

Magic City Acceptance Academy (MCAA)

The Magic City Acceptance Academy (MCAA) mission is to “facilitate a community in which all learners are empowered to embrace education, achieve individual success, and take ownership of their future in a positive learning environment.”

1. Academic Performance

(Attachment: MCAA Academic Performance at a Glance). Source: Magic City Acceptance Academy Renewal Report 2025 by the Alabama Public Charter School Commission

A. Overview: Performance in Context

The Magic City Acceptance Academy (MCAA) mission is to “facilitate a community in which all learners are empowered to embrace education, achieve individual success, and take ownership of their future in a positive learning environment.” MCAA was established to serve specific and often underserved student populations: students who have disengaged from traditional schools, who are not thriving in conventional settings, or who are returning from homeschool or alternative programs. Many students enter MCAA performing below grade level with significant academic gaps and complex social-emotional needs.

Rising to these educational challenges, MCAA not only stabilized academic performances adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and resultant disconnection from school, but actually fostered growth rates and literacy outcomes for MCAA students that consistently outperform peers. Moreover, MCAA students reside in 34 different zip codes across multiple districts in Alabama. Such diversity in academic and geographical background requires flexible, individualized approaches for each learner.

From FY22 to FY24, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in MCAA enrollment more than tripled from 18.22% to 58.81% (Figure 1: MCAA Academic Performance at a Glance)—a shift that typically correlates with lower standardized testing outcomes. Yet, MCAA has maintained overall academic performance as measured by objective indicators near the state average while outperforming district averages in several key subjects and continued to post exceptional growth rates. In sum, MCAA has achieved academic stability in the context of educating a dramatically changing and evolving student body with considerable needs and challenges.

B. Detailed Academic Performance Against the Framework

Overall State Report Card Results

- **FY22:** 75 points (C), achieved in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. (Figure 1: *MCAA Academic Performance at a Glance*).
- **FY23:** 67 points (D), measured during an academic year in which MCAA's economically disadvantaged student percentage jumped by 31 percentage points. (Figure 1: *MCAA Academic Performance at a Glance*).
- **FY24:** 72 points (C), demonstrated MCAA's ability to adapt and improve rapidly following significant challenges and changes. (Figure 1: *MCAA Academic Performance at a Glance*).

MCAA's FY24 rebound was not accidental or haphazard; rather it reflected deliberate instructional shifts, targeted interventions, and a focus on maintaining strong growth rates even during periods of intense student demographic change. This report card measure provides a snapshot overview of the successes and challenges of a school, but it does not and cannot effectively measure or comprehensively describe what is happening within its walls (Figure 1: *MCAA Academic Performance at a Glance*).

Today at MCAA, hundreds of students are thriving including many who have not matriculated or otherwise participated in education for years at a time. Further, some students have entered measurably behind their peers in their past achievement of grade appropriate learning, often presenting with additional supportive needs beyond those of their age peers pertaining to mental wellness, housing and food security, and social-emotional-behavioral confidence. These barriers to learning often require additional support provided through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Support is provided through Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and Section 504 plans. These measures ensure that students with academic, behavioral, and social needs receive accommodations and modifications so that students with disabilities have equal access to education. MCAA has 69 students with IEPs and 29 students with 504 Plans. Despite deep-rooted individual obstacles to student development and success, MCAA has facilitated a consistent achievement level for all students as a whole near the 60% range over FY22-FY24 (FY22: 60.60%; FY23: 60.11%; FY24: 59.41%). Tellingly, this achievement level rates higher than the average of the contributing counties of student residence (the district average was 53.19% in FY24) and closely compares to the state average across all districts for all student demographics (the statewide average was 63.76% in FY24). MCAA's stability spans the same time period of significant changes in the enrolled student population, underscoring both instructional quality over extended time and demonstrating schoolwide resilience in the face of educational challenges complicated by infrastructural needs and staffing needs within the building. (Figure 1: *MCAA Academic Performance at a Glance*).

MCAA has undergone significant changes in enrollment as the school's mission has evolved to meet community needs. MCAA opened its doors as a school that welcomed all students, and that

remains true today. MCAA has drawn many students who struggled in their prior traditional schools. This included a steep increase in the number of economically disadvantaged students, those entering already with IEPs and 504 Plans, as well as English Language Learners (ELL students). Enrollment also included an increase in students who are racially diverse and those who had received alternative placement or other disciplinary action in traditional school districts. (*Attachment: MCAA Enrollment Year to Year*)

MCAA is pursuing a wider variety of electives and multi-level core classes as its facility space remains the same. Changes in enrollment have occurred in parallel to MCAA's broadening of course offerings, necessitating the creