville Tech

- YMCA
- Minds in Motion
- Facebook postings
- Legacy Academy Daycare
- Furman University
- Greenville Recreation Playground
- GYM Sports Club
- Chinese Sunday School sponsored by the Greenville Chinese Culture Association
- First Baptist Day Care
- Boy Scouts
- Pelham Baptist Church
- Sent a letter to all charter schools who have a waiting list
- Mother’s Morning Out
- Pavilion Park
- Butler Springs Park
- Plan for Chinese New Year
- Christmas Festival
- Greenville Literacy Association Book Sale

Currently, East Link Academy has 397 prospective students who wish to enroll in ELA whose parents have signed up either through the website, regular mail or at any of our numerous face-to-face informational sessions. The Charter Committee will continue to promote and obtain interest even after the charter application has been submitted. Below is a summary of student interest for the opening grades as of the date the charter was submitted.

<i>Grade Level:</i>	<b>Number of Interested Students:</b>	<b>Opening Grade Size:</b>	<i>Percentage:</i>
<i>4K</i>	104	72	+100%
<i>Kindergarten</i>	71	96	74%
<i>1st</i>	74	96	77%
<i>2nd</i>	50	48	+100%
<i>3rd</i>	54	48	+100%
<i>4th</i>	44	48	92%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>408</b>	

In Appendix A are letters of support from individuals in the Greater Greenville area and across the state who believe that East Link Academy will be an asset to the educational opportunities available in the area. Individuals and organizations providing letters include:

- Hua Zhang, *Board Chairman, Greenville Chinese Culture Association*
- Tami Blumenfield, *Professor of Asian Studies, Furman University*
- Begona Caballero, *Professor of Language and Culture, Wofford College*
- Jane Chen, *Chinese Teacher, Christ Church Episcopal School*
- Robert Cox, *Professor and Director, USC Institute of International and Area Studies*
- Ed Davis, *Board Chairman, East Point Academy, West Columbia*
- J. Nathan Galbreath, *Attorney, Nelson and Galbreath*
- Laura Getty, *former SCPCSD Board Member*
- Krista Van Fleit Hang, *Professor of Language and Culture, USC*
- Betsy Hart, *Director of Programs, National Foreign Language Center*
- Jun Hu, *President, JH Global Services*
- Xiaobo Hu, *Director and Professor, Center for Chinese Studies, Clemson University*
- Naiden Kremenliev, *Managing Partner, Argonne Financial Advisory*
- Harry Kuosho, *Professor of Asian Studies, Furman University*
- Zihua (David) Liu, *Director, Confucius Institute of Presbyterian College*
- John Lummus, *President and CEO, Upstate SC Alliance*
- Hongxia Mo, *Instructor of Chinese, Furman University*
- Maria Paez, *Professor of Language and Culture, Wofford College*
- Pei Tang, *China Construction*
- Knox White, *Mayor of the City of Greenville*
- Vivian Wong, *Real Estate Investor and Developer*
- Dongming Zhang, *Professor of Asian Studies, Furman University*
- Fang Zhu, *Former Board Chairman, Greenville Chinese Culture Association*

Partnerships and associations with the Greenville Chinese Culture Association's Language Program, the Confucius Institute (CI) of Presbyterian College, and programs from Clemson, Furman, and Wofford have given the Committee a wealth of knowledge. The Committee's partnership with the Greenville Chinese Culture Association (GCCA) ensures East Link Academy continued support in the areas of language and culture. The partnership with the Confucius Institute (CI) gives the school a link to an institute of higher education for teacher and staff development in the area of language immersion instruction. CI has also agreed to work with ELA to provide

teachers from China for the school, if needed. Having qualified teachers, who are native speakers of Mandarin, is an essential element of the school.

Appendix Items: Appendix A – *Evidence of Support*, Appendix B and C are not applicable.

### **3. Curriculum and Instructional Model**

#### a) Educational Model

##### *Program Overview*

East Link Academy provides innovation through its whole-school, one-way dual language immersion model, informed by the Utah Language Immersion model (<http://www.utahdli.org/>), for the elementary and middle grades. At ELA, students will be taught the same State curriculum standards as is taught in their resident public schools, ensuring that students meet or exceed the academic performance standards and expectations. The key differentiation of ELA’s academic program is that the content for math, science and related arts will be taught by a Mandarin-speaking teacher. An English-speaking teacher will teach the English and social studies content. All ELA students will be fully immersed in the Mandarin language for 50% or more of the academic day, during which time they will develop their skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing through the Content-Based Instruction. The target language will be Mandarin for speaking and listening and simplified Chinese characters will be taught for reading and writing.

Students coming to East Link Academy will have little to no knowledge of Mandarin, therefore the immersion program will be one-way. In a one-way immersion program, most students are non-native speakers of the target language. This is opposed to a two-way immersion program where there is an equal mix of students who are native speakers of the target language and those who are not. The one-way Mandarin language immersion program at ELA is designed to serve diverse language groups and socio-cultural backgrounds, and to maximize the benefits of second

language learning for students based on the premise that the earlier a child is introduced to a language, the greater the likelihood that the child will become fully proficient.

Research shows that learning a second language stimulates a different part of the brain; therefore, children in language immersion programs, in general do better academically, specifically in mathematics (Cohen, A. D., and Johnson, C. E., Ellison, F. P., & Flores, J. S.) and science (Kessler, C., & Quinn, M. E.) than children who speak only one language. Bilinguals demonstrate more mental flexibility and perform better on tasks requiring mental manipulation. They are original in verbal expression, demonstrate non-verbal intelligence and can answer open-ended questions more freely than monolinguals. Per Judith Kroll, an expert on bilingualism, “Bilinguals are more efficient in resolving mental competition. They are able to keep languages separate while keeping them both available and active in their minds at the same time.” Additionally, learning other languages encourages students to participate actively in an increasingly interdependent world and an international job market by offering students the opportunity to develop multilingual proficiencies.

East Link Academy to succeed in its mission in preparing students to be links between the West and East, students must achieve bilingualism, biliteracy and cultural competence. Learning the language itself is not enough. To prepare students holistically to be both language and cultural links, ELA will provide a variety of traditional Chinese cultural experiences such as Chinese dance, art, and music during both the instructional day and outside of the classroom through performances and celebrations, all conducted in Mandarin. Thus, students at ELA will develop proficiency in both the English and Mandarin languages while developing an awareness and appreciation for both cultures.

The purpose of any immersion program is to teach the school curriculum through the medium of Chinese for at least half of the school day or in certain specified subject areas. East Link Academy students are expected to develop oral and written proficiency in both Chinese and English while meeting state and school expectations for achievement in literacy and all other school subjects. Because of greater time, exposure, and cognitively challenging content, students in immersion programs will evidence higher levels of Chinese language proficiency than students who enroll in traditional or FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary School) programs.

Immersion education is unique in that it can encompass any and every curriculum. Though it can be delivered through its own curriculum, it does not have to be. Immersion education is implemented using any curriculum the school deems best. However, the curriculum and content of each course is delivered in the target language. This means that instead of students being taught about the target language, students are being taught in the target language. Similar to how we learned our first language, in which fluency of communication came before grammar instruction, immersion education seeks to produce proficient communicators of the language before they become grammar police.

#### *Whole-school One-way Immersion Model*

The **educational model** at East Link Academy is grounded in the latest research-based, best practices on the integration of core academic instruction and language immersion education. The purpose of language immersion programs is to develop bi-literacy or high levels of proficiency in English and another language through the study of academic content, such as math, science, and the arts. ELA will provide a one-way language immersion environment for educating children who do not need prior knowledge of the Mandarin language to enter the program. A characteristic of one-way language immersion programs includes student population consists of majority language

speakers with limited to no proficiency in the immersion (minority) language, e.g., English speakers in U.S. schools.

Designed to promote academic excellence in mathematics, science, English language arts, social studies, and Mandarin language acquisition through early and sustained immersion in the Chinese language, ELA's one-way Mandarin language immersion program is informed by the Utah Language Immersion (<http://www.utahdli.org/>) for the elementary and middle grades programs. In 4K, 5K and 1<sup>st</sup> grade, students will spend 75% of their day immersed in the Mandarin language during which time they will develop their skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing through content-based instruction in mathematics and science, as well as an array of traditional Chinese cultural experiences such as Chinese dance, art, and music. This 75/25 Mandarin/English ratio creates the dynamic language environment needed to start young students on the correct path of becoming English-Mandarin bilingual proficient. In 2<sup>nd</sup> grade through 6<sup>th</sup>, students will spend 50% of their day learning academic content in the target language while continuing to develop their Mandarin and English literacy skills. This balanced design assures that students' acquisition of Mandarin will not be compromised while assuring students get the adequate preparation for state assessments which will be taken in English.

To become the *language and cultural links between the West and East*, the target language will be Mandarin for speaking and listening and simplified Chinese characters will be taught for reading and writing. ELA will use the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards and assessments to inform and measure the effectiveness of the program for language proficiency for Mandarin of its students on novice (low, mid, high) and intermediate (low, mid, high) levels in the three modes of communication:

- **Interpersonal Communication:** Students interact freely and negotiate meaning thereby providing a higher degree of understanding.

- **Interpretive Listening and Reading:** A listener or reader develops cultural interpretation and meaning from text, performance, or speech.
- **Presentational Speaking and Writing:** A speaker or writer prepares a message to be understood by members of the other culture.

To assist students in *meeting the global challenges of their lifetime*, ELA will provide opportunities for students to use their language skills in the three intercultural competencies:

- **Investigation of Cultural Products and Practices:** Students can use their language skills to investigate the world beyond their immediate environment.
- **Understanding of Cultural Perspectives:** Students can use their language skills to recognize and understand other ways of thinking.
- **Participation in Cultural Interaction:** Students can use their language skills and cultural understanding to interact in a cultural context.

The one-way Mandarin language immersion program at East Link Academy is designed to serve diverse language groups and socio-cultural backgrounds and to maximize the benefits of second language learning for students based on the premise that the earlier a child is introduced to a language, the greater the likelihood that the child will become fully proficient. These benefits are cognitive, academic, economic, and social in nature. Additionally, learning other languages encourages students to participate actively in an increasingly interdependent world and an international job market by offering students the opportunity to develop multilingual proficiencies. Students are taught the same South Carolina State Standards as other students in the state, but ELA students will receive their instruction in both English and Mandarin. A variety of multicultural lessons, performances, and celebrations, conducted in the target language, enrich the students' learning experiences.

*Instructional Design and Teaching Methods*

East Link Academy will employ two distinct but complementary instructional models to achieve its goals of developing students who are both proficient in two languages as well as achieving academic excellence in the content areas. To achieve language proficiency, ELA teachers will use content-based instruction which focuses not on the language itself, but rather on what is being taught through the language; the language becomes the medium through which something new is learned. To achieve academy excellence in core content, teachers will design units and lessons using the inquiry-based learning process that seeks to increase the intellectual engagement and deep understanding of learners.

**Content-based instruction (CBI)** is a teaching method that emphasizes learning about something rather than learning about language. In the CBI approach, the student learns the target language (Mandarin) by using it to learn some other new content (math and science). The theory behind CBI is that when students are engaged with more content, it is natural way to learn a language and more efficient as students are learning the content and the target language at the same time (if done properly). Students will be able to use more advanced thinking skills when learning new information and will focus less on the structure of the language. This approach is very student-centered as it depends entirely on the students' ability to acquire and use the language.

There are many things that can be considered 'content'; what is important is that what is being taught or discussed, such as current and world cultures or even general topics of interest, are all valid 'content' options. F. L. Stoller in his article "*Content-Based Second Language Instruction: What is it?*" (2002) lists eight practices that allow for natural content integration:

- 1) Extended input, meaningful output, and feedback on language and grasp of content
- 2) Information gathering, processing, and reporting

- 3) Integrated skills (using reading, writing, speaking and listening in natural classroom activities)
- 4) Task-based activities and project work, enhanced by cooperative learning principles
- 5) Strategy training (to produce more metacognitively aware strategic learners)
- 6) Visual support (i.e. images, graphic organizers, language ladders etc.)
- 7) Contextualized grammar instruction
- 8) Culminating synthesis activities (knowledge is displayed in writing and orally)

The **inquiry-based learning model** which emerged in the 1960s from the “discovery learning” movement and relies on the idea that individuals are able to learn by investigating scenarios and problems, and through social experiences. Teachers encourage students to conduct investigations that would satisfy their curiosity, help them broaden their knowledge base and develop the necessary skills, rather than having students memorize information from printed material. There are four basic principles that govern inquiry-based learning summarized as follows:

- 1) Learners are in the center of the entire process, while instructors, resources and technology are adequately organized to support them.
- 2) All learning activities revolve around information-processing skills.
- 3) Instructors facilitate the learning process, but also seek to learn more about their students and the process of inquiry-based learning.
- 4) Emphasis should be placed on evaluating the development of information-processing skills and conceptual understanding, and not on the actual content of the field.

In an instructional setting, inquiry-based learning can give instructors the opportunity to allow students to fully explore problems and scenarios, so that they can learn from not only the results, but also the process itself. They are encouraged to ask questions, explore their

environments, and obtain evidence that support claims and results, and design a convincing argument regarding the way they reached to the end result. There are four forms of inquiry, each with varying levels of student autonomy depending on the level of student and/or the content to be learned.

- **Confirmation inquiry:** Learners are given a question, as well as a method, to which the end result is already known. The goal is to confirm the results. This enables learners to reinforce already established ideas, and to practice their investigative skills.
- **Structured inquiry:** Learners are given the question and the method of achieving the result, but the goal is to provide an explanation that is already supported by the evidence gathered during and through the investigative process.
- **Guided inquiry:** Learners are only given a question. The main goal is to design the method of investigation and then test the question itself. This type of inquiry is not typically as structured as the previously mentioned forms.
- **Open inquiry:** Learners must form their own questions, design investigative methods, and then carry out the inquiry itself. They must present their results at the end of the process.

Grade-level and content teachers will collaborate to develop learning experiences aligned to state standards that incorporate five basic steps involved in inquiry-based learning: asking questions; probing various situations; conducting analyses and provide descriptions; communicating findings, verbally or in writing; and thinking about the information and knowledge obtained.

### *Immersion in the Academic Program*

Language immersion at East Link Academy serves as an integration point for various learning and educational objectives. The school setting will be prepared as a context for students to practice their language skills as they interact with others at all occasions. Students will build their language skills upon the blending of language acquisition, cultural learning, and content in

core academic instruction. Per an article published in the American Council on Immersion Education (1997),

*“Immersion teachers need to provide their students with a structured learning environment that attends to language development and content-area knowledge development while consistently using the target language. Students benefit from frequent opportunities to use the target language in the context of teacher use of multisensory experiences supported by visual aids, hand and body gestures, and manipulatives. Successful immersion teachers use instructional routines and patterned language for transitions. By developing a variable range of instructional strategies, teachers can help students understand both language and content.”* ([http://www.carla.umn.edu/immersion/acie/vol1/nov1997\\_teachingstrats.html](http://www.carla.umn.edu/immersion/acie/vol1/nov1997_teachingstrats.html))

There are four specific strategies that teachers use in immersion instruction:

**1) Making Input Comprehensible:** The teacher begins with simplifying the language using a “foreigner talk” characterized by a slower speech rate, clear enunciation, use of high frequency words, use of context clues such as body language. It is necessary for the teacher to find text materials that are developmentally appropriate and allow for redundancy of lessons as students begin in the immersion experience. Finally, teachers need to develop a variety of techniques to check for student comprehension in both the content and language acquisition.

**2) Provide Opportunities for Language Output:** In addition to the input of the target language for students through continued exposure, it is important that students have an opportunity for comprehensible “output.” Students need to have a setting in which they have many opportunities to produce new forms and to communicate in setting where their attempts to communicate are valued and shaped to make them understandable, allowing them to adjust their understanding of the language. This is one of the major challenges of immersion instruction, but can be accomplished by guiding students from simple to more complex responses or use of songs, rhymes, poems, or chants in the target language.

**3) Enhance the Comprehensibility of Readings:** Learning new vocabulary and allowing students to make connections to personal experiences and backgrounds, enhances the comprehensibility of readings. Using techniques such as advanced graphic organizers, story mapping, and semantic mapping are recommended pre-reading strategies. As students advance through the immersion program, these uses of the strategies will allow them to succeed as they increase the amount of time they spend in the English language. Encouraging students to draw meaning from the pictures in the reading and using additional visuals can aide with text comprehension. Following the text in the target language with the text in English may also assist with comprehension.

**4) Develop a System for Providing Constructive Feedback:** To assist students in learning the proper tones associated with the Mandarin language, teachers need to provide abundant and constructive feedback on student output. This is also true as students learn the basics of character writing. Attention to this detail will allow the student to use the language in the upper grades and in analysis of authentic texts.

Research indicates that to gain fluency in a language, students need to spend significant time in an environment saturated in the language they are learning. Therefore, grades Pre-K through 1<sup>st</sup> will have a 75/25 (Mandarin/English) immersion program. This will give students approximately 878 contacts hours per year with Mandarin, and creates the dynamic language environment needed to start young students on the correct path of becoming English-Mandarin bilingual proficient.

In the first year, East Link Academy students who enroll students in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade through 4<sup>th</sup> will be new to the Mandarin language and may not have had the benefit of an early immersion program. These students will receive 50% of their instruction in the Mandarin language, which

will focus on teaching students the basics of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students will have an additional class with the Chinese-speaking teacher who will reinforce specific math and science concepts using the target language. All possible support measures will be provided to these students to prepare them to reach their targeted proficiencies for their time learning the language, with the understanding that modifications to that program may need to occur based on student ability levels.

Using content-based instructional strategies, the core academic program will be divided into two groups – one taught in English and one taught in Mandarin. Beginning in 4K through 1<sup>st</sup> grade, the Mandarin language curriculum will include literacy study and most of the content subjects (math, science, and social studies). The English-spoken curriculum will focus on English languages arts with some collaborative reinforcement of the content. The curriculum focus will shift beginning in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and English instruction will include more conceptual instruction in the social sciences while the practical application of these subjects will remain in the target language.

By middle school, social studies shifts back to the Mandarin language and science shifts to English instruction. These changes in the middle grades allow for more instructional time in the target language, focusing on literacy study and increasing students' proficiencies in reading and writing. After 5 years of initial operation, East Link Academy's middle school structure will include an immersion track that will offer advanced Chinese classes for those who qualified, mainly for those who graduated from the school's whole immersion program. Those students will likely take a third language class in high school and will have a great advantage when they enter the high school and beyond.

Grade	Math	Science / Health	English Language Arts (R/W)	Mandarin Language Arts (L/S/R/W)	Social Sciences	Art, Dance, PE, Music, Media, Culture
<b>4K</b>	Mandarin	Mandarin	English	Mandarin	Mandarin	Mandarin
<b>5K</b>	Mandarin	Mandarin	English	Mandarin	Mandarin	Mandarin
<b>1</b>	Mandarin	Mandarin	English	Mandarin	Mandarin	Mandarin
<b>2</b>	Mandarin	Mandarin	English	Mandarin	English	Both
<b>3</b>	Mandarin	Mandarin	English	Mandarin	English	Both
<b>4</b>	Mandarin	Mandarin	English	Mandarin	English	Both
<b>5</b>	Mandarin	Mandarin	English	Mandarin	English	Both
<b>6</b>	Mandarin	Mandarin	English	Mandarin	English	Both
<b>7</b>	Mandarin	English	English	Mandarin	English	Both
<b>8</b>	Mandarin	English	English	Mandarin	English	Both

After successful completion of grades 5K through 8<sup>th</sup>, students will have had an estimated 5,700 contact hours with the Mandarin language, as shown below.

	Grade									
	<b>4K</b>	<b>5K</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>% M</b>	75%	75%	75%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	~45%	~45%
<b>Total IH/D</b>	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5
<b>M IH/D</b>	4.9	4.9	4.9	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	2.9	2.9
<b>D/Yr</b>	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180
<b>M IH/Yr</b>	878	878	878	585	585	585	585	585	468	468
<b>Total Mandarin Contact Hours:</b>	5,733									

Their target level of proficiency at that time is expected to be Intermediate-High as determined by the ACTFL proficiency guidelines described later in the *Goals, Objectives, and Assessment* section.

### *Curriculum Standards and Instructional Material Overview*

The Charter Committee believes East Link Academy must provide a curriculum that stimulates the intellectual growth of students, from 4K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and that also supports the needs of all students at all levels of learning ability, including English Language learners,

special education students, and students below grade level. The core curriculum program will be built on the rigorous academic content standards identified by the State Board of Education as outlined in the *South Carolina Early Learning Standards* and the *South Carolina State Curriculum Standards*, and then supplemented with health, art, music, dance, physical education, and Chinese culture. Using student baseline achievement data, teachers will provide learning experiences that will help students not only achieve these expectations, but extend and deepen the students' understanding of the standards. The curriculum will provide experiences that engage students in activities to develop their physical, social, emotional, and cognitive growth, which serves as the foundation for their continued academic and professional careers.

East Link Academy will choose instructional materials provided by the State Department of Education's list of approved resources. This ensures that students are provided learning opportunities aligned with the state academic standards for those subjects. Where feasible and in alignment with the immersion program, ELA will purchase materials written in Chinese that support the curriculum objectives. Any specific curriculum materials mentioned are subject to change in the case of unpredicted issues or newly adopted instructional materials. For instance, if the materials are unavailable or become excessively cost-prohibited, the school reserves the right to utilize alternative materials of similar nature.

Because students will be learning some curriculum through the medium of a new language, adaptations to the curriculum and resources will be used to make it linguistically accessible without diluting or lowering the standards. Curriculum adaptations include both the adaptation of instructional strategies and adaptation of instructional resources. Additionally, classroom instruction will be supplemented with resources in the core academic program where enrichment or reinforcement of academic standards is necessary for student success. Therefore, classroom

teachers will adapt the curriculum resources themselves, a practice which is most likely to result in materials that respond best to student needs and abilities.

The Immersion Coordinator and Academic Director will be responsible for assisting in the selection of these materials and in the implementation, through professional development and classroom delivery. The teachers will also consult the Immersion Coordinator and Academic Director to identify unit goals and objectives, how they will know students have attained those objectives, identify language (vocabulary, expressions) required for curriculum learning, list instructional experiences that will help students meet the learning objectives, and rewrite text to make it more comprehensible by students.

#### *Academic Program*

The **Primary/Elementary Program (4K-6)** will focus on acquiring a broad base of content area language and vocabulary as a means of making sense of the world through content-based instruction. Instructional strategies will be content- and inquiry-based, as described above. In addition to learning the academics, students will learn to understand and rely on each other as they explore the five core subject areas: language and literacy (English and Mandarin), mathematics, social studies, and science. In addition to the core subjects, students will engage daily in at least one elective that will develop their physical, social, and emotional growth such as physical education, dance, visual arts, or music. In addition to the Mandarin class, students in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade through 8<sup>th</sup> will also participate in a Chinese Culture Experience class focusing on varying cultural enrichment activities such as Chinese calligraphy, art of tea, paper cutting, Chinese knot, or watercolor art. Opportunities to learn Chinese Dance, Tai Chi, or the geography, history, architecture, mythology, and culture will be provided.

In the **Middle Grades Program (7-8)**, the focus for Mandarin instruction will be reading and writing skills and on deepening intercultural competencies. Subjects will be divided into specific courses in the core subject areas. English language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science will be taught in English. Students will continue their Mandarin language learning in immersion courses. Students will also participate in elective courses that will develop their physical, social, and emotional growth such as art, music, computer applications, dance, or drama. The specific courses will be determined based on student interest and teacher availability.

Instructional strategies will continue to be content- and inquiry-based but will incorporate project-based learning. Project-based learning allows students to learn through direct experience in hands-on activities, yet includes explicit teaching when relating facts to concepts, emphasizing the relationship between key ideas and model thinking (Blumefeld, 1992; Palincsar and Brown, 1984). Because projects are interdisciplinary in nature, content from any subject can be introduced, reinforced, or applied as the project progresses.

Following are detailed descriptions of each curriculum area with key objectives, instructional materials, and teaching strategies.

**English Language Arts Curriculum:** The English language arts standards include expectations for disciplinary literacy, reading (literary and informational texts), writing, and communication for each grade level will inform the curriculum for English (reading and writing). Teachers will collaborate on instructional strategies and learning experiences for teaching phonemic awareness, vocabulary, literacy, reading and comprehension will be used to introduce and subsequently differentiate instruction for learners at all reading ability levels.

The English language arts curriculum will help students use the reading process effectively. Students will be able to select and use pre-reading strategies that are appropriate to the text such

as discussion, making predictions, brainstorming, generating questions, and previewing to anticipate content, purpose, and organization of a reading selection. Reading will not be passive, but rather an interactive process involving the text itself, the reader, and the context of the reading situation. Additionally, students will use writing process effectively. They will be able to select and use appropriate pre-writing strategies, such as brainstorming, graphic organizers and outlines.

Using a balanced literacy approach, the curriculum will include the use of guided reading, leveled readers, and timely progress monitoring. A resource on the state adopted list is *Literacy by Design*® by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, is a literacy curriculum that features whole class interaction followed by differentiated small group instruction and shared connections followed by independent focus. A consistent instructional path ensures seamless reciprocity between Reading and Writing Workshop. *Literacy by Design*® incorporates the gradual release of responsibility model—the underlying principle of a balanced literacy approach—into the instructional design for reading and writing. The gradual release of responsibility model is sometimes described as “I do/we do/you do.” Students progress through modeled, shared, interactive, and small group reading and writing to become empowered, independent readers and writers. Using this approach, teachers can guide students through important skills and strategies, building layers of knowledge and ability. Because students receive the right skill instruction at the right time, with plenty of opportunities for practice and application, their confidence grows with each learning achievement. The result is skilled independent learners, certain in their ability to embark upon new challenges. In addition, teachers can monitor students’ understanding and provide interventions as needed.

**Mathematics Curriculum:** The mathematics standards include process standards that students use to develop the conceptual understandings and applications of mathematical content and skills. Instructional strategies will include immersion language strategies that support both

language acquisition and content mastery. Key concepts included in the mathematics standards include number sense (base ten, fractions, and operations), algebraic thinking and operations, geometry, and measurement and data.

Beginning with 4K through 6<sup>th</sup> grade, because mathematics instruction will be conducted in Mandarin only, best practices in immersion instruction will be used to ensure students understand and comprehend the concepts. The partner English teacher will reinforce those concepts in his/her classroom through practical applications and daily use. For example, students will learn to count in Chinese and the students will be encouraged to use Mandarin when conducting the morning calendar work in the English classroom.

The curriculum from the state adopted resource Pearson's *enVisionMath* ©2012 program aids students in developing the use of mathematical language as they discuss and solve real-world problems within each mathematical concept. This resource leads students through a progressive journey of developing mathematical knowledge and skills; uses a variety of learning experiences to help students explore real-world problems and develop skills in researching information, strategies, and methods of solving each problem; helps students to develop a deeper mathematical understanding by providing activities to evaluate methods and conclusions. Additionally, the program provides instructional materials in Chinese which will support the target language acquisition.

In middle grades, students will use instructional materials such as Glencoe's *Math Accelerated: A Pre-Algebra Program* and Pearson's *Digits* to broaden their understanding of the interconnectedness of mathematical concepts that were introduced in grades K–5 and will continue throughout grades 9–12 and beyond. Students will also be provided opportunity to earn high school credits in algebra and geometry.

**Science Curriculum:** The *South Carolina Academic Standards and Performance Indicators for Science* include the academic contents and practices of scientists and engineers. At the primary/elementary school level (4K–6), science will be taught in an immersion classroom setting with a native Mandarin-speaking teacher. Instructional strategies will include immersion language strategies that support both language acquisition and content mastery in grades 4K through 6<sup>th</sup>. In the middle grades (7-8), science will be taught in English.

In kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, the science and engineering practices and core content emphasize students making observations and explanations about phenomena they can directly explore and investigate. Student experiences will be structured as they begin to learn the features of a scientific investigation and engage in the practices of science and engineering. In 3<sup>rd</sup> grade through 5<sup>th</sup>, the science and engineering practices and core content emphasize students becoming more sophisticated in describing, representing, or explaining concepts or ideas. Students use their experiences from structured investigations in kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade to begin planning their own investigations to answer scientific questions. In 6<sup>th</sup> grade through 8<sup>th</sup>, the science and engineering practices and core content transition students to developing and planning controlled investigations to create more explicit and detailed models and explanations.

One resource on the state adopted list is *Full Option Science Systems* (FOSS) ©. This resource provides a research-based science curriculum for grades K-8 developed at the Lawrence Hall of Science, at the University of California, Berkeley that will be used to meet the science and engineering practices. The program bridges research and practice by providing tools and strategies to engage students and teachers in enduring experiences that lead to deeper understanding of the natural and designed worlds. The FOSS© Program is built on the assumptions that understanding core scientific knowledge and how science functions is essential for citizenship; that all teachers

can teach science; and all that students can learn science. The guiding principles of the FOSS© design, listed below, are derived from research, and confirmed through FOSS© developers' extensive experience with teachers and students in typical American classrooms:

- Understanding of science develops over time.
- Focusing on a limited number of topics in science avoids shallow coverage and provides more time to explore core science ideas in depth.
- Science is more than a body of knowledge.
- Science is inherently interesting, and children are natural investigators.
- Education is an adventure in self-discovery.
- Formative assessment is a powerful tool to promote learning and can change the culture of the learning environment.
- Science-centered language development promotes learning in all areas.
- Experiences out of the classroom develop awareness of community.

**Social Studies Curriculum:** The *South Carolina Social Studies Academic Standards* provide students with the knowledge of government, geography, history, and economics which are essential for creating informed citizens who participate in a democratic society. Social studies will be taught in a content-based and inquiry-based approach, relying on important primary source documents to address rigorous literacy standards along with technology to enhance the delivery of content knowledge or quality products created by students.

At the early elementary level (PK-1), social studies topics will be integrated into the immersion classroom taught in the target language. By 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, the concepts will be taught in English with practical applications taught in the Mandarin classroom. For example, students will learn about the regions and landforms of South Carolina in English but a project in Mandarin will require them to learn and include the Mandarin characters for the various landforms on their

displays. In the middle grades (7-8), appropriate concepts will be integrated into a Chinese Culture and Media class while the primary instruction for social studies will be taught in the English language.

This curriculum will promote students' understanding of historical, geographical, and civic knowledge and their application of this knowledge to today's diverse world culture. In the early grades (5K-2) students learn about the world with which they are most familiar: home, school, the neighborhood, and the broader Greenville community. Instruction in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade introduces children to the history of our state and teaches them about South Carolina's geography, jobs, and government. The remaining elementary years will focus on the story of the United States based on important events, people, and policies that have led us to become the country we are today. The program will prepare students to understand multiple cultures, tolerance, and respect for the world beyond our borders and, therefore, encourage them to become global citizens. One resource on the state instructional materials adoption for grades K-5 is Pearson's *myWorld Social Studies* which utilizes storytelling to bring social studies content to life. It connects social studies content and literacy instruction with materials that are streamlined, flexible and attuned to today's classroom. The innovative digital instruction is seamlessly integrated, providing a blended program that is engaging, effective and easy to use.

The 6<sup>th</sup> grade content is based on the history of early world cultures from their beginnings until the 1500's. The government, geography, and economies of various civilizations, including China, and time periods are integrated chronologically throughout the year as students learn about long-ago places and events. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade state textbook adoption list includes McGraw/Hill's *Discovering Our Past: A History of the World*.

The middle school years will broaden the students' knowledge as they learn about other places and people in the world. They gain an understanding of the importance of the past and the conditions that have brought countries and regions to their present states today. The 7<sup>th</sup> grade will continue the study of world cultures with a focus on the changes that have occurred in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas from 1600 to the present using MacGraw-Hill's *Contemporary Cultures: 1600 to the Present*. Students examine the history and geography of the societies that developed concurrently during this period, including the growing interaction among these societies as well as the exchange of ideas, beliefs, technologies, and commodities. Teachers will be encouraged to use a wide variety of resources in their teaching of this content. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade standards are on the history of South Carolina and the United States from the earliest settlements until the beginning of the 20th century. Government, geography, and economics are integrated chronologically throughout the year. Two suggested texts are Clairmont's *South Carolina: The History of an American State* and Holt, Rinehart & Winston's *Call to Freedom*.

**Primary/Elementary Grades Mandarin Language Arts Curriculum:** Research shows that in addition to language immersion, there is a need for formal instruction in the target language to achieve native-like fluency and grammar. Therefore, East Link Academy will offer Mandarin Language Arts instruction to all grades. The Mandarin language arts curriculum will include both age- and proficiency-appropriate authentic materials and interactive classroom activities. Outside of the classroom, students will try their hand at language-focused cultural activities, which will be the real-world application for language instruction, such as visiting local Chinese restaurants or markets.

The American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, [www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org)), a national voice representing language educators, sets expectations that will result in high quality

language programs. ACTFL has adopted three general principles that provide the foundation for implementation and expansion of language programs for all levels of instruction:

- All students should learn or maintain at least one language in addition to English.
- Learning languages should be a central part of the curriculum at all levels of instruction, from young learners through graduate school and adults.
- Language learning should be offered in extended, well-articulated sequences that develop increasing levels of proficiency at each level of instruction by teachers who are well qualified in language proficiency, cultural knowledge, and teaching skills.

In grades 4K through 8<sup>th</sup>, the Mandarin language arts curriculum will use the *South Carolina Standard for World Language Proficiency*, which is based on the standards created by ACTFL and reflect the difficulty level of Chinese by following the national requirements for language learners. This standard “is a description of the competencies a South Carolina world language learner should demonstrate at three of five proficiency levels...in speaking, writing, listening, and reading.”

Resources for Mandarin language literacy instruction are increasing in availability. *Better Chinese*, LLC founded by educators from Columbia University and the United Nations and partnered with US-China Strong Foundation, has as its mission to develop the best materials and programs to teach the Chinese language and culture to non-native speakers. *Better Chinese*, LLC developed the *Better Immersion* curriculum framework with instructional materials to be used in the K-6 immersion classrooms that “ensures academic rigor, foundational language consistency, and measurability with in-depth teacher supports.” *Better Immersion* also supports the instructional framework for East Link Academy including differentiated instruction, balanced literacy, and backward design. *Better Immersion* is a K-6 Chinese Immersion Language Arts Program with topics derived from national standards in English, Social Studies, Science, and Math. based on the

adaptation of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts. Meaningful vocabularies are selected by referring to ACTFL, AP, HSK requirements, and also determined high utility words across content areas. The target proficiency level at Grade 5 and 6 will be the equivalent of the ACTFL intermediate-mid level. There are four major themes (self, relationships, community, and world) which scaffold through the grades and incorporate whole-class and small group activities in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

**Middle Grades Innovative Language Immersion Courses:** In the middle grades program, students will continue their Mandarin language learning in immersion courses, entitled *Chinese Literacy* and *Culture and Media* (see descriptions below). These courses are designed to aid students who demonstrate accepted proficiency in the language and prepare them for advanced Chinese in high school. These courses will be taught in Mandarin only. They are designed to prepare students for AP and/or college level courses in Mandarin language and literacy proficiency. Students will be placed in Mandarin courses in middle school based on proficiency levels, which will allow teachers to focus instruction to the specific needs of students in reaching the targeted proficiencies. Because of placement based on proficiency, students will be enrolled in multi-grade classes (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders may be in the same class).

*Chinese Literacy (Grades 7 and 8):* These courses are designed to challenge students to develop/continue to develop listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in the context of thematic units and essential questions that reflect real-world applications. Students build skills in cultural-linguistic competencies necessary for successful communication with native Chinese speakers. Courses are taught 100% in the target language. These courses are a 2-year sequence in which students apply content knowledge to critical thinking, writing and speaking tasks aligned to

the AP Language and Culture exam and that prepare students for AP level courses in Chinese language and literacy proficiency.

*Culture and Media (Grades 7 and 8):* These courses are designed to challenge students to use authentic texts to examine the cultural perspectives, products, and practices of the Chinese culture, and ask students to build intercultural competency to deepen understanding of western culture. Students utilize media and authentic texts to learn about the diverse cultural products, practices, and perspectives of China. Courses are taught 100% in the target language. Topics in the courses will be aligned with grade level standards in science, social studies, mathematics, and health to allow for inquiry- and problem-based learning projects and will include experiential learning opportunities for students to interact with native Chinese speakers outside of the classroom.

**Integrating the Visual Arts program and Chinese Culture:** East Link Academy recognizes that learning about the arts and other cultures is essential for developing the whole child. The integration of visual and performing arts will add depth and dimension to the expressive and interpretive abilities of its students. Classes and other opportunities will address those standards that have been identified for each grade level by the State Board of Education. Students in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade through 8<sup>th</sup> will have the opportunity to participate in a Chinese culture experience class in which they will focus on varying cultural enrichment activities such as Chinese calligraphy, art of tea, paper cutting, Chinese knot making, or water color art. Additionally, opportunities to learn Chinese dance, Tai Chi, geography, history, architecture, mythology, and culture will be provided.

In addition to physical education, computer science, and health, students in grades 4K through 8<sup>th</sup>, will take part in a variety of related arts classes including music, art, and dance which

will be taught mainly in Mandarin and will build upon the listening and speaking skills that immersion students develop from a young age. This will extend the amount of exposure students with the target language thereby influencing their ability to reach the expected proficiency for their grade level.

**Global Character Education Curriculum:** *To prepare students to be language and cultural links between the West and East in order to meet the global challenges of their lifetime,* East Link Academy is committed to the principles of good character and citizenship through character education to fulfill State Law Section 59.17.135(2). We believe that teaching positive character traits is essential to improving the learning environment, promoting student achievement, reducing disciplinary problems, and developing civic-minded students in cooperation with the parents and community, who will be prepared for leadership in today's global society and beyond.

These principles include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Individual self-worth
- Strength in knowledge
- Personal integrity, honesty, and trustworthiness
- Choice and accountability
- Preparedness
- Respect for the rights of all persons regardless of race, religion, sex, age, physical condition, or mental state
- Sense of justice and fair play
- Patriotism, citizenship, and understanding of the rights and obligations of a citizen in a democratic society
- Understanding, sympathy, concern, and compassion for others
- Discipline and pride in one's work, respect for one's property and the property of others, including public property
- Respect for authority
- Self-advocacy

The curriculum for character education will include meaningful and age appropriate lessons that respect all learners and will help all students succeed. The school will maintain school communities in which positive behavior is expected, practiced, demonstrated, modeled, and

reinforced within an environment of mutual respect and dignity. By embracing these principles in grades 4K through 6<sup>th</sup>, middle school students will serve as role models to the elementary school children.

Together with the guidance department, teachers will provide at least forty-five minutes of character education biweekly to kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade and will seek opportunities to build upon those lessons daily. It is the goal of East Link Academy to hold students to a high standard of behavior, emphasizing personal discipline, responsibility, and ethics to age appropriate materials. *Character Counts!*® ([www.charactercounts.org](http://www.charactercounts.org)) provides a framework which includes the Six Pillars of Character (trustworthiness, fairness, respect, responsibility, caring, and citizenship) that provides a common language and expectations to develop academic, social, emotional skills and character traits. These Six Pillars will be emphasized individually through thematic lessons and group projects. *Character Counts!*® is an immersive program that has been shown to improve student attendance and test scores while reducing the number of negative incidents such as discipline referrals and bullying.

Classroom communities will be established in which students, with the teacher's guidance, will develop a list of responsibilities that support student rights and expectations. The focus will be on developing and implementing positive behavioral supports that build a strong sense of community and establishes healthy work habits for individuals and the class at large. Community building strategies such as morning meetings, class projects, problem-solving sessions, and role play activities promote respect and appreciation of all members of the class and enrich opportunities for children to learn from one another through the curriculum. To create an environment of community within the school, students will begin each day with a morning meeting in their homeroom class. This time (15-30 minutes) will be used by the teacher to

- Set a tone for respectful learning
- Establish a climate of trust in the classroom
- Motivate students making them feel significant
- Create empathy in students and encourage collaboration
- Support students' social, emotional, and academic learning

East Link Academy teachers will provide feedback to parents regarding student class behavior through programs such as PlanetK-8 or Bloomz. These are online communication platforms that brings teachers, students, and parents together to encourage students to exhibit positive behaviors in the classroom. Parents can receive real-time instant messages on their phones (iOS, Android, or any computer) or can view a daily timeline of student behaviors. Additionally, teachers can send announcements of important events to the entire class or send photos to individual parents. Teachers can display the classroom site on their interactive whiteboards and assign or deduct points per student or class immediately.

**Physical Education Curriculum:** The physical education curriculum is aligned to the 2014 *Academic Standards for Physical Education*. The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) recommends that schools provide 150 minutes of instructional physical education for elementary school children and 225 minutes for middle school students per week for the entire school year. The Charter Committee believes that healthy students make better students and that better students make healthy communities. Research supports that daily physical education is directly linked to higher achievement in academics as well as reducing health problems. Each week students will receive a minimum of sixty minutes of physical education through 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and offer at least one semester elective class credit of physical education to students in the middle grades program.

To supplement the physical activity of the students, the school will also include 20-30 minutes of daily recess for students in kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Athletic team participation

will also be phased-in over a five-year period to include authentic Chinese sports (such as ping pong or badminton) and other team sports (such as soccer, volleyball, basketball, or archery).

**Health and Safety Education Curriculum:** The health and safety education curriculum will follow the *South Carolina Academic Standards for Health and Safety Education*. These standards are designed to provide opportunities for students to develop the skills and content necessary to develop life-long healthy habits. Per the South Carolina Code of Laws and the Comprehensive Health Education Act, ‘Comprehensive health education’ means health education in a school setting that is planned and carried out with the purpose of maintaining, reinforcing, or enhancing the health, health-related skills, and health attitudes and practices of children and youth that are conducive to their good health and that promote wellness, health maintenance, and disease prevention. It includes age-appropriate, sequential instruction in health either as part of existing courses or as a special course. As such, East Link Academy is committed to a sound, comprehensive health education program that is an integral part of each student's general education. Sexual education will be provided in accordance to state requirements.

**Environmental Education Curriculum:** The basic goal of environmental education is to succeed in helping individuals and communities understand the complex nature of the relationships between natural and human-made environments. East Link Academy students will have an opportunity to participate in activities such as gardening and recycling that are cross-curricular and build their knowledge and understanding of the values, attitudes, and practical skills to participate in a responsible and effective way in anticipating and solving environmental problems and in the management of the quality of the environment.

**Computer/Technology Education Curriculum:** The computer/technology curriculum will address those standards that have been identified for each grade level by the State Board of

Education. The primary goal of computer/technology education is to develop technologically literate citizens. However, these studies do not exist in a vacuum – the school will use educational technology to support curriculum and instruction in all areas. The East Link Academy Charter Committee believes students, teachers, and others should have access to technological resources and the ability to use those resources at the time and place of need.

East Link Academy Charter Committee is committed to educating and preparing students in a 21st Century learning environment by providing students in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades with a Chromebook or comparable device. By providing students with this device to use at school and home, learning and instruction can extend beyond the school day and classroom walls. The goal of 1:1 computing is to develop digitally literate students with anytime, anywhere access to learning resources. New devices will be issued to 7<sup>th</sup> grade students, and following a series of orientation sessions, a parent meeting, and a signed parent and student agreement, students will be able to take their devices home. Students will be issued the same device in grades 7 and 8, with devices being collected at the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade. At the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade, students will have the opportunity to purchase their device and take it on to high school.

### *Differentiated Instruction and Response to Intervention*

**Differentiated instruction** is a method of designing and delivering instruction to best reach each student. Per Carol Tomlinson,

*“The idea of differentiating instruction is an approach to teaching that advocates active planning for and attention to student differences in classroom, in the context of high quality curriculums. The idea of differentiating instruction to accommodate the different ways that students learn involves a hefty dose of common sense, as well as sturdy support in the theory and research of education (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000). It is an approach to teaching that advocates active planning for student differences in classrooms.”*  
(<http://www.caroltomlinson.com/>)

At East Link Academy, student learning will be enhanced using a variety of learning experiences in response to the varied needs and preferences of students. Learning activities and resources may be varied by difficulty to challenge students based on different readiness levels (including those students above or below grade level, with disabilities, identified as gifted and talented, and requiring ELL services), by topic in response to student interests, and by students' preferred ways of learning. The learning environment will be planned and monitored using a variety of school and teacher created benchmark and formative assessments administered throughout the year. These assessments will be given to students at the beginning of an instructional unit to determine readiness and will be administered again at the end of units to determine mastery and if re-teaching is necessary to meet academic and language targets. Additional information regarding specific formative and summative assessments can be found in the Assessment Plan. Teachers will have the flexibility to adjust their lesson plans to help students achieve academic excellence. Specific professional development will be provided for teachers on the use of differentiated instruction.

To serve the students who are state identified as academically gifted and talented, East Link Academy will initially develop a pull-out program to further enrich these students. In this model, gifted and talented students are removed from the regular classroom for a specified period each week. The accelerated and enriched curriculum is differentiated in level of abstraction, complexity, pace, breadth, and depth. Interdisciplinary units of study focus on an infusion of technological skills, along with research, creative, and critical thinking skills. This program will utilize best practices for teaching gifted and talented teachers as outlined in the State Department of Education's Manual for Gifted and Talented education. Curriculum units will be chosen from those developed by the Center for Gifted Education at the William and Mary College of Education that use the Integrated Curriculum Model (ICM) for Gifted Learners. ICM is designed to respond to

gifted learners' characteristics of precocity, intensity, and complexity through its three dimensions of advanced content, higher level processes and product development, and interdisciplinary concepts, issues, and themes. As the population of students becomes more defined, changes in the delivery of gifted education may change to meet the needs of students.

Each year students will be assessed on their Mandarin proficiency. This report will be given to parents and students to indicate how students are progressing toward their target proficiency based on years in the program. Students will be placed in homeroom sections based on the attainment of these proficiency levels. This will provide the teacher with an opportunity to conduct mathematics instruction at the level of most students in the class, thereby moving those students forward in their language learning but still differentiating mathematics skills as needed by the students.

To ensure that East Link Academy accomplishes its mission, ELA must also ensure struggling learners are identified early and provided appropriate interventions. Because the core areas of math and science will be taught in Mandarin in the primary/elementary school, it will be essential for the English-speaking teacher to work closely with the Mandarin-speaking teachers to determine if any deficiencies are related to conceptual understanding or language comprehension. ELA will use the Response to Intervention (RTI) model to identify students with disabilities and behavior problems, or who are at-risk for underachieving, and enhance the ability of teachers to address the individual student needs. RTI will enable teachers to improve the instructional and emotional support needed for each student to be successful at ELA. The four essential components of an RTI model are:

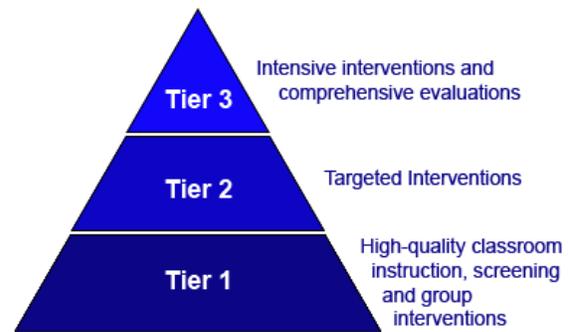
- 1) Identify potential problem(s) using individual screening.
- 2) Analyze the problem and determine the nature of any discrepancy.

- 3) Use a multi-tiered approach to establish unique performance goals for the student, and develop a relevant intervention plan to monitor student progress in an appropriate period.
- 4) Continuously collect data from the process of monitoring the plan, and evaluate the effectiveness of the prescribed intervention. Adjust the plan accordingly if needed.

The RTI model is not a linear progression from one step to another. Instead, it is a cyclic process which continuously evaluates student’s needs as they progress, and adapts as students meet their achievement goals or new needs arise. East Link Academy will implement a three-tiered approach to instructional delivery, which provides services and interventions to students at increasing levels of intensity based on progress monitoring and data analysis. This approach includes fidelity of instruction using the identified core instructional materials, scaffolding of concepts, differentiated instruction, and interventions of increasingly higher intensity, based on the differentiated needs of students.

As part of Tier 1 intervention, all students will receive instruction using high-quality, research-based instructional materials provided by qualified educators to ensure that their difficulties are not due to inadequate instruction. All students will be initially screened to establish an academic

**\* Response to Intervention / Integrated Service Delivery**



and behavioral baseline so that struggling learners can be easily identified. Students identified as being at-risk through these universal screenings or because of school, state or federal assessments will receive supplemental instruction during the school day in the regular classroom. Although the length of intervention time will vary with individual students, teachers will use curriculum-based measurements to progress monitor student achievement. Students not showing progress in the

regular classroom will be moved to Tier 2 for more targeted interventions. Students who continue to show too little progress after Tier 2 interventions will be considered for more intensive interventions as part of Tier 3. Students who still do not make adequate progress are then referred for a comprehensive evaluation and considered for eligibility for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004).

To address the unique goals of language proficiency for East Link Academy, the RTI model will also be used specifically in the area of the Mandarin language development. Students who have not progressed as expected in the development of the Mandarin language will receive remediation during after school tutoring sessions.

Teachers cannot make the difference that is required for some struggling students alone. Parents must be part of the process. They provide important information that may be affecting the student both inside and outside of school, along with their expertise in the planning and implementation stages of the interventions for their child. Involving parents gives them the opportunity to understand the level of support in both the academic and behavioral areas that will increase/decrease in intensity depending on the child's needs. Just as with assessment results, parents will receive frequent progress reports about their child's response and performance to the intervention implemented.

East Link Academy is not a replication school and will not offer the requirements for students to earn the South Carolina State High School Diploma.

#### b) Educational Structure

The educational structure at East Link Academy is characterized by a small school size, small class sizes, a four-day per week extended school day, and reverse the master schedule at mid-year in the support of student achievement.

Research shows that *smaller schools* outperform larger schools in student achievement and teacher attitudes and satisfaction. The research base on the effects of school size and its effect on student performance is extensive and constant (Cotton, 1996; Gregory, 1992; Howley, 1994; Kershaw and Blank, 1993; Nachtigal, 1992). Therefore, East Link Academy will limit school size to 408 of students in 4K through 4<sup>th</sup> grade in the first year and will add a grade level each subsequent year to establish grades 5 through 8, with a total school size of 936 at full build-out.

Research also indicates that *small class sizes* have a distinct advantage over larger class sizes, especially in the lower grades. In terms of student performance, specifically for minority students, the impact is twice as large as non-minority students (Nye, et al., 1989, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, and 1999; Word, et al., 1990). With this understanding, East Link Academy will strive to limit class size to between 20 and 24 students with smaller class sizes in the primary grades, with an assistant. This will allow teachers to focus on the listening and speaking acquisition of students in these grades so that students will be more likely to achieve their target proficiency levels in these areas. Additionally, the early focus on students' listening and speaking will enable students to be more academically successful in learning mathematical concepts in the upper grades because they will be able to understand the teacher as she instructs them in Mandarin. In pre-kindergarten and kindergarten there will be an English-speaking teaching assistant for each class of students.

East Link Academy will offer an *extended school day* to allow provide additional academic or cultural support for all students. On Mondays through Thursdays, the school day will begin at 8:30 a.m. and end at 4:00 p.m. On Fridays, school will end at 3:15 p.m. This extended time will be used to support personal, social, and academic growth and gives times for students to complete work, communicate with teachers and take care of their academic responsibilities without being

pulled from their regular academic schedule. This time will also allow students who are at or above grade level to participate in enrichment activities to extend academic learning or in extracurricular activities they may not get to participate in after school, such as Chinese dance, culture, or team sports.

Barron, Henderson, and Spurgeon (1994) have found that the time of day that teachers teach reading affects the mastery skills of below-grade-level students. The researchers found an overall increase in the mean reading scores for below-grade-level students who received instruction in the afternoon as compared with those of the similar group who received instruction in the morning. To accommodate different learning times in kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade only, East Link Academy will reverse the schedule between quarters two and three. For example, if the English (reading and writing) are taught in the morning portion of the day, it will be rescheduled for the afternoon and vice versa. This will also allow target language learning to occur for students at different times of the day.

*Starting Grade Levels and Growth Plan*

Because language is best learned at an early age, East Link Academy will open with 4K through grade 4: three 4K classes, totaling 72 students; and four Kindergarten classes, four 1st grade classes, and two classes each in 2nd through 4th grades, totaling 336 students.

**Starting Grades and Class Sizes, 2018-2019**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Number of Classrooms</b>	<b>Number of Students per Classroom</b>	<b>Number of Students per Grade</b>	<b>Total Number of Students (408)</b>
<b>4K</b>	3	24	72	336
<b>5K</b>	4	24	96	
<b>1</b>	4	24	96	
<b>2</b>	2	24	48	
<b>3</b>	2	24	48	
<b>4</b>	2	24	48	

East Link Academy will then grow one grade-level each subsequent year, until it reaches full capacity in 2025-2026 with grades 4K through grade 8, totaling 936 students.

**Grades and Class Sizes at Full Capacity, 2025-2026**

Grade	Number of Classrooms	Number of Students per Classroom	Number of Students per Grade	Total Number of Students (936)
<b>4K</b>	3	24	72	72
<b>5K</b>	4	24	96	864
<b>1</b>	4	24	96	
<b>2</b>	4	24	96	
<b>3</b>	4	24	96	
<b>4</b>	4	24	96	
<b>5</b>	4	24	96	
<b>6</b>	4	24	96	
<b>7</b>	4	24	96	
<b>8</b>	4	24	96	

*Overview of the Average School Day*

State law and regulations require that the length of the school day for primary/elementary and middle school students must be at least six hours, or its weekly equivalent, including lunch. East Link Academy will offer an extended school day on Monday through Thursday with the day beginning at 8:30 a.m. and ending at 4:00 p.m. On Fridays, the day will end at 3:15 p.m. During this extended time, students will be provided with a range of remedial to enrichment activities depending on the students’ needs. Appendix D provides sample daily schedules for students.

Students in **4K through 1<sup>st</sup> Grade** will begin the morning in homeroom with a Mandarin-speaking teacher. During this time students, will do their calendar work, community building exercise, and pledge. At some point during the day, students will spend 90-minutes with an English-speaking teacher who will instruct reading, writing and language arts. A Mandarin-speaking teacher will teach science and math along with a designated time for Mandarin language arts where students learn and practice speaking and writing basic Chinese characters. Related arts

time will include two 45-minute periods of art, dance, PE, music, and media, and where appropriate Mandarin-speaking teachers will instruct these classes.

Students in **2<sup>nd</sup> Grade through 6<sup>th</sup>** will begin the morning in either an English or Mandarin homeroom where students will do their calendar work, community building exercise, and pledge. Teachers will work in two-person teams, one Mandarin-speaking and one English-speaking teacher. These two teachers will share their homeroom students. Students with Mandarin-speaking homeroom teachers will begin their day with Mandarin instructed subjects (math, science, and Mandarin language arts). Students with English-speaking teachers will begin their day with English instructed subjects (reading, writing, and social studies). Midway through the day students will switch between these two assigned teachers and receive the corresponding instruction. Related arts time will include 45-minute of art, dance, PE, music, and media and where appropriate Mandarin-speaking teachers will instruct these classes. Additionally, students in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade through 6<sup>th</sup> will learn science in a separate specialized laboratory classroom co-taught by Mandarin- and English-speaking teachers.

In the **middle grades**, courses such as English Language Arts, Chinese Literacy, and Mathematics will meet every day. This schedule will allow for maximum exposure to the language so that students can achieve the goal of preparedness for AP and college level courses in Mandarin language and literacy proficiency. As in the primary/elementary program, students will have an extended day on Mondays through Thursdays. During this additional 45-minutes per day, students will engage in activities that further support content area or Mandarin enrichment or remediation.

#### *Teacher Lesson Planning Process*

The Immersion Coordinator and Academic Director will be responsible for developing pacing guides for each content area. They will ensure ALL curricular maps and lesson plans will

be aligned to state and national standards in the respective content areas. Units will be developed using the *backward design model*, in which the teacher starts with the desired results and then derives the curriculum to meet the desired results (the evidence of learning called for by the expectations and the teaching needed to equip students to perform.) (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998)

The backward design model is comprised of the following three steps:

- 1) identify the desired results (what should the students know and be able to do)
- 2) determine acceptable evidence (how will the teacher know when the students have met the learning objectives); and
- 3) plan learning experience and instruction (what activities will you use to facilitate instruction so that your students meet the objectives).

Instructional planning in an immersion setting presents some challenges for the language teacher. In addition to the variation in students' academic abilities, learning styles, and knowledge that all teachers encounter, language teachers must be sensitive to variations in student proficiency levels. Because East Link Academy will utilize content-based instruction in the immersion classroom, language teachers will develop standards-based lessons that include both content and target language learning. Professional development will include videos and activities presented by StarTalk entitled "*Chinese Immersion: Lesson Planning in the Content-based Classroom.*" This online resource will provide teachers with skills and strategies for identifying content and language objectives, designing assessments, and planning for instruction.

Once units of study have been developed using backward design, English-speaking and Chinese-speaking teachers will collaborate weekly on specific instructional strategies to include in their weekly lesson plans. Scaffolded instruction, or the gradual release model, will be used in daily lesson plans to move the classroom instruction from a teacher-centered to a more student-centered environment. Teachers will create daily lessons that provide grade specific content information, provide essential questions, and enable children to develop their own questions and

work independently and/or in small groups to inquire further. Teachers will have the flexibility to modify their lesson plans as needed to help students reach academic excellence.

c) Professional Development

Professional development is a crucial component to teacher success, even for experienced teachers. The Charter Committee recognizes the importance of a carefully planned program, well-trained teachers, strong leadership, and administrative support in any language immersion program to empower its students to develop and achieve the competencies required by the global market.

The Head of School, with support from the Academic Director and Immersion Coordinator, will be responsible for overseeing professional development. In the fall of each year, all teachers and staff will create Professional Development Plans and evaluate their growth toward those goals in the spring of that year with the school administration, indicating their priorities for areas of need and interest. The school administration will use this information to determine selections for professional development opportunities at the school, at conferences and regional trainings. Professional Development Plans will be evaluated by each individual teacher and an administrator in the spring of the year.

In support of the mission to prepare students to face global challenges in their lifetime, and to build lasting capacity of staff and administration teachers will have daily collaborative planning time for teacher planning. In addition, the academic calendar will utilize the last Friday of every month (8 days total) to allow for continued professional development for staff and faculty on both academic and behavioral issues. Examples of professional development topics include:

- ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL) or equivalent assessment tool
- Backward design lesson planning
- Balanced literacy
- Classroom and behavior management strategies
- Content-based instruction

- Content knowledge and instructional materials
- Culture and diversity training
- Differentiated Instruction
- Effective communication strategies
- Identifying students with special needs
- Language Immersion Instructional Strategies
- Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) for students training
- Strategic Instructional Model (SIM)-SIM is a comprehensive evidence-based adolescent literacy program
- Technology integration

There are five areas of development that are specific for immersion teachers: curriculum and instruction, classroom and behavior management, the social and emotional development of students, effective communication, and technology integration. Although a comprehensive curriculum is essential for high academic achievement, the most successful teachers will bring additional content to the academic content to effectively reach students. In particular, “Chinese immersion teachers must be able to make academic content accessible to students who are learning language through the medium of a new language” (AsiaSociety/CLL in the Early Grades). Teachers must also be equipped with the knowledge and strategies to support the development of each student and to address any issue that may weaken the goal of learning. Teachers must also be aware of any differences in culture as they develop classroom management strategies. Both English-speaking and Chinese-speaking staff need to understand one another’s culture to avoid any misunderstandings between teachers, administrators, parents, and students. This is key to efficient communication within the school community. Finally, teaching in the 21st century involves a strong grasp of technology-both for communication and instruction. To meet the professional learning needs of its teachers and staff, East Link Academy will annually produce an academic calendar that meets the required number of instructional days for students as well as extended time for teacher professional learning and planning.

Because of the nature of immersion instruction, more time will be needed for teachers to plan collaboratively on classroom activities beyond the instructional days. As part of the teacher's regular work assignment, East Link Academy will facilitate a one-week Immersion Institute each summer prior to the opening of school, bringing in experts in the field of immersion instruction, allowing teachers to develop the necessary knowledge and skills they need to help students achieve at high levels. Language teachers will also be trained on how to implement the proficiency assessments such as ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL) and the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). In the 'What Matters Most' (1996) report by The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future indicated, investments in teacher knowledge and skills net increases in student achievement than other uses of educational funding. Sustained and targeted professional learning is more likely to have an impact than shorter opportunities (Garet, et al., 2001). With a focus on mathematics and science being taught in Mandarin there will need to be specific professional learning activities that enhance the immersion teachers' subject knowledge as well as the use of effective immersion teaching strategies.

Each year during the first week before school begins, all new and returning staff will be required to attend meetings in which the school's mission and vision are reviewed, the goals for the year are articulated, staff and student expectations are shared, information related to human resources, teacher and staff evaluation, instructional materials, and scheduling will be shared. All staff will be required to complete SafeSchools training on topics such as FERPA and confidentiality of records, blood borne pathogens exposure prevention, school safety, bullying prevention, and sexual harassment.

In Evaluating Professional Development (2000), Thomas R. Guskey describes the processes and procedures involved in evaluating professional development, from the very simple to the very complex, at five increasing levels of sophistication:

- 1) Participants' reactions to professional development
- 2) How much participants learn
- 3) Evaluating organizational support and change
- 4) How participants use their new knowledge and skills
- 5) Improvement in student learning

Using these five areas, the East Link Academy Leadership Team will seek to understand the value of each experience and how that information can be used to inform and improve the school's goals as they relate to the mission.

Appendix Items: Appendix D – *School Calendar and Daily Schedule*, Appendix E – *Supporting Documents for Educational Plan*, and Appendix F – *List of Teaching Positions*. Appendix G is not applicable.

#### **4. Serving Students with Special Needs**

East Link Academy understands that as a public school, it must be open to all students who apply regardless of disability status, label or services needed. Students with disabilities who attend ELA will be served in the same manner, and will receive the same level of high quality of special education and related services and support, as in other similar public schools in South Carolina. The purpose of special education and related services is to give students with disabilities access to the general education of the school, program, or extracurricular activities that all students without disabilities enjoy.

East Link Academy will fully comply with the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA),

which include appropriately certified personnel, documentation, assessments, adaptations, and modifications. ELA will abide by the provision of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), under the requirements of IDEA and Section 504, in the same manner as it provides for students in other schools in the district. ELA will comply with all federal and state laws, per IDEA 613(e) (1) (B), regarding accommodations for students with disabilities and will not discriminate against individuals who are believed to have disabling conditions. ELA will adhere to the criteria for eligibility, reporting, and official records for accommodations under Section 504 and the IDEA. Compliance with applicable regulations (IEP and service delivery) will be guaranteed on a case-by-case basis.

East Link Academy will also comply with all processes stipulated by the district in the *Child Find Procedures for School-aged Charter School Students*, from referral through eligibility and reevaluation, to exiting the child from special education either through reevaluation or revocation of parental consent. The school will publicly post information regarding the *Child Find* process in its school and on its website. All parents will receive procedural safeguards at the onset of the evaluation process to ensure the parents are not only aware of the process of special education, but also of their rights at any point during the process.

East Link Academy will comply with all state and federal statutes, laws, regulations, and sponsor specific policies/procedures when it comes to serving students with special needs.

**Identifying Students with Special Needs:** East Link Academy faculty and staff will receive professional development on an ongoing basis so that students who may qualify for special services are identified in a timely manner, and so that instructional delivery and interpersonal relations are conducted appropriately and effectively. Identifying children through RTI, and

referrals from teachers, parents and administrators will all be part of the training to staff and faculty for identifying children to be evaluated for a disability.

East Link Academy will conduct an evaluation before the initial provision of special education and related services. A parent of a child may initiate a request for an initial evaluation to determine if the child is a child with a disability. Additionally, when there is reason to suspect the child may have a disability, an employee of ELA is obligated to initiate a request for an initial evaluation. Within a reasonable amount of time from the receipt of a request for an evaluation, ELA either obtains parental consent for an initial evaluation through an evaluation-planning meeting, or provides to the parents' prior written notice stating that ELA does not suspect a disability and will not be conducting an evaluation.

The initial evaluation:

- 1) Is conducted within 60 days of receiving parental consent for the evaluation; and
- 2) Consists of procedures:
  - a) To determine if the child is a child with a disability as defined in South Carolina Board of Education Regulation 43-243.1; and
  - b) To determine the educational needs of the child.

East Link Academy will obtain parental consent before conducting an evaluation. The evaluation team consists of the members similar to those of Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team and other qualified professionals.

As part of the initial evaluation and any reevaluation, the evaluation team will develop an evaluation plan that will provide for the following and be summarized in an evaluation team report:

- 1) Review of existing evaluation data on the child, including:
  - a) Evaluations and information provided by the parents of the child;
  - b) Current classroom-based, local or state assessments and classroom-based observations;
  - c) Observations by teachers and related services providers;

- d) Data about the child's progress in the general curriculum, or, for the preschool-age child, data pertaining to the child's growth and development; and
  - e) Data from previous interventions.
- 2) Based on that review and input from the child's parents, identify what additional data, if any, are needed to determine:
- a) Whether the child is a child with a disability, as defined in South Carolina Board of Education Regulation 43-243.1, and the educational needs of the child;
  - b) In the case of a reevaluation of a child, whether the child continues to have such a disability and the educational needs of the child;
  - c) The present levels of academic achievement and related developmental needs of the child;
  - d) Whether the child, as a result of the disability, needs special education and related services; or
  - e) In the case of a reevaluation of a child, whether the child continues to need special education and related services; and
  - f) Whether any additions or modifications to the special education and related services are needed to enable the child to meet the measurable annual goals set out in the IEP of the child and to participate, as appropriate, in the general education curriculum.

East Link Academy will administer such assessments and other evaluation measures as may be needed to produce the data identified above. ELA provides prior written notice to the parents of a child with a disability that describes any evaluation procedures the school district proposes to conduct. In conducting the evaluation, ELA will:

- Use a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the child, including information provided by the parent, that may assist in determining:
  - Whether the child is a child with a disability as defined in South Carolina Board of Education Regulation 43-243.1; and
  - The content of the child's IEP, including information related to enabling the child to be involved in and progress in the general education curriculum (or for a preschool child to participate in appropriate activities);
- Not use any single measure or assessment as the sole criterion for determining whether a child is a child with a disability and for determining an appropriate educational program for the child; and

- Use technically sound instruments that may assess the relative contribution of cognitive and behavioral factors, in addition to physical or developmental factors.

East Link Academy will ensure that:

- Assessments and other evaluation materials used to assess a child:
- Are selected and administered so as not to be discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis;
- Are provided and administered in the child's native language or other mode of communication, and in the form most likely to yield accurate information about what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally, and functionally, unless it is clearly not feasible to so provide or administer;
- Are used for the purposes for which the assessments or measures are valid and reliable;
- Are administered by trained and knowledgeable personnel; and
- Are administered in accordance with any instructions provided by the producer of the assessments.
- Assessments and other evaluation materials include those tailored to assess specific areas of educational need and not merely those that are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient.
- Assessments are selected and administered so as best to ensure that if an assessment is administered to a child with impaired sensory, manual or speaking skills, the assessment results accurately reflect the child's aptitude or achievement level or whatever other factors the test purports to measure rather than reflecting the child's impaired sensory, manual or speaking skills (unless those skills are the factors that the test purports to measure);
- A school age child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, including, if appropriate, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities;
- Preschool children are assessed in the following developmental areas: adaptive behavior, cognition, communication, hearing, vision, sensory/motor function, social-emotional functioning, and behavioral function.

- Assessments of children with disabilities who transfer from one school district to another school district in the same school year are coordinated with the children's prior and subsequent schools, as necessary and as expeditiously as possible, consistent with South Carolina Board of Education Regulations 43-243, to ensure prompt completion of the full evaluations.
- In evaluating each child with a disability, the evaluation is sufficiently comprehensive to identify all the child's special education and related service needs, whether commonly linked to the disability category in which the child has been classified.
- Assessment tools and strategies that provide relevant information that directly assists persons in determining the educational needs of the child are provided.

The parents will receive formal written report of evaluation results including:

- Assessment results and educational implications;
- Parental/Guardian Rights (IEP team meeting attendance, right to refuse services, and other parental rights pertaining to the evaluation process);
- A full description of all procedural safeguards available;
- A list of sources where parents/guardians may obtain free/low cost legal services;
- A statement of any other factors relevant to the proposed action;
- A declaration that the student's educational status shall not be changed without the knowledge and written approval of the parent or until the notice and due process procedures have been exhausted; and
- Procedural safeguards available.

**Developing the Individualized Education Plan (IEP):** If a determination is made that a child has a disability and needs special education and related services, after seeking the consent for the initial provision of services, East Link Academy will develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for the child within 30 calendar days of the date eligibility is determined as required by South Carolina Board of Education Regulations 43-243. The special education teacher will

progress monitor the special education students to have accurate, up to date information on the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance to determine if the IEP goals are appropriate and achievable.

East Link Academy will form an IEP team that includes:

- The child's parents
- At least one general education teacher of the child
- At least one special education teacher of the child
- An LEA Representative who:
- Someone who can interpret the instructional implications of the evaluation results
- The child, whenever appropriate.

East Link Academy will adhere to the following procedure to schedule IEP meetings:

- 1) The school special education teacher will contact the parent and determine a mutually agreed upon date and time for the IEP meeting. This may be done via email, by phone or in person. As a result of parent contact a mutually agreed upon date and time is established, teacher will complete the IEP invitation in Enrich.
- 2) If the teacher is unable to preset the date and time with the parent via email, phone or in person, a written invitation from Enrich will be sent home to the parent. Without parental contact, the meeting should be scheduled with a reasonable amount of time for the parent to plan to attend.
- 3) If, after 3 days, the teacher does not receive written signed invitation response, a second invitation should be sent home again using a different method such as email, in person or US mail.
- 4) If after two reasonable attempts and no response or the parent responds they will not attend, the teacher may hold the IEP meeting. If the parent indicates in writing, that they will attend but do not show up for the meeting, the teacher may hold the IEP meeting.

In developing each child's IEP, the IEP team considers:

- The strengths of the child;
- The concerns of the parents for enhancing the education of their child;
- The results of the initial or most recent evaluation of the child;

- The results of the child's performance on any state or district-wide assessment programs, as appropriate; and
- The academic, developmental, and functional needs of the child.

The IEP will include all the following:

- A statement that discusses the child's future and documents planning information;
- A statement of the child's present levels of academic and functional performance, including:
  - A statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals,
  - A description of the child's progress toward meeting the annual goals described in the IEP will be measured; and when reports on the progress the child is making toward meeting the annual goals will be provided;
- A statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the child,
- An explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with nondisabled children in the regular classroom and in activities;
- A statement of any individual appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the child on state and district-wide assessments;
- If the IEP team determines that the child must take an alternate assessment instead of a particular regular state or district-wide assessment of student achievement, a statement of why;
- The projected date for the beginning of the services and modifications described in the IEP and the anticipated frequency, location and duration of those services and modification;
- For children age 13 or over, appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment and, where appropriate, independent living skills; and the transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals.

**Developing a Section 504 Plan:** If a determination is made that a child has a disability that meets the wider definition of disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the student typically receives accommodations in the general education classroom, but may require out of

class accommodations that do not rise to the level of special education services. Accommodations under 504 are required to “level the playing field” for students who qualify. Students under 504 are also afforded procedural safeguards, and while similar to IDEA, are not the same.

**Transfer IEPs:** East Link Academy will provide comparable services to all children who enter ELA with an IEP in place. Within 30 days, ELA will gather data and have an IEP team meeting to determine if the IEP is appropriate for ELA’s environment and can be accepted as is, or if adjustments to the IEP are required to provide access to ELA’s general education.

**Service Delivery and Placement Options:** In accordance with IDEA, “children will be treated as individuals with unique abilities and disabilities that need to be addressed by providing unique support services, which are explicitly articulated in the IEP”. East Link Academy will ensure that students with disabilities receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and will utilize a variety of strategies to address student needs. ELA will create a system to ensure that a continuum of alternative placements, including inclusive classrooms, is available to meet the needs of students with disabilities for special education and related services and that least restrictive environment (LRE) issues are considered in placement decisions. Least restrictive environment:

- Is based on meaningful evaluation data,
- Considers appropriate placement options,
- Is determined at least annually,
- Is determined by the child’s IEP team, and
- Considers any potential harmful effect on the child or on the quality of services that he or she needs, including the medium through which the instruction is delivered.

**Annual Reviews and Reevaluations, and Transition Services:** During annual reviews and three-year reevaluation, the IEP team will determine if the student does or does not continue to meet the criteria to be a student with a disability under IDEA. At that time, if the student does not meet the criteria for disability, the IEP team will determine if the student meets the wider

definition of disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which does not require the full level of special education services. If at the reevaluation, a student is determined to no longer qualify for or no longer require services, the student will be exited from special education. If the team decides a transition plan is needed, then one will be created.

**Staff and Support Services:** To fulfill its obligation, East Link Academy will have a full time special education teacher in place the first year of operation whose job is to provide services for students already identified and to assist in the identification of students not yet identified but who meet the state and/or federal criteria of a student with a disability. S/He will attend all district meetings for special education coordinators/teachers, and all trainings provided by the district to better provide services to the school, students, and parents. S/He will serve as the contact person between ELA and the district on special education matters, including state and federal reporting.

The student's IEP, created by the IEP team, will also specify any special circumstances (equipment, supervision, etc.) that need to be provided to meet the student's needs. East Link Academy will work with the district's Special Education Services to contract for any special services needed to fulfill any child's IEP. If services are unavailable through the district, ELA will contract with the appropriate related service providers, including but not limited to occupational and physical therapy, orientation and mobility, speech therapy, and psychologist for testing in the manner necessary to afford children with disabilities an equal opportunity for participation in school activities.

Students' needs and services are determined by the IEP team, but the school must be prepared before the beginning of school to serve students with more significant disabilities in the event of the enrollment of such student. East Link Academy will not wait to see what services are required before establishing a contract with Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, and

related services providers, so that services can begin immediately if determined by the IEP team or need as comparable services.

East Link Academy will also provide English as a Second Language services for students who are determined eligible via district or State approved screening assessments. This service will be contracted out on an as-needed basis or if enough students require services a part- or full-time person will be employed. All students will complete the Home Language survey in the enrollment package to determine which if any students need to be screened. Screening will determine the need for services. Students whose native language is Mandarin will be able to receive ELL services in the regular classroom. Students with a native language other than Mandarin will receive their services in the regular classroom and from pull-out if needed.

Appendix Items: No documents, Appendix H is not applicable.

## **5. Goals, Objectives and Assessment Plan**

Immersion education is unique in that it can encompass any and every curriculum. Though it can be delivered through its own curriculum, it does not have to be. Immersion education is implemented using any curriculum the school deems best. However, the curriculum and content of each course is delivered in the target language. This means that instead of students being taught about the target language, students are being taught in the target language. Similar to how we learned our first language, in which fluency of communication came before grammar instruction, immersion education seeks to produce proficient communicators of the language before they become grammar police.

According to Asia Society, “the leading educational organization dedicated to promoting mutual understanding and strengthening partnerships among peoples, leaders and institutions of

Asia and the United States in a global context”, the goals of a language immersion program are to develop a student’s:

- 1) proficiency in English
- 2) proficiency in a second language
- 3) intercultural competence
- 4) academic performance in the content area, at or above expectations.

a) Goals and Objectives

**Rationale:** It is expected that the students who attend East Link Academy will be academically as prepared as students who are enrolled in similarly situated schools (“schools like ours”) in the Greenville County School District (GCSD) while also developing proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the Mandarin language.

**Desired results:** East Link Academy will achieve an equal or higher rating on state performance standards in English (reading and writing) and mathematics.

**Baseline Data:** Baseline data for students enrolled at East Link Academy will be determined in 2018-2019 and each subsequent school year based on the annual cohort of students. For reference, in spring 2015, Greenville county students who scored exceeding and ready on ACT Aspire were 72.8% (English), 44% (reading), 28.5% (writing), and 54% (math).

To fulfill its mission and the goals of a language immersion program described above, East Link Academy has established the following goals:

<p><b>Goal #1 (Proficiency in English)</b></p>	<p>For each year in existence for which a state assessment is conducted, students will demonstrate an equal or higher school-wide proficiency rating in English Language Arts (reading and writing) than similarly situated schools (“schools like ours”) in the Greenville County School District</p>
<p><b>METRIC</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual assessments administered by the SCDE (SC-READY)</li> </ul>
<p><b>ANNUAL TARGETS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annually, students will demonstrate growth in reading</li> <li>• Meet the state and federal accountability objectives for all students and subgroups in English (reading and writing) each year</li> </ul>
<p><b>STRATEGIES TO MEET THIS GOAL</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize State standards in English language arts (reading and writing).</li> <li>• Utilize PASS, MAP, SCReady and classroom assessment scores to determine strengths and weaknesses of students to inform instruction.</li> <li>• Utilize MAP or i-Ready data to differentiate instruction in classrooms. Chart student MAP scores for East Link Academy (reading and language usage). Use RIT bands for flexible student groups for instruction.</li> <li>• Provide academic assistance to students scoring not met on state testing program using Response to Intervention (RTI) and extended day enrichment/remediation opportunities.</li> <li>• Focused training for teachers on specific reading/writing strategies used in Reading and Writing workshop and DRA-2 in K-2 to prepare students for state testing.</li> <li>• Use classroom assessments that are aligned with state testing programs/standards (authentic assessments, rubrics, etc.).</li> <li>• Provide technology and corresponding training to implement instructional program</li> <li>• Implement independent and guided reading strategies in all English classes.</li> <li>• Share best practices and tips through monthly professional learning communities (PLCs).</li> <li>• Hold grade level data team meetings to focus on instructional practices and student achievement.</li> <li>• Conduct student-led conferences</li> <li>• Provide a 4-day extended schedule and afterschool enrichment program</li> </ul>	

<b>Goal #2 (Proficiency in Mandarin)</b>	After five years of continuous enrollment (grade 5) and upon completion of grade 8, at least 80% of students will attain the target proficiency in Mandarin as measured by the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards.
<b>METRIC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) or similar assessment (annually)</li> <li>• The ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL) or similar assessment (year 5 and 8)</li> </ul>
<b>ANNUAL TARGETS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each year at least 80% of students will meet their target Mandarin Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, (LSRW) as determined by the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)</li> <li>• At least 80% of students will demonstrate recommended proficiency in LSRW as identified by the ACTFL standards for students with at least five years of continuous enrollment in the immersion program in grade 5 and grade 8</li> </ul>
<b>STRATEGIES TO MEET THIS GOAL</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a schedule that supports 75% of instruction in the target language in grades PK-1, 50% in grades 2-6 and middle school</li> <li>• Adopt the ACTFL Proficiency and Performance Guidelines to inform curriculum</li> <li>• Integrate best practices in Immersion teaching in Mandarin classrooms</li> <li>• Use the target language in related arts opportunities, such as music, art, and dance</li> <li>• Implement research-based immersion teaching strategies in Mandarin-speaking classrooms, including mathematics, science, and culture</li> <li>• Target professional development for teachers in immersion teaching strategies</li> <li>• Provide professional development on the administration of the OPI assessment</li> <li>• Conduct parent information sessions such as PTO meetings and Dual Language Immersion Parent-Student-Teacher Conferences on school expectations for language learning</li> <li>• Provide Mandarin language acquisition interims and report cards for reading, writing, speaking and listening using data from OPI</li> <li>• Post ‘I can’ statements as outlined in the SC World Language Standard in each classroom</li> <li>• Encourage students to participate in state Chinese competitions such as Chinese STAR</li> <li>• Provide a 4-day extended schedule and afterschool enrichment program</li> </ul>	

<b>Goal # 3 (Intercultural Competence)</b>	After five years of continuous enrollment (grade 5) and upon completion of grade 8, at least 80% of students will attain intercultural competence as defined and measured by the SC World Language Standard
<b>METRICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student portfolios with artifacts that demonstrate their level of competency for each “I can...” statement (formative)</li> <li>• Completion of an intercultural development rubric or inventory tool (summative)</li> </ul>
<b>ANNUAL TARGETS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each year, students will demonstrate competency of the “I can...” statements as outlined in the Standard</li> <li>• Each year, students will meet or exceed the indicators of global competence</li> </ul>
<b>STRATEGIES TO MEET THIS GOAL</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement content-based instruction (CBI) and inquiry-based teaching methods</li> <li>• Utilize small school and class size</li> <li>• Implement a global character education program (Character Counts<sup>®</sup>)</li> <li>• Encourage parent involvement in school functions and student learning opportunities</li> <li>• Implement daily immersion in the Mandarin language</li> <li>• Celebrate Chinese-related cultural events such as the Mid-Autumn festival, Chinese New Year</li> <li>• Conduct an annual Bridging Ceremony to symbolize commitment to language usage</li> <li>• Recite the Pledge of Allegiance daily in both English and Mandarin</li> <li>• Employ native Mandarin-speaking teachers and staff members</li> <li>• Integrate Mandarin into non-Mandarin class projects</li> <li>• Require participation in a Chinese Culture Experience class beginning in grade 3</li> <li>• Provide a 4-day extended schedule and afterschool enrichment program</li> </ul>	

<b>Goal #4 (Academic Performance in the Content Area)</b>	For each year in existence, East Link Academy will demonstrate an equal or higher school-wide proficiency rating in Mathematics than similarly situated schools (“schools like ours”) in GCSD.
<b>METRICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual assessments administered by the SCDE (SC-READY)</li> </ul>
<b>ANNUAL TARGETS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet the state and federal accountability objectives for all students and subgroups in mathematics each year</li> <li>• Annually, students will demonstrate growth in mathematics</li> </ul>
<b>STRATEGIES TO MEET THIS GOAL</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement curriculum utilizing the State standards in mathematics</li> <li>• Utilize PASS, MAP, SCReady and classroom assessment scores to determine strengths and weaknesses of students to inform instruction</li> <li>• Utilize MAP or i-Ready data to differentiate instruction in classrooms. Chart student MAP scores for mathematics. Use RIT bands for flexible student groups for instruction</li> <li>• Provide academic assistance to students scoring ‘not met’ on state testing program using Response to Intervention (RTI) and extended day enrichment/remediation opportunities</li> <li>• Focused training for teachers on specific mathematics and immersion teaching strategies</li> <li>• Use classroom assessments that are aligned with state testing programs/standards (authentic assessments, rubrics, etc.)</li> <li>• Provide technology and corresponding training to implement the instructional program</li> <li>• Share best practices and tips through monthly professional learning communities (PLCs)</li> <li>• Hold grade level data team meetings to focus on instructional practices and student achievement</li> <li>• Provide a 4-day extended schedule and afterschool enrichment program</li> </ul>	

b) Assessment Plan

There is a complex relationship among the curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment to ensure student achievement. Therefore, East Link Academy will use a variety of methods to gather and monitor student performance data to ensure all students maintain progress toward mastery of the state academic standards. The assessment data will be used in four ways:

- 1) to improve vertical articulation by providing easy access to student performance data across grade levels;

- 2) to evaluate program, curriculum, and instructional effectiveness;
- 3) to inform adjustments to the program where necessary; and
- 4) to help differentiate instruction to meet the individual needs of students.

East Link Academy's assessment program will focus on performance and proficiency in the Mandarin language. This emphasis on what students can *do* with the language rather than on what they can tell *about* it inspired the goals of ACTFL, national and state standards for foreign language learning, and focuses on relevance and real-world applications. Two types of assessment will be used: classroom assessments and external assessments. Both will be used to establish entry and exit criteria for program articulation. Classroom assessments include performance-based assessment tasks; self-assessments; peer-assessments; teacher observations; portfolios; and teacher-made quizzes and tests. External assessments that will be used by ELA include the ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL) is unlike any other assessment. AAPPL Measure is designed for mid to late primary students and secondary students in 5<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, addresses the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages*, and uses today's communication media in which test takers perform tasks such as participating in a virtual video chat, creating wikis, e-mailing, and using apps to demonstrate language ability and the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages/Language Testing International, which utilizes face-to-face or telephonic assessment of speaking ability.

Teachers will use both formative and summative assessments to monitor student progress daily, weekly, quarterly, and annually. Student performance on these assessments will be recorded by teachers and shared with parents using PowerSchool, interims and report cards, and language proficiency reports that indicate student abilities in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Administrators, teachers, parents, and students will regularly analyze student performance and other school data to finalize decisions concerning curriculum for intervention, acceleration, and enrichment. East Link Academy will systematically collect, analyze, and apply data to monitor all aspects of organizational and instructional effectiveness at the student, classroom, and school level. Student progress information will be gathered and monitored using teacher observations, long-range and short-range lesson plans, student portfolios, rubrics, formal and informal assessments, interim and quarter report cards, parent conferences, honor rolls, MAP (or equivalent assessment tool) (administered 2-3 times each year), and state standardized assessments (SCPASS for science and social studies and SCREADY for reading, writing and mathematics).

These proficiency assessments will be administered at the beginning of the first year to gather baseline data for listening, speaking, reading and writing. In subsequent years, student growth will be measured against these baseline assessments. The assessments will be administered again in the spring of each year to show annual student growth and progress toward targeted proficiency. Specific areas of performance in communication that students will be assessed in are:

- **Comprehensibility:** How well is the student understood in their speaking?
- **Comprehension:** How well does the student understand what is being said?
- **Language control:** Is the student's language accurate?
- **Use of vocabulary:** How extensive and applicable is the student's language?
- **Communication strategies:** How do they maintain communication?
- **Cultural awareness:** How is their cultural understanding reflected in communication?

Specific training for teachers will be required to administer these assessments. To monitor students annually, teachers will utilize formative assessments created collaboratively by teachers and aligned with expected proficiencies. These results will be reported to parents at the parent-teacher-student conferences, on regular interims and on the final report cards. The end-of-year reports will be collected and used to inform student placement the following year.

At least twice per year, East Link Academy will conduct parent-teacher-student conferences that will follow the Dual Language Immersion Parent-Student-Teacher Conference Model. In this model, students participate in the conference and showcase what they have learned in their core content subjects as well as the Mandarin language. The conferences are conducted with both an English and Mandarin teacher present along with the student and parent(s). During the conference, the student will have the opportunity to demonstrate for the parent(s) their mastery of the language with guidance from the teacher. This enables the parent(s) to witness their child's learning and see discuss with the teachers any additional supports that may be needed. Discussion of progress in other subjects will also occur as well as goal-setting/evaluation for the student during the year.

The table below shows the plan for administering additional both formative and summative school and state-level assessments. Modifications will be made as programs requirements change.

<b>Grade</b>	<b>School Program</b>	<b>State Program</b>
<b>4K</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Records</li> <li>• Math Records</li> <li>• Mandarin learning records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual Growth and Development Indicators (myIGDIs)</li> </ul>
<b>5K</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Records</li> <li>• Primary MAP (Reading and Math) or I-Ready</li> <li>• Unit based benchmarks and assessments</li> <li>• ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)</li> <li>• Mandarin learning records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DRA 2+ (Developmental Reading Assessment, 2nd ed.)</li> <li>• ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners) for English to Speakers of Other Languages Program (ESOL) program</li> </ul>
<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Records</li> <li>• Primary MAP (Reading and Math) or I-Ready</li> <li>• Unit based benchmarks and assessments</li> <li>• ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)</li> <li>• Mandarin learning records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DRA 2+</li> <li>• ACCESS</li> <li>• W-APT-WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test for ESOL Program</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Records</li> <li>• Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) in reading, language and math or i-Ready</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DRA 2+</li> <li>• CogAT &amp; Iowa Assessment (IA)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unit based benchmarks and assessments</li> <li>• ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)</li> <li>• Mandarin learning records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACCESS &amp; W-APT for ESOL Program</li> <li>• STAR Performance Assessment (identified students)</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Records</li> <li>• Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) or I-Ready</li> <li>• Unit based benchmarks and assessments</li> <li>• ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)</li> <li>• Mandarin learning records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SC READY – Writing, Reading, Math</li> <li>• ACCESS &amp; W-APT for ESOL Program</li> <li>• STAR Performance Assessment (identified students)</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Records</li> <li>• Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) or I-Ready</li> <li>• Unit based benchmarks and assessments</li> <li>• ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)</li> <li>• Mandarin learning records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SCPASS for Science and Social Studies</li> <li>• SC READY – Writing, Reading, Math</li> <li>• ACCESS &amp; W-APT for ESOL Program</li> <li>• STAR Performance Assessment (identified students)</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Records</li> <li>• Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) or I-Ready</li> <li>• Unit based benchmarks and assessments</li> <li>• ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)</li> <li>• Mandarin learning records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SCPASS for Science and Social Studies</li> <li>• SC READY – Writing, Reading, Math</li> <li>• STAR Performance Assessment (identified students)</li> <li>• ACCESS &amp; W-APT for ESOL Program</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) or I-Ready</li> <li>• Unit based benchmarks and assessments</li> <li>• ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)</li> <li>• Mandarin learning records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SCPASS for Science and Social Studies</li> <li>• SC READY – Writing, Reading, Math</li> <li>• ACCESS &amp; W-APT for ESOL Program</li> </ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) or I-Ready</li> <li>• Unit based benchmarks and assessments</li> <li>• ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)</li> <li>• Mandarin learning records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SCPASS for Science and Social Studies</li> <li>• SC READY – Writing, Reading, Math</li> <li>• ACCESS &amp; W-APT for ESOL Program</li> </ul>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) or I-Ready</li> <li>• Unit based benchmarks and assessments</li> <li>• ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)</li> <li>• Mandarin learning records</li> <li>• PSAT option</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SCPASS for Science and Social Studies</li> <li>• SC READY – Writing, Reading, Math</li> <li>• ACCESS &amp; W-APT for ESOL Program</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*EOCEP, as needed</li> </ul>
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The current SC Standard does not address the difficulty level of different languages. The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) found that “the expected speaking proficiency for a student with a given background and a given aptitude, in a given language, after a given number of weeks, will depend not only on the difficulty of the spoken language itself, but also on the amount of time and effort that the student has had to spend in concurrent study of the writing system.” Based on this research, FSI categorized foreign languages into four groups. Chinese is a Group VI language, which is one of the most challenging languages to American learners requiring about 2,200 hours to learn the language whereas French or Spanish generally require 600 hours. Today, ACTFL has acknowledged this challenge and explained the different requirements for foreign language students and foreign language teacher candidates. East Link Academy will follow the current study and expect Intermediate High level proficiency for its graduates by providing approximately 4,700 contact hours in Mandarin for students completing grades 5K through 6 alone.

The chart below provided by the SC Department of Education’s Office of Standards and Learning identifies the expected proficiency levels for students enrolled in a language immersion program at the end of each year in the program, up through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Although the SCDE has not currently published proficiency targets for students in the middle grades who have attended an elementary immersion program, it is the goal of East Link Academy to provide learning opportunities that allow students through grade 8 (with at least six continuous years in the program) to reach Intermediate-High proficiency levels through the early 75/25 language immersion exposure as well as continued core and related arts classes.

**Primary/Elementary Dual Language Immersion  
Proficiency Benchmarks for Logographic Languages**

<b>Language Competency</b>	<b>End of 5K</b>	<b>End of Grade 1</b>	<b>End of Grade 2</b>	<b>End of Grade 3</b>	<b>End of Grade 4</b>	<b>End of Grade 5</b>
Listening	Novice High N-4	Int. Low I-1	Int. Mid I-2	Int. Mid I-3	Int. Mid I-4	Int. Mid I-5
Speaking	Novice Mid N-3	Novice High N-5	Int. Low I-1	Int. Mid I-2	Int. Mid I-3	Int. Mid I-4
Reading	Novice Low N-1	Novice Mid N-3	Novice High N-4	Int. Low I-1	Int. Mid I-2	Int. Mid I-3
Writing	Novice Low N-1	Novice Mid N-2	Novice Mid N-3	Novice High N-4	Int. Low I-1	Int. Mid I-2

Research indicates that to gain fluency in a language, students need to spend significant time in an environment saturated in the language they are learning. In grades 4K through 1<sup>st</sup> grade, students will learn in the one-way language immersion program, spending 75% of their day in the target language with a Chinese-speaking teacher and 25% of the day with an English-speaking teacher. This will allow approximately 878 contact hours per year with the language for the youngest students.

Appendix Items: No documents.

## **II. ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN**

### **1. Governance**

#### *Formation of the Charter Committee*

A group interested in the creation of a Chinese Language Immersion School in the Greenville area, along with representatives from the Confucius Institute (CI) at Presbyterian College, visited East Point Academy (EPA) in West Columbia, SC, the first and currently only Chinese Language Immersion School in South Carolina. After this visit, the Greenville Chinese Culture Association (GCCA) and the CI met to discuss the partnership that would be needed to create a Chinese Language Immersion School in the Upstate. Once the original group was

established, they began asking other individuals to join the Charter Committee of East Link Academy.

Ms. Dana M. Hutto, Assistant Principal for curriculum at East Point Academy (EPA) in West Columbia, was invited to join the East Link Academy Charter Committee to provide elementary operational expertise of an immersion school. Since Ms. Hutto joined the Committee, several other members of EPA have joined, bringing their considerable knowledge and expertise. Given the uniqueness of a language immersion program, it is imperative that the Charter Committee consists of individuals who hold not only education expertise but language acquisition expertise as well.

The Charter Committee has gathered persons with expertise in opening and serving as board members from other charter schools, reviewing and making recommendations for charter applications, school finance and school facilities. The Charter Committee consists of a wide array of individuals with language studies expertise, specifically Asian Languages. In addition, Mrs. Traci Bryant-Riches serves as the Project Manager to assist the Charter Committee with the organization and adherence to state and district laws and expectations.

The core Charter Committee members listed below have been selected to become the Founding Board upon approval, based on experience, and longevity and level of involvement in the committee. Additional Founding Board members will be recruited through school outreach, and voted on to fill any gaps in capacity of the Board to open the school and meet the minimum Board membership requirements. Below is a brief profile for each core member, including their leadership experiences and credentials:

**Ms. Jennifer Kirchner**, *Charter Committee Chair, Facilities Sub-Committee Chair*

Ms. Jennifer Kirchner earned both a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering from North Carolina State University. While at North Carolina State, Ms. Kirchner participated in the study abroad program with Temple University in Tokyo, Japan, and earned an International Certificate in Engineering. Ms. Kirchner is a Senior Engineering Tools Scientist at General Electric in Greenville, SC. At GE, Ms. Kirchner develops the next generation of advanced engineering design software system for structural analysis. In this role, Ms. Kirchner works with teams world-wide, and continuously applies the understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures she gained during her international studies. She is also a member of Upstate International.

**Mr. John Li**, *Outreach Sub-Committee Chair*

Mr. John Li is currently seeking his degree in Business Administration from the University of South Carolina. Mr. Li started with East Point Academy in 2013, and played an important role in developing the school's Extended Care Program and Summer Program. He is currently the Special Programs Coordinator at East Point Academy in West Columbia/Cayce, South Carolina. He has extensive experience in managing budgets and working with accounts receivable and accounts payable along with recruiting staffs. At East Point Academy, Mr. Li has developed a framework for Mandarin Immersion Curriculum and uses his knowledge in Mandarin Culture and Language to promote fusion between the East and the West, culturally and academically.

**Ms. Cheyenne Willis-Kozaily**, *Curriculum Sub-Committee Co-Chair, Multilingualism*

Ms. Cheyenne Willis-Kozaily has 15 years combined experience in education, including language immersion, dual language acquisition Spanish as a Foreign Language, English as a Foreign Language, parent education for multilingual families, curriculum development and the linguistic journey of the multilingual child. In 2010, she launched Bilingual Familia Consulting,

affectionately termed Lingüa by its clients, a full-service language solutions company, offering any service language-related for both families and businesses in any language requested. In 2013 the company was awarded Georgia's first Small Business Rockstar award from the state office of Economic Development and Lt. Governor Casey Cagle. Ms. Willis-Kozaily's company was also awarded the Southeast's Best Kid's Language Classes by Red Tricycle parenting website. The company has always been self-sustaining, with no debt. Ms. Willis-Kozaily serves as the board's language immersion and marketing expert. She continues to pursue her PhD in cognitive linguistics and raise two trilingual children.

**Ms. Dana M. Hutto**, *Curriculum Sub-Committee Co-Chair, Teacher Recruitment*

Dana Hutto earned her Master's Degree in Educational Administration from the University of South Carolina. She is currently the Assistant Principal for Curriculum and Instruction of East Point Academy in West Columbia/Cayce, SC where she has been since 2014. Ms. Hutto has twenty years of experience in education, having taught elementary and middle school as well as university level courses for in-service teachers. She has also worked at both the South Carolina Department of Education and Lexington School District One as a science, health, and physical education coordinator. She has extensive experience in working with teachers on integrating standards, classroom instruction and assessment.

**Ms. Ramona Schaetzle**, *Recruitment Sub-Committee Chair*

Ms. Ramona Schaetzle has a Bachelor's degree in nursing from Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Alabama. She is the sole proprietor of RCSchaetzle Consulting, LLC located in Greer, SC. Her primary responsibilities are monitoring clinical trials to ensure that GCP (Good Clinical Practice) is followed. She is a member of ACRP (Association of Clinical Research Professionals) and is a certified CRA (Clinical Research Associate) working with multiple

sponsors within the pharmaceutical industry. She has worked in clinical research with varying roles since 2001. Prior to that, she was a research coordinator for clinical trials. She also has many years of nursing experience.

**Ms. Christina Sun**

Ms. Sun has been teaching Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language for seven years. After graduating from Syracuse University with an M.A. in linguistics, she started working at East Point Academy teaching Mandarin through language immersion. Ms. Sun has also been actively involved in various language immersion education programs in Columbia, SC. As a strong believer of teaching language through immersion setting, Ms. Sun advocates appreciation of linguistic and cultural diversity through language learning.

Additional, supporting members of the East Link Academy Charter Committee include:

**Ms. Gabriela Alexander**

Ms. Gabriela Alexander attended the Cambridge Institute in Buenos Aires, Argentina where she earned an A.A in English as a Second Language and Translation-Interpretation. She then earned a BA in Language and International Trade from Clemson University, with a minor in French and Spanish. Ms. Alexander first taught French and Spanish courses at Tri-County Technical College. She now teaches Spanish and French through the Home School Resource Center, and provides English as a Second Language services to foreigners employed in the USA and their family members.

**Ms. Amie Booth**

Ms. Amie Booth is the lead teacher at the South Carolina Science Academy, a middle/high charter school in Columbia, SC. She coordinates teacher professional development, supervises teacher lesson plans and ADEPT evaluations, serves as the testing administrator, and teaches

STEM classes for students. She has extensive experience in developing school-wide curricula from science and German at Timmerman School, to Gifted and Talented at East Point Academy. Ms. Booth has received grants from the National Science Foundation and presented papers in the Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience.

**Mr. Brandon Dillard**

Mr. Brandon Dillard earned his Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from North Carolina State University. Mr. Dillard is the Director of the Greenville Office for WAVE Engineering, a M.E.P. (mechanical-electrical-plumbing) consulting firm based in Charlotte, NC. He is a licensed a Professional Engineer in South Carolina. Mr. Dillard's specialization is in HVAC and refrigeration. Mr. Dillard is the chair of the Young Engineers committee for the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) Greenville Chapter.

**Dr. Xiaobo Hu**

Dr. Xiaobo Hu is Professor and Director of Clemson University Center for China Studies. He started his teaching career as a Ph.D. student at Duke University, and then taught in three different schools before he joined Clemson faculty in 1999. His research and teaching expertise includes economic reform policies, Chinese global investment, political economy of the New Silk Road development, privatization and property rights, international political economy, the U.S.-China business relations, and China's rise and its global impact. Dr. Hu has been in various leadership positions that include President of Association of Chinese Political Studies. He has also served a Board Member for Greenville Chinese Culture Association, Greenville Sister Cities International, and Presbyterian College Confucius Institute.

**Dr. Chun Mei**

Dr. Chun Mei holds a Ph.D. in Chinese and Comparative Literature from Washington University in St. Louis (2005). Currently an independent scholar based in Greenville, SC, she served an assistant professor of Chinese at Central Washington University from September 2006 to June 2010. Dr. Mei's monograph, *The Novel and Theatrical Imagination in Early Modern China* (Brill, 2011), has been praised in book reviews as "pathbreaking" and "finely wrought." Her articles have appeared or are forthcoming in *Chinese Literature (CLEAR)*, *Asia Major*, and *Renditions*. Her co-translation of *Inheritance within Rupture: Culture and Scholarship in Early Twentieth-Century China* was published in the Brill Humanities in China series in 2015.

**Mr. Antonio Rodriguez**

Mr. Antonio Rodriguez is a Senior Systems Engineer at General Electric in Greenville, SC. He has a Master's degree in Materials Science and Engineering from the University of Florida and a Master's in Management Science/Technical Management from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach Florida. Mr. Rodriguez's Bachelor's degree is in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Central Florida in Orlando. As with his education, Mr. Rodriguez has spent his entire career in the field of engineering. He is fluent in English and Spanish.

**Ms. Freda Sue**

Ms. Freda Sue earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in printmaking from the Savannah College of Art and Design Atlanta. Ms. Sue taught a university art course as an assistant professor for three years, and is currently the co-founder of Ivory Bull Press, a new printmaking studio located in Greenville. Ms. Sue has recent and concurrently showing works in the U.S. and Asia including; solo exhibition in Greenville; group exhibition in New York, NY; Anderson, SC;

Knoxville, TN; and Taiwan. Ms. Sue is a member of Contemporary Print Collective located in Greenville, Southern Graphic Council International and Taiwan Society of Printmaking."

**Ms. Amy Wang**

Ms. Amy Wang received a Bachelor's degree in Chinese Language from Northeast Normal University of China. Ms. Wang spent time in Japan as a private Chinese Language tutor before coming to America to teach Mandarin at the Modern Chinese School in Columbus, Ohio. In 2006 Amy moved to Greenville, SC and in 2009 became a Mandarin Instructor of Language Lab at Michelin North America. Currently she is the Assistant Principal of the Chinese Sunday School, while also teaching Mandarin at Christ Church Episcopal School. Ms. Wang serves as the General Manager of the Greenville Chinese Culture Association.

**Mr. Rob Weathers**

Mr. Rob Weathers earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in mechanical engineering at Georgia Tech. While in graduate school, he worked as an aerospace technologist for NASA at the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. Upon completing his formal education, he worked for Westinghouse at the Savannah River Site in Aiken and Barnwell Counties for ten years. He then moved to Greenville County, where he has worked for General Electric for the past fifteen years. Early in his career, Mr. Weathers taught engineering at the University of South Carolina at Aiken (evening classes). More recently, he worked as a grade-school math teacher for the Greenville Chinese Culture Association's Chinese School (Sunday afternoon classes). Mr. Weathers has served as a victim's assistance councilor for the Aiken County Sheriff's Office. He has also done three separate stints as an adult leader with the Boy Scouts of America.

**Dr. Dongming Zhang**

Dr. Dongming Zhang received his Ph.D. in East Asian Literature at Cornell University is now the Coordinator of Chinese Studies and China Programs at Furman University. He is an Associate Professor of Chinese and Asian Studies in the university's Department of Asian Studies, where he teaches courses on Chinese literature, culture, and language. His recent study focuses on the production of modern popular culture in China, beginning from the mid-19th century and extending through to the present. Dr. Zhang served previously as the Program Director for the State Department's Critical Language Scholarships Institute and Startalk-Furman Chinese Language Program.

**Ms. Traci Bryant-Riches, *Project Manager, Charter School Consultant***

Ms. Traci Bryant-Riches served as the Director of Charter Initiatives at the SCPCSD as well as the Director of Federal Programs. Before taking a position at the SCPCSD, she worked for the SC Department of Education as an Education Associate for the Office of Special Education. After leaving the SCPCSD, she established her own Charter School Consulting business. In addition to her own business, she works for Pinnacle Charter Academies opening dual credit high school around the state. While Ms. Bryant-Riches is participating on the Charter Committee, she is not a voting member of the Charter Committee.

**Dr. Xian Wu, *Chinese Language and Cultural Consultant***

Dr. Xian Wu earned his Ph.D. in Mathematics from Harvard University, Cambridge, and is currently a Math Professor and an advisor of the Confucius Institute at University of South Carolina. In 1998, Dr. Wu, together with a group of volunteers, founded Columbia Academy of Chinese Language (CACL), a nonprofit weekend school that teaches children Chinese. He then

served as its first Principal. Dr. Wu was also the founding chairman of the charter committee of East Point Academy (EPA), and served on EPA's board until June 2015.

### *Model and Philosophy of Governance*

The Board will set the mission and goals, monitor outcomes, and ensure accountability of East Link Academy. The Board will establish policies when needed, meet the requirements prescribed by laws and rules of the State Board of Education, and monitor performance of the school. The Board will not engage in operations, but will rely upon the Head of School to lead the staff in such a manner as to fulfill all the requirements set forth in this charter. Additionally, at least one-third of the Board must be fluent in Mandarin and offer expertise in Chinese culture or heritage (whether elected or appointed), to ensure the alignment of the program, in preparing students to be cultural links as set forth in the mission of the school.

The Board will follow the advice of Brian Carpentier, a national figure in charter school governance, who says "The Board should focus on the outcomes where operations is focused on the process." He further states the question the Board should ask is "How did it work?" The staff, as the operations of the school, should ask, "How do we do it?" It is important for the roles and responsibilities of the Board and of the administration to be clearly defined and separated, as this will build the effective, productive, and trusting relationship between the Board and the Head of School that is necessary for the success of the school.

To carry out the operations of the school the Board will hire the Head of School (HOS), who will be responsible for all aspects of school operations within the scope of operating policy and budgetary approval by the Board. The HOS is responsible for keeping the Board informed regarding matters related to the daily operation of the school. The school's educational program

faculty and staff will report directly to the HOS. The operational structure is presented in Appendix L – *Organizational Chart*.

*Responsibilities of the Charter Committee*

East Link Academy is registered as a South Carolina not-for-profit corporation. The corporation will seek Section 501(c) (3) status as a tax exempt organization for the sole purpose of organizing and operating a South Carolina charter school. The following documents will be maintained and be available for review on the school website: Governing By-laws in accordance with the South Carolina Charter Schools Act, S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-10 et seq.; Articles of Incorporation; IRS Notification of EIN# and Determination of Exempt Status. The governing body of ELA will be a public corporate entity and will comply with the Freedom of Information Act.

The role of the Charter Committee is to launch a high-quality charter school and to govern the school through the application process. Upon approval, a Founding Board will be formed from the Charter Committee, which will govern the school until the election of the first Board of Directors is held. The Founding Board’s responsibilities will be, but are not limited to:

- Ensure compliance with all the requirements for a charter school as provided by the Charter Schools Act
- Comply with all applicable federal and state laws
- Employ and contract with teachers and non-teaching employees
- Ensure that all personnel undergo background checks and fingerprinting prior to hiring
- Contract for all other services for the school
- Develop pay scales, performance criteria, and discharge policies
- Adopt and approve the initial budget of the school
- Approve operating procedures for the school
- Ensure that the curriculum fulfills the mission statement of the school
- Ensure that the school will adhere to the same financial audits, audit procedures, and audit requirements as are applied to traditional public schools
- Ensure that the school will adhere to the same health, safety, civil rights, and disability rights as required by the school district that issued the School's charter

The East Link Academy Charter Committee has four sub-committees which focus on specific aspects of planning and starting a charter school:

**Curriculum:** Co-Chaired by Ms. Dana Hutto and Ms. Cheyenne Willis-Kozaily, this committee is charged with researching and establishing the educational program and recruiting teachers both English and Mandarin speaking.

**Recruitment:** Chaired by Ms. Ramona Schaetzle, this committee is charged with recruiting interested families by attending various events and promoting the charter school.

**Outreach:** Chaired by Mr. John Li, this committee is charged with promoting the school to community stakeholders.

**Facilities:** Chaired by Ms. Jennifer Kirchner, this committee is charged with researching available sites for school locations, discussing funding options with developers, and overseeing the process of construction and be the liaison between the Charter Committee and the architect/developer.

The plan for the Founding Board, with the assistance of the Charter School Consultant, to recruit and hire the Head of School, and transition leadership is provided later in the *Leadership and Operations* section. The plan for dissolving the Founding Board and instituting the first elected Board of Directors is given in Appendix J - *Bylaws*. The Board will be responsible for the ongoing organization and control of the school and is empowered, within the boundaries of federal and state law, to determine the policies necessary for the effective operation and general improvement of the school. A detailed list of the responsibilities of the Board, along with the following are also specified in the Bylaws provided in Appendix J:

- The election process of the Board, including when elections will occur and the procedures for how Board members are elected or appointed
- A description of how officers of the board will be selected

- An explanation of powers and duties, size, terms, composition, qualifications, term limits, officer positions and duties, vacancy replacement, minimum number on the Board, quorum, and decision-making process.
- An explanation of the Board meeting frequency and focus, and the role of any standing sub-committees.
- A description of the relationship between the Board and the Head of School, including the amount of authority the Board will convey to the HOS.

The Bylaws were adopted by the Charter Committee when the group selected the core committee members to become the Founding Board.

### *Board Training and Capacity Building*

The Board will attend professional development workshops at least once a year. All Board members will be trained in accordance to Charter School law, by the Public Charter School Alliance of South Carolina through their online system. As members of the Board change, additional training and professional development will be provided to the new members. Each year the Board will attend a strategic planning meeting to ensure the stability and the future of East Link Academy. Trainings and workshops are in addition to regularly scheduled Board meetings. Once the first board is duly elected the first training will be conducted in-person within three months as stated in the bylaws. Each year as part of the training for the Board, money will be set aside for members to attend the State Charter School conference, where numerous board development sessions are held. Most specifically the board will be trained by the financial service providers on the subject of state and federal funding for charter schools in South Carolina. The two most important things a board must do is hire a high-quality leader for the school and ensure it is fiscally sound. To ensure a fiscally sound school the board must be well trained in reading and understanding school budgets from revenue streams to the smallest expenditures. The charter

school consultant will also assist the board with any issues that may arise. The budget includes board training money that may be used for conferences or contracting with a board trainer as the board sees fit.

### *Parent and Community Involvement*

In opening and governing a Chinese immersion school, the board must ensure the authenticity of not only the language component of the program, but of the cultural component as well, which requires active engagement from the Chinese community. Additionally, while the student assessments will be used to monitor the overall progress of the school towards meeting its goals and objectives, it is the parents who can measure the progress of their children outside of the school, and their engagement and enthusiasm with the program. Thus, East Link Academy will encourage parents and community members to attend as many Board meetings as possible to have this valued engagement. Board meetings will be held in the evening to facilitate parents and community members being able to attend. In addition to community members, parents will also be invited to submit their names and credentials if interested in serving as Board members, which provides for direct input into school governance. ELA has designated a maximum of three seats on the Board as parent seats to allow for this direct involvement, while maintaining a diversity of members.

Outside of Board meetings, the Board will provide an open atmosphere for parents and the community to provide feedback on the school and its leadership. East Link Academy will have a suggestion box available for parents' convenience to give ideas or complaints to the Board concerning the school. All entries in the suggestion box will be reviewed by the HOS and the board.

### *Liability and Indemnification*

The East Link Academy Board of Directors assumes liability for the activities of the charter school and agrees to hold harmless the SCPCSD, its servants, agents, and employees from any and all liability, damage, expense, causes of action, suits, claims, or judgements arising from injury to persons or property or otherwise that arises out of the act, failure to act, or negligence of the charter school, its agents and employees, in connection with or arising out of the activity of the charter school

Appendix Items: Appendix I – *Charter Committee*, Appendix J – *Bylaws*, Appendix K – *Articles of Incorporation*, and Appendix L – *Organizational Chart*.

## **2. Education/Charter Management Contracts**

East Link Academy will not contract with any Educational Management Organization (EMO) or Charter Management Organization (CMO).

Appendix Items: Appendix M through P are not applicable.

## **3. Leadership and Operations**

The Board of Directors is a governing body, not an operational one. All operational functions of the school will be carried out through the Head of School (HOS), or through any service providers contracted with by the Board. The HOS is ultimately responsible for all school-based decisions as authorized, establishing and implementing procedures for the day-to-day operations of the school. The HOS will ensure that the operations of the school are in accordance with the mission of East Link Academy and established procedures, policies, to attain charter goals.

All employees will report to the HOS, who will in turn report directly to the Board. The HOS is responsible for keeping the Board informed regarding matters related to the daily operation of the school. At the HOS's request, staff may make reports, and give school updates to the Board, but all communication with the Board must be approved through the HOS.

#### *Hiring Process of Head of School and Transition of Responsibilities*

The Board will hire the Head of School who will be responsible for all aspects of school operations within the scope of operating policy and budgetary approval by the Board.

The Board will establish a hiring committee to advertise and review resumes and curriculum vitae for the HOS. The HOS will have either a certificate of administration, or at least one year of experience in elementary administration. Candidates who have demonstrated knowledge of language immersion programs will have priority in hiring. The steps in the recruitment and hiring process of the HOS will generally follow the steps below, but may be modified as needed:

- 1) A nationwide search for the Head of School will be conducted, including referrals from board members, online job sites, CERRA, and other pertinent resources (such as professional organizations and job fairs). The job announcement will also be sent to current Chinese immersion schools in the nation.
- 2) The Hiring Committee (a subset of the Charter Committee) will review resumes along with the Project Manager.
- 3) Screening interviews will be conducted by phone as the first step of the interviewing process.
- 4) Face-to-face interviews of candidates will be held with the Hiring Committee.
- 5) Background and extensive reference checks will be conducted.
- 6) With a successful background check, the Board will interview final candidates.
- 7) The Board will extend an offer of employment.

Once the Head of School (HOS) has been hired, the HOS will assume the responsibilities to hire the school staff and faculty, and lead the operations of the school. If the HOS is under contract with another school at the time hiring, then the Project Manager will continue to managing the operational start up until such time that the HOS can assume the duties. Ideally the newly hired HOS will work in conjunction with the Project Manager on all matters of the school, including hiring of staff and faculty, as described later in this section.

### *Leadership Team*

East Link Academy will have a leadership team consisting minimally of the Head of School (HOS), Operations Director, Academic Director, and Immersion Coordinator. This team will collaborate on the curricular, operational, and financial aspects of the school, and will facilitate the delivery of instructional and support services to students in an effective and efficient manner. Because the team will work closely together, in the event of the loss of one member of the team, the school will not operate at a deficit of knowledge. The remaining leadership team can operate the school effectively until the position is filled. Key ELA administrative staff will be as follows:

**Head of School (HOS):** The chief executive of the school, reports directly to the Board. The HOS has direct supervision of the organizational management, faculty and staff employment, and fiscal operations of the school with five primary focus areas: school leadership, mission-centered programming, student instruction, culture, and accountability.

**Operations Director:** Is responsible for planning, coordinating and supervising the day-to-day business operations of the school and serves as administrative aid to the HOS, relieving him/her of administrative details; assists the HOS in the operational function of the school by providing the leadership and management skills necessary to maximize the efforts of faculty and staff in an environment conducive to educational enhancement, growth, and achievement.

**Academic Director (beginning in year 5):** Performs a variety of administrative tasks in coordinating the successful implementation of the academic program while providing support to school administrators, faculty, and staff. The primary responsibility is to develop and coordinate the implementation of the K-8 instructional program including professional and curriculum development.

**Immersion Coordinator (beginning in year 1):** Performs a variety of administrative tasks in coordinating the successful implementation of Mandarin language immersion program while providing support to school administrators, faculty, and staff. The primary responsibility is to develop and coordinates the implementation of the K-8 Mandarin Immersion Program, including incorporating Mandarin into content areas and visual and performing arts.

The Head of School will work directly with the Academic Director and Immersion Coordinator, who will work with teachers, and certified staff to ensure that they receive proper direction and support to deliver an effective instructional program; and the Operations Director, who will oversee the daily operations of the school including any assigned staff to ensure the daily functions of the school support the mission. The faculty and staff will be responsible for carrying out these procedures in their daily activities and interactions with students, parents, and the community.

#### *Capacity Building Plan for Leadership and Staff Development*

To ensure the leadership team maintains the capacity to fulfill the mission of East Link Academy, each team member will attend relevant staff development to keep abreast of job expectations. ELA will also join the SC Charter School Alliance whose mission is “to strengthen public education for South Carolina students by supporting and advocating for high quality public charter schools.” The Head of School will also attend SC Charter School Alliance Charter CEO

Leader's Training. The budget reflects a substantial amount of funds allocated to professional development that will be in addition to any Title II funds the school will receive for teacher development. The school calendar also reflects the designation of one day a month for teacher development over and above the two weeks required prior to school starting. The HOS will determine the topics for each PD day depending on the evaluation of teachers that will be a constant activity throughout the school year. The Charter School consultant will assist the HOS in learning all things unique to charter schools as well as any district, state or federal requirements the HOS is unfamiliar with at the time.

#### *School Leader Evaluation and Succession Plan*

The Board will evaluate the HOS annually based on student success, adherence to the charter, accomplishment of goals, financial stability, and overall operational success of the school. The Board will create a detailed evaluation rubric with legal counsel. While the charter school is not required to use PADEPP it will use it as a guide when creating its own rubric.

#### *Management Company or Educational Services Provider*

East Link Academy will not use an Educational Management or a Charter Management Organization for operations.

#### *Parent and Community Involvement*

To strengthen the link between East Link Academy and the parent community, ELA will create a staff and parent advisory council to serve as an advising body to assist the school in deliberation of policies and to create an environment that helps meet the goals of the charter. Participants in the councils will include a parent and teacher from each grade band (K-2, 3-6 and 7-8) with at least one teacher being a native Mandarin speaker. The council is an important group that shares information and communicates with the school, parents, and community. The council

will be chosen during the first semester but will begin officially in the second semester of the school's first year. As with all volunteers that come to the school to work with children, council members must present a clean SLED check or, if new to South Carolina, an FBI check in addition to a sex offender check.

The primary objective of the council is to give the HOS feedback on the programs, climate and culture of the school and provide suggestions for improvement. The council's responsibilities are as follows:

- Provide a venue for feedback among all partners and give a voice to the community
- Agree upon community-related goals for the school program
- Make constructive recommendations for school improvement
- Establish relationships with members of the broader community and recognize their value
- Provide information to the community about the purpose and mission of ELA

Parents will have numerous other opportunities for involvement in their children's education. Parents will be required to attend an orientation session with the student(s), at which time the opportunities, expectations, and requirements of the school will be explained, setting the stage for expected student progress, achievement, and behavior. Other forms of communication will supplement this such as mailings, school web pages, teacher web pages, phone calls, emails, newsletters, and the PowerSchool Parent Portal.

Parents will be encouraged to attend and participate in school functions and events throughout the year, including school sponsored workshops, Parent-Teacher Organization events, parent nights, report card conferences, and student award ceremonies such as the Bridging Ceremony which celebrates the students' crossing-over into use of the Mandarin language for school conversation. Additionally, the Chinese community will be encouraged to participate in school events, and volunteer its knowledge and experience to the faculty and staff in order for students to truly become the language and cultural links that the mission seeks to achieve.

*Roles of Consultants*

While a charter school is a public school, it is not a traditional school and there are many differences that affect the academic and operational aspects of the school. Faculty and staff who may be very experienced leaders in traditional schools may lack the nuances of running a successful charter school where autonomy is high and accountability higher. Also, funds are always tight in the beginning years of a charter school. Personnel is often needed but cash flow is limited leaving the school with a gap in knowledge to reach its intended goals.

East Link Academy will contract with a Charter School Consultant (CSC) in the planning year and the first three years of the school, as-needed. A new charter school is most vulnerable in the first three years of operation. Responsibilities traditionally held at the district office are now under the purview of the school leadership. All new school leaders, including the board, have a learning curve that requires the need for a consultant with knowledge of the myriad of federal and state requirements as they relate to education in general and charter schools specifically. Additionally, Chinese Language and Cultural Consultant (CLC) will also be contracted as-needed to assist the Immersion Coordinator with language and culture initiatives to continuously improve the academic program.

The **Charter School Consultant (CSC)**, Ms. Traci Bryant-Riches, will provide the Head of School, the Operations Director, and the Board with expertise in daily and annual regulations and reporting. CSC's duties include, but are not limited to (see Appendix R - *Start Up Plan* for full list of duties):

- Serving on the facility sub-committee
- Assisting the Board to hire a HOS and staff
- Recruitment of new students and Charter Committee members
- Fulfilling all requirements by the sponsor
- Ensuring the school is following all federal and state laws

Until a Head of School has been hired and is officially no longer employed with any other school or school district, the CSC will serve as the primary contact to the sponsor and/or any agency to which East Link Academy is conducting business. The Charter Committee will make all decisions, but the CSC will carry them out. Once the HOS is employed by ELA, the CSC will move to the consulting role to assist the Board and HOS with all academic and operations processes of the school.

The **Chinese Language and Culture Consultant (CLC)**, Dr. Xian Wu, will provide an additional connection to the Chinese community as well as expertise in immersion program design.

CLC's duties and services include but are not limited to:

- Helping with Chinese language and culture program initiatives
- Helping to recruit, train, and retain highly qualified staff, especially native Mandarin speaker teachers (and assist with visa applications, if needed)
- Helping to apply for Confucius Institute (CI) classroom and acquire CI teachers
- Helping develop a school cultural of high academic expectation and global cultural sharing

Appendix Items: Appendix Q – *Sample Job Descriptions*, and Appendix R – *School Start-up Plan*.

#### **4. Employees and Employment Procedures**

All employees of East Link Academy will be public school employees who report to the Head of School. Upon hiring, all employees will receive their job descriptions, responsibilities, and the organizational chart of the school so that all reporting lines are clearly defined. All employees will receive training in the charter and its goals to ensure complete understanding of the school model and the desired outcomes.

##### *Advertising and Selection Process*

Initially, the Head of School, along with a hiring committee of non-board members, but including the Project Manager, will lead the advertising and selection process for hiring

instructional staff and other employees. Board members may not be on the staff hiring committee, so as not to create a conflict of interest between the HOS and any member of the Board over the hiring of candidates. At least one member of the hiring committee must be a native Mandarin speaker to help gauge the correctness of the candidates' Mandarin language proficiency. As with the HOS, candidates who have demonstrated experience and understanding of language immersion programs will have priority in hiring, but not guaranteed employment.

For the Immersion program to reach its fullest potential, East Link Academy must have qualified teachers who are native speakers of the Mandarin to achieve its mission. Greenville has a solid Chinese community, and this should provide a pool of qualified Mandarin teacher candidates. In addition, there are teacher programs at other universities throughout the United States that have Master's programs for Chinese educators to earn teaching certificates. The US-China Strong foundation partner organizations, New York University Steinhardt (<http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/about/>) and University of Maryland's Office of China Affairs (<https://globalmaryland.umd.edu/offices/china>), also provide services for recruiting and certifying Chinese educators. Job announcements will be sent to these and other universities with Chinese Immersion programs, and to all current immersion schools. ELA will solicit resumes from interested teachers through advertisements on CERRA, university recruitment fairs, and teacher professional organizations.

Additionally, East Link Academy is partnering with the Confucius Institute (CI) of Presbyterian College to bring teachers from China to teach at ELA. The CI and the Beijing Language and Culture University (BLCU) in Beijing, China have a partnership to prepare and place Chinese teachers in schools around the world who teach Mandarin to nonnative speakers. This partnership will supply volunteer teachers on an annual or bi-annual basis who will serve as

classroom teachers or assistants and provide the language and cultural experiences to the students. Not all Mandarin teachers will be part of the CI partnership, but each year a few teachers will.

#### *Administrative and Teaching Staff*

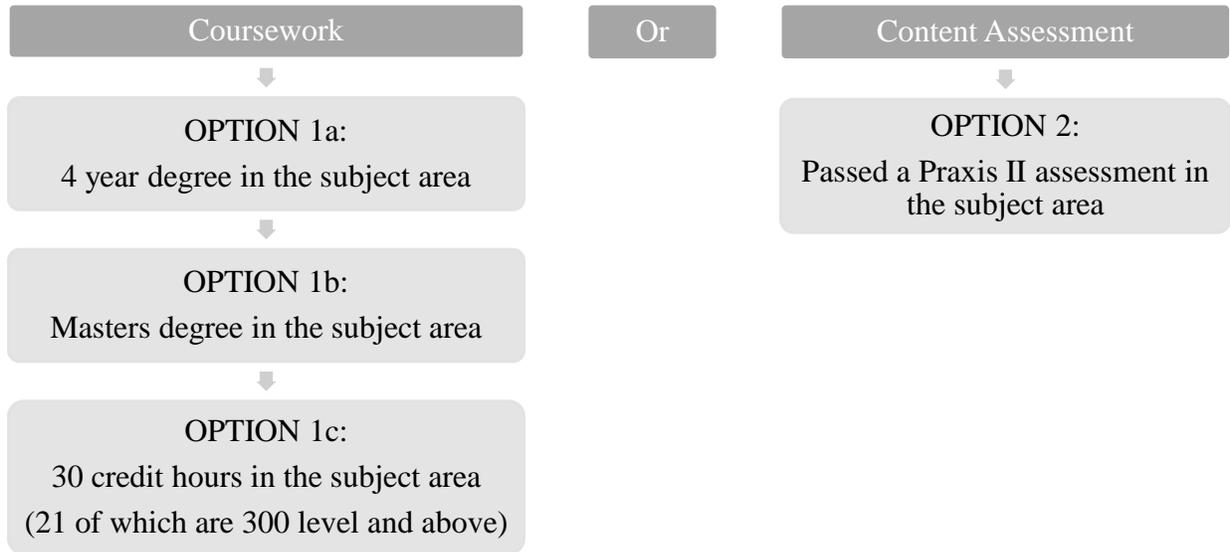
East Link Academy will hire experienced administrators in the area of elementary and middle education, with special emphasis in the area of immersion. At least one member of the administrative staff will hold a current SC certification of administration, or will have at least one year of experience in the field of school-based administration.

East Link Academy will hire certified teachers, with no more than 25% of the teaching staff being uncertified. Teachers with elementary certifications may teach in any academic area allowed by their area of their certification. Any non-certified teachers must be appropriately qualified to teach in their subject area, and determined to be “allowable” based on qualifications as outlined in the S.C. Code Ann. Section 59-25-115. All teachers must be able to prove content knowledge before employment will be offered as show in the chart below from the SCDE. Mandarin teachers who teach content other than Mandarin must be either certified or fall under the 25% rule.

#### *Demonstrating Content Knowledge*

Uncertified charter school teachers, who fall under the 25% rule, must hold a 4-year degree in their content area and have evidence of content knowledge. Uncertified teachers may demonstrate content knowledge by meeting one of the options listed below.

**Demonstration of Content Knowledge**



Special education, early childhood and elementary teachers need 30 semester hours in each of the four core subject areas taught in self-contained classrooms (e.g. math, science, social studies, and language arts). However, there are teachers who might have the hours in only one of the four areas, such as language arts. That teacher could be qualified to only instruct language arts classes for the appropriate students. At times, this is relevant to special education teachers or specialists who only instruct one subject area in lower grades. Additionally, for special education, early childhood and elementary teachers, the only current option for those areas of certification is the PRAXIS II. Certified special education teachers who wish to teach elementary students must take the elementary PRAXIS II. Note: The teacher in a charter school who falls under the 25% rule for uncertified teachers, and is allowed to teach a core class, will not be eligible to teach the same class in a traditional public school.

*Teacher Evaluation Process*

East Link Academy will use the South Carolina Department of Education’s system to evaluate teachers excluding the HOS, as the evaluation of the HOS is a function of the Board to

determine continued employment. The Assisting, Developing, and Evaluation Professional Teaching (ADEPT) system complies with statute S.C. Code Ann. § 59-26-30 and 59-26-40 and the State Board of Education's ADEPT guidelines. All certified teachers will be placed under an induction, annual or goals-based evaluation system as appropriate and will be assisted and evaluated in a manner consistent with the SBE-approved ADEPT plan. The HOS and other administrators of ELA will ensure the fidelity of the evaluation system and be responsible for performing the required ADEPT evaluations. If the district does not offer training, a contracted trainer will perform the following duties in relation to ADEPT: SAFE-T training; teacher mentor training; tracking of teacher evaluation status; filing and maintaining teacher evaluation results; entering of teacher data into the State PCS Data System; and teacher mentor payments.

#### *Communication of Employment Policies*

After approval of the charter, the East Link Academy Charter Committee will secure the services of an educational attorney to create the employee handbook which will define all employee policies. This handbook will be completed by June 30th prior to official hiring of any employee. All employees of ELA will be considered at-will employees. The Board will approve the terms and conditions of employment for all employees. The terms and conditions in the employment agreement will include but not be limited to: salary and payment schedule; length of work day; length of work year; vacation/holiday/leave policy; benefits; and notification policy for absence.

Employees will be informed of terms and conditions upon offer of employment. At that time, they will receive an employee handbook with all currently established personnel policies and procedures, including the Grievance and Termination procedures at orientation. As with all

schools, policies will be developed as needed. Any changes in policy by the Board will be emailed to all employees and discussed at the next staff meeting following the change in policy.

East Link Academy will be an Equal Opportunity Employer and will not discriminate for employment based on race, gender, national origin, ethnicity, age, pregnancy, sexual orientation, or disability. It is the responsibility of the Head of School to create a working environment that is free of discrimination, nurtures learning and is a safe space for all employees and students. The creation of a positive school climate for students and staff is an important element of the HOS's job and will be an integral part of the HOS's evaluation from the Board. Any employee who sexually harasses or creates a hostile environment based on race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or disability will be terminated. The employee will have a right to a hearing with the Board.

#### *Grievance and Termination Procedures*

At any time, an employee may choose to leave his/her employment services with the school. In turn, East Link Academy can dismiss an employee for any reason not related to membership in a protected class. Article 5, Chapter 25, Title 59 will not apply to employees of ELA. Employees will have the right to file a grievance with the Board. Though at-will employees may resign or be terminated at any time and for any or no reason, SC law requires a "description of a reasonable grievance and termination procedure, as required by this chapter, including notice and a hearing before the governing body of the charter school." Because charter school employees are at-will and day-to-day school operations are the responsibility of school administration, hearings before the Board related to employee grievances and terminations will typically address only whether the employee is in fact an at-will employee; whether the school administration's

conduct is consistent with the school's policies and procedures; and/or whether the administration's conduct complies with federal and state laws.

Employees, whether teaching or nonteaching staff, with disputes or concerns should follow this procedure:

**Step 1) Immediate Supervisor Meeting:** Step 1 is a meeting between the immediate supervisor of the employee and the employee to try to resolve the issue before moving to the HOS, unless the HOS is the immediate supervisor. If no resolution is found, then the employee may move on to Step 2.

**Step 2) Submit Issue in Writing:** Step 2 requires the employee to submit his/her issue in writing to the HOS describing the issue in detail, desired result, and the proposed solution. The written issue must be submitted within ten (10) business days of the occurrence.

**Step 3) Head of School Meeting:** Step 3 requires the HOS to meet with the employee and any supervisor to discuss the policies and procedures relating to the issue. If this review does not dictate a resolution and a resolution cannot be established, then the employee has the right to address the East Link Academy Board. The decision of the HOS is final unless the issue concerns a claim of discrimination or termination is involved. If either of the latter two are at issue, then the employee may address the Board.

**Step 4) Submit Issue in Writing to the Board of Directors:** At-will employees, may be terminated for cause or no cause so long as it is not based on membership of a protected group. If an employee has followed Steps 1-3, then the employee may move to Step 4 and bring the issue to the Board by submitting a written request for a hearing within 30 calendar days of the action under dispute.

**Step 5) Hearing with the Board of Directors:** The final step of the Grievance Procedure is a hearing with the Board as required by SC Charter School Law. The Board will review the issue and schedule a hearing with the employee, supervisor (if any), and Head of School. After the hearing the Board will make a final decision and report the resolution to the employee within five business days.

Appendix Items: No documents, Appendix S in not applicable.

## **5. Enrollment**

East Link Academy will recruit students from across Greenville and surrounding counties, searching for families, of any ethnicity or background, who want a bilingual education for their children to increase the career and economic opportunities in today's global economy. Racial and cultural diversity is essential in a language immersion classroom, and ELA will be diligent in its outreach effort to ensure that the student body has a richly diverse staff and student body. As of the date of this application, the Greenville County School District's racial make-up is 22% African American, 14% Hispanic, 56% Caucasian and 8% Other. To meet the requirement of being within 20% of Greenville's demographics, every effort will be made so that the ELA student body reflects the diverse cultural and socio-economic make-up of the school district.

Upon approval, Greenville and surrounding county families will receive information about East Link Academy, and the upcoming enrollment procedures and deadlines through a combination of parent forums, newspaper articles, emails, and posts around town, radio announcements, Greenville-area websites, the school website, and social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter.

All students, 4K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade residing within South Carolina will be eligible to attend East Link Academy. Students will be admitted without regard to disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services.

*Initial Enrollment, Reenrollment, and Open Enrollment*

East Link Academy will begin to accept initial enrollment applications as soon as the charter application is approved and will continue until January 31, 2018. Applications for enrollment may be mailed to the project manager or may also be submitted via the ELA website at [www.eastlinkacademy.org](http://www.eastlinkacademy.org).

In subsequent years, East Link Academy will accept reenrollment forms in November and December prior to the published dates of winter break for the following school year. This will allow students currently enrolled an opportunity to secure their position in the school for the following year. These forms may be mailed to the ELA facility, submitted to the main office, or completed online. Current students who do not submit their reenrollment forms by the published deadline will be subject to the open enrollment procedures listed below.

Open enrollment will be conducted from the first business day of January to last business day of February for new student applications for the following school year. All applications, regardless of method of submission, will be collected, printed, and dated to confirm submission is prior to the published deadline. The deadline for submission will be published on the school website, as well as on the printed version of the enrollment application. Parents will be notified that the application has been received. Any applications received after the published deadline will be considered on a first-come/first-served, space-available basis. The lottery, if needed, will be held on the first business day of March each year.

### *Priority Enrollment*

Priority preferences in the lottery are as follows:

- 1) child(ren) of the ELA Charter Committee members and employees, not to exceed 20% of the total enrollment for that year (Charter Committee members' children have priority for enrollment throughout the duration of the ten-year charter);
- 2) children of employees
- 3) sibling applicant(s) of a currently enrolled and attending student;

To be considered a "sibling applicant," an applicant must share at least one common parent, either by birth or legal adoption with a sibling either currently enrolled or who has completed at least one year at East Link Academy within the last six years. As with all other applicants, all sibling applicants are required to complete any additional steps in the enrollment process, such as enrollment paperwork and participation in an Enrollment Orientation Meeting.

### *Lottery Process*

All applicants to East Link Academy must submit a lottery application prior to the published deadlines. If the number of applicants received exceeds the capacity of the program, class, grade level, or building, a lottery drawing will be used to determine enrollment. Any applications received after the published deadline will be placed at the end of the wait list in the order in which they were received. The drawing will be duly publicized and conducted in a public meeting. The lottery drawing will proceed as follows:

- 1) For each applicant, a lottery card will be created with applicant's information as follows:
  - a) the name of the student, grade level and date of birth; and
  - b) sibling(s) if applicable including grade(s) and date(s) of birth.

- 2) The information on the card will be emailed to the family no less than one week prior to the lottery to ensure all information is correct.
- 3) Students who are in grades that do not require a lottery will be placed automatically as will the siblings of those children.
- 4) The remaining individual cards of students who will be in grades that require a lottery will be placed in an envelope. The outside of the envelope will note only the grade level for which the applicant applied.
- 5) Each envelope will then be placed in a container marked with each grade level. The envelopes will be thoroughly shuffled. The containers will be stored in a securely locked location.
- 6) The lottery will begin with the highest grade that requires a lottery with four-year-old kindergarten being drawn last.
- 7) A community representative, not associated with ELA, will then draw envelopes from the container until all have been drawn.
- 8) The applicants name will be called out and placed on the board. The name will be recorded on an independent tally sheet.
- 9) In the event a student drawn has a sibling that is on the wait list in another class, the student on the wait list will be moved to the top of the waiting list. This will be repeated for each grade level until all grades and all cards have been drawn and a list has been created.
- 10) This process is repeated until all names are drawn and assigned to grade levels. As grade levels become full, remaining names will be placed on a waiting list in their lottery order number.

Following the lottery drawing, East Link Academy will send out acceptance letters to parents beginning at the top of the list for all available student slots. To be enrolled for the following school year, all applicants must satisfy three requirements:

- 1) Sign and return the acceptance letter within 10 business days. If the letter is not returned, then the first student on the wait list will be offered the placement. Upon receipt of the acceptance letter, enrollment packets will be sent to the parents.

- 2) Complete and submit all enrollment packet information within 20 business days. Any enrollment packets that are received late or are not returned to ELA will constitute that slot being offered to the next child on the list.
- 3) Attend one Enrollment Orientation Meeting during the year of application. Dates will be published annually.

### *Appeals*

The results of the lottery will be final and binding and may not be appealed to the sponsor. In the event that East Link Academy denies admission of a student for reasons other than the lottery, the student may appeal to the sponsor. The appeal must be made within 10 business days of the letter of non-acceptance in writing and state the grounds on which the appeal is based. The decision of the sponsor shall be binding and final without the right of appeal (Section 59-40-50(c)(1)).

### *Withdrawals*

A student may withdraw at any time during the school year by completing a withdrawal form. East Link Academy will make every effort to conduct an exit interview with the family to understand why the family/student wishes to leave. This information will be documented and shared with staff to address any school deficiencies that resulted in a student's departure.

Appendix Items: Appendix T – *Letter from Sponsor regarding Desegregation Plan or Order.*

## **6. Student Conduct, Rights, and Responsibilities**

The policy on student conduct and discipline is outlined in this section however after the approval of the charter application, the East Link Academy Charter Committee will create a final version of the Parent and Student Handbook which will include all discipline policies in addition to the students' code of conduct, academic expectations, emergency preparedness, teacher communication, school level expectations and citizenship, arrival and dismissal times, special

services, and general school procedures and expectations. The P-S Handbook will be completed by June 30<sup>th</sup> and placed online prior to school opening. During the months of July and August (before the first day of school), each student and parent will attend an orientation session where they will be presented with a copy of ELA's Parent and Student Handbook.

East Link Academy will communicate any infraction of the rules and expectations by students to their parents in a timely manner to maintain a cooperative effort to encourage children to become aware of the natural consequences of their actions. Each teacher will develop a classroom management plan for his or her class and inform the parents prior to the beginning of school that supports the school-wide behavior expectation plan.

### *Discipline Procedures*

**1) Expectations:** Respect for people and property; children are guided to develop age-appropriate behavior through character education.

**2) Preventive Guidelines:** Positive expectations of behaviors are set up and reinforced.

**3) Procedure for discipline of negative behavior:** The child is told the expected behavior and how to correct the behavior. If the behavior continues, the child is removed and redirected to positive work. If behavior continues, the student's file is annotated, parents are notified, and a conference is scheduled between the Teacher and parents/guardians to develop a plan. If the above has not worked and cooperation with the child and/or parents is not evident, a child may be dismissed. Dismissal cannot be an alternative if parents have not been fully informed of the intervention strategies tried.

**4) Discipline Policy for Abusive, Destructive, and Obscene Language and/or Behavior:** The use of abusive language and/or behavior will not be tolerated. The student will be advised at the first occurrence and parents will be notified. For those instances in which a student's

behavior poses a continuing disruption to the class or where the health or safety of the students is impacted, East Link Academy reserves the right to suspend a student's enrollment until a meeting between the school administration, including the guidance counselor, and the parents can be conducted to discuss a behavior contract to ensure appropriate behavior so enrollment can continue. The primary criteria for re-admittance are the parental support of the school policy, professional recommendations, and the student's own ability to modify behaviors.

#### *Suspensions of Ten or More Days*

Before a student receives a suspension of more than ten days the Head of School will convene a Behavior Committee, which is composed of the HOS or designee, Guidance Counselor and two teachers appointed by the HOS. The Committee is responsible for reviewing the incident(s) that led to the recommended suspension. The Behavior Committee may request the presence of the parent/guardian and/or student. If the Behavior Committee decides to move forward with the suspension, the HOS shall provide the student and parent/guardian with written notification of the charges of misconduct, the disciplinary action to be taken, and their right to appeal in writing to the East Link Academy Board. If an appeal is submitted, the Board will schedule a hearing in a timely manner and provide the student and parent/guardian the opportunity to present their case. The Board will then review the entire disciplinary record and notify the student and parent/guardian in writing of the final disciplinary action to be taken within 5 business days.

#### *Expulsions*

East Link Academy reserves the right to terminate enrollment for the protection of students, administrators, teachers, volunteers, and all other school personnel. In compliance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C.1232) the Student Code of Conduct will be given to

parents and students prior to the beginning of the school year. This requires a signed statement of notification and compliance.

Should the Behavior Committee recommend expulsion for a student, the student can appeal the expulsion to the East Link Academy Board. The HOS will provide the student and parent/guardian with written notification of the charges of misconduct, the disciplinary action to be taken, and their right to appeal in writing to the ELA Board. If an appeal is submitted, the Board will schedule a hearing in a timely manner and provide the student and parent/guardian the opportunity to present their case. The Board will then review the entire disciplinary record and notify the student and parent/guardian in writing of the final disciplinary action to be taken within 5 business days. Alternative educational instruction will be used during the pending expulsion and until the final decision. Students with disabilities will be addressed in accordance with their IEP and the district's policies and procedures for students with disabilities. Under IDEIA, the continued provision of FAPE will remain with the LEA and by extension of the charter the school. Any student who deliberately brings a fire-arm or look alike will be put up for expulsion with all due process in place.

#### *Grievance to Expulsions*

The grievance process will begin when the parent is notified of the event. The parent shall have the right to present the grievance in writing to the HOS within ten calendar days following notification of the event. The parent may request in writing to meet with the Board via the HOS within five business days of the HOS's response to the grievance. The HOS will present the grievance, all correspondences, and responses to the Board; a decision will be made within ten business days. Failure of the parent to attend the hearing shall end the grievance procedure.

*Discipline and Students with Disabilities*

Students with disabilities will be disciplined in accordance with their Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan, and the district's policies and procedures for students with disabilities. East Link Academy's policy on suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities will adhere to the specific procedures for disciplinary actions that involve students with disabilities as outlined in the IDEA 2004 Amendments or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Under IDEA, the continued provision of FAPE will remain with the LEA and by extension of the charter the school. The following disciplinary process will be implemented to ensure compliance:

- 1) School administration can remove a student with a disability for no more than 10 consecutive days for violation of the school code of conduct (to the same extent applied to children without disabilities).
- 2) Students with disabilities are not exempt from the rules regarding misbehavior as outlined in Student Code of Conduct. All disciplinary action involving students with disabilities will be addressed in accordance the policies and procedures set forth by the district.
- 3) School administration can also order a change of placement of a child with a disability to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting for up to 45 days for possession of weapons or drugs or the solicitation or sale of controlled substances while at school and/or school functions.
- 4) If administration believes that a child is a danger to him/herself or others, an expedited due process hearing can be requested to remove a student to an interim alternative educational setting for up to 45 days.
- 5) 45-day interim alternative educational placements can be extended in additional 45-day increments if the hearing officer agrees that the child continues to be substantially likely to injure him/herself or others if returned to the prior placement.
- 6) A student with a disability can be removed, including suspending, or expelling for behavior that is not a manifestation of the child's disability, to the same extent as children without disabilities, for the same behavior. Administration can report crimes to law enforcement if deemed necessary.

- 7) If a situation is severe enough the administration may request a temporary restraining order to protect a child or adults from harmful behaviors. (300.519-529 and 521 d.)

Appendix Items: Appendix U – *Draft Discipline Policy*.

## **7. Transportation**

Greenville County Schools is a “choice” district, offering quality schools at all levels across the school system. Approximately 15% of the school system’s 76,000 students attend school on choice, which equates to roughly 11,000 students. Greenville county requires parents to provide their own transportation to/from the school their child(ren) is attending through Change in Assignment Choice (<https://www.greenville.k12.sc.us/Schools/main.asp?titleid=choice>). Given that over ten times the number of students of East Link Academy at full capacity (936 students) are already able to provide their own transportation to their school of choice, and that charter schools in South Carolina do not receive state funding for transportation and are by law exempt from this responsibility, ELA does not intend to provide daily transportation.

However, East Link Academy does recognize the need to facilitate transportation for those students with strong interest in ELA, but who may also struggle with transportation. Therefore, ELA will assist parents in the organization of car pools. To additionally assist working families who choose ELA, the school will offer a morning program that will allow parents to drop off students early in addition to the longer school day and afterschool program. Starting at 4:00 PM and ending at 6:00 PM the school will operate a low-cost after school program that will allow parents to pick up children at a later time. The after-school program will include academic clubs (such as reading, writing, math, or STEM), homework assistance, sports clubs (such as basketball, running, tai-chi, or ping-pong), and extracurricular offerings such as music, Chinese dance, karate, or gymnastics. Such programs not only allow working parents to leave their children at a place

that can be trusted while they are at work but also offer many ELA students extra learning opportunities.

The budget does include funding for contracted field trip transportation; however, no vendor has yet been selected.

Appendix Items: No documents, Appendix V is not applicable.

### **III. BUSINESS PLAN**

#### **1. Budget and Finance**

##### *Annual Budget*

The annual budget will be prepared by the Head of School, the financial company contracted by the Board and by the Treasurer of the Board. The budget will be established and monitored so that resources are allocated to meet the operational, and educational priorities and East Link Academy's mission. Immersions programs require a higher number of staff to meet the needs of the model and the long-term sustainability of the charter. See staffing plan in Appendix Y for a full list of teachers which shows more teachers than homerooms. The financial sustainability of the charter will depend on the review of the revenue versus the expenditures per pupil required to meet the program and academic goals. ELA will work diligently to recruit and retain students to secure a steady revenue stream. In the event enrollment is lower than expected, ELA's Head of School along with the Board of Directors will revise the budget to cut expenses including a RIF as a last resort. The priorities for cuts would start in the area is supplies, 1-to-1 computing, and any extra-curricular activities being funded from the general budget. If the cuts were severe enough to include personnel peripheral services such as technology, media etc., would be reduced first before related arts and then classroom teachers.

Other monies will be collected through programming such as aftercare, grants, and/or donations to supplement the budget which are not reflected in the budget because they are not solid funds at this time.

The budget for the first five years is included as Appendix Y and was prepared in accordance with the S.C. Department of Education (SCDE) Financial Accounting Handbook (Handbook), the Funding Manual and the Single Audit Act. It supports East Link Academy's mission and includes expenditures for salaried instructors, guidance counselors, instructional resources, and professional development. As with all schools staffing is the most important aspect of the budget. In an immersion school, staffing is the number one priority as classroom teachers must be English and Mandarin speakers. To enact a 75/25 model for each grade that follows the model an extra teacher is required, four homeroom Mandarin speaking teachers and one English speaking teacher. In addition to homeroom teachers the related arts program must also be supplemented with English and Mandarin speaking teachers. The budget shows that the needs of the model have been accounted for in each section. The table provided in Appendix F – *Teaching Positions* indicates each grade that requires an extra teacher to adhere to the 75/25 and 50/50 model.

Teachers in an immersion school have unique professional development needs that a traditional school setting may not require. Because immersion teachers often come into immersion teaching from other disciplines, professional development needs are varied and inconsistent. As a result of needing targeted professional development, additional funds have been allocated to provide training in immersion strategies, differentiated instruction, content knowledge and instructional resources, etc. Week-long trainings in the summer as well as one Friday per month

will be used for school-wide professional learning experiences for approximately 64 teachers at full-buildout.

To date East Link Academy has not negotiated any services to be provided by the sponsor. Once approved the board will create an RFP for financial services, food services, including auditors, etc. For every RFP, the board will require 3 company bids if available. In all RFPs companies with charter school experience will be given priority consideration notwithstanding the monetary bid. As charter schools are unique in many aspects the understanding of charter schools is of the utmost importance.

The Board will adopt an annual budget no later than the month of June preceding the start of East Link Academy's fiscal year and will receive and approve monthly financial statements that reflect budget to actual reporting.

### *Revenues*

Revenue account codes used in the budget are in accordance with the State Department of Education's *Funding Manual*. Appendix Y contains a worksheet that documents estimated State revenues in accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-140(A)-(D) for five years. Revenues include grant revenue through the Charter School Program Planning and Implementation grant for years one and two. This grant was included after consideration of the likelihood of receipt based on historical award data showing at least an 80% award rate. If this grant is not available, East Link Academy has prepared a contingency budget that removes this revenue and continues to support the school's priorities. There are several revenue opportunities that will not be secured until the population is determined, so they have not been budgeted except for IDEA funds since the school will receive money if only for Child Find purposes.

Pre-K revenues are based on enrollment interest at \$6,000 per student for Instructional Fees. Private day care/preschool in Greenville runs from approximately \$5,000.00 to \$12,000.00. Greenville County School District does not offer full day preschool for nondisabled children leaving only private day cares and preschools to compare to ELA's program. ELA will serve children from drop-off at 7:30 AM to 3:15 PM. Extended care will be open to preschool children until 6:00PM.

### *Expenditures*

Expenditure account codes used in the attached budget are in accordance with the 2016-2017 *Funding Manual*. The essential function of the Board shall be policymaking and the assurance of sound operations and financial management. All expenditures will be go through the financial services provider for payment. Checks will not be written out of the school except for a small Directors' account managed by the book keeper but controlled by the financial services provider with never any more than \$2,000.00 available in the account. In conjunction with the financial services provider internal controls will be put in place to ensure that no one person writes, signs and approves any check written.

### *Annual Audit*

East Link Academy will comply with the annual audit statutory requirement. The Board will solicit three bids from independent CPA firms and will select one that preferably has prior charter school auditing and reporting experience. ELA will adhere to sound financial practices and procedures by:

- Establishing policies and adhering to procedures to properly account for all revenue and expenses as directed in the most current state Funding Manual.

- Maintaining appropriate records using a general ledger system that is established and maintained on an audit ready basis.
- Preparing and providing required reports to appropriate agencies and other interested parties.
- Ensuring that all accounting, reporting and auditing procedures and requirements comply with the published specifications of the SCDE.
- Ensure adequate internal controls, including segregation of duties, safeguarding of assets, accurate and adequate recording keeping.

The Board and/or the Audit Committee of the Board will receive, review and approve the Auditor's Report and related findings and recommendations prior to official reporting to the school district and required state agencies. The audit will be submitted to the SCPCSD no later than November 1<sup>st</sup> or the deadline set by the district if different.

#### *Pupil Accounting System*

In accordance with the S.C. Pupil Accounting Manual and the S.C. Student Accountability Manual, East Link Academy will adhere to the reporting procedures, policies, and regulations that apply to all public schools in South Carolina. Reports will be maintained and filed per district, state, and federal requirements. ELA has reviewed the S.C. Pupil Accounting Manual in regards to the detail requirements for membership criteria, PowerSchool Interface Assigning EFA Codes, Pupil Classification Codes, Attendance Reporting and Responsibilities, Special population additions, Submission of Reports and Retention of Records and Audit Requirements and will fully comply with the mandates.

Student Accountability System secures a cumulative head count of eligible students who are served for the current school year. The cumulative head count is used to calculate the funds school districts will receive under established programs.

East Link Academy does not plan to offer South Carolina Retirement System benefits to its employees. ELA will offer a private plan at 2% for the first year increasing to 4% in year to and beyond. The board will decide on the retirement plan offered after choosing a financial accounting services. The chosen financial accounting services provider will assist in choosing a retirement plan based on ELA's budget.

Appendix Items: Appendix W – *Student Enrollment Projection Form*, Appendix X – *SCDE Per Pupil Estimate Review*, Appendix Y – *Five-Year Budget*, and Appendix Z – *Ten-Year Budget*. Appendix AA and BB are not applicable.

## **2. Facilities**

The East Link Academy Charter Committee has not established a contract for a specific facility, but has identified two existing buildings that have great potential and have been reviewed by Paul Mussman, an architect with Mussman and Associates. Paul has been the architect for numerous traditional and charter schools in South Carolina including schools in Greenville County. ELA has also identified a parcel of land that has potential but until the charter has been approved no contract will be established.

Members of the East Link Academy Charter Committee interviewed three development companies, American Charter Development, HighMark, and Hubrich Holdings to build the facility in the event the decision to build or renovate an existing building that is not part of a lease agreement. ELA's chosen development company will work with the Office of School Facilities and Department of Transportation to ensure all codes have been met to receive a Certificate of Occupancy. ELA will not proceed with facility or land acquisition until a final approval of the application has been achieved.

At full capacity, the facility will need a minimum 45 classrooms, a cafeteria, gym/multipurpose room, playground, computer lab, nurse's area, administrative offices, conference room, and a lobby area. The recommendation for the architect is to have at least 75-100 sq. ft. per student. This will provide enough space for classrooms, administration, and some accessory spaces. Each classroom will be equipped with an interactive board, tables and chairs, supply closets and a teacher computer and printer. This equipment will be purchased with funds from the Planning and Implementation Grant, if awarded. If the grant is not awarded the equipment will be purchased with general funds. Beginning in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, East Link Academy will have 1:1 computing, again purchasing equipment with grant funds and/or general funds. ELA will work with a local technology company to ensure all classrooms are equipped with a enough broadband to support all 1:1 computing including teachers and staff. Specifically, broadband that can support 64 teachers, 14 staff, 200 student Chromebooks/laptops, projectors for each classroom and guests. ELA will establish our e-rate before signing a contract with an internet provider. ELA will work with the architect to build or renovate the facility in stages if appropriate to meet the needs of the model and student learning.

Appendix Items: No documents, Appendix CC through FF are not applicable.

### **3. Insurance Coverage**

Appendix Items: Appendix GG – *Insurance Documentation*.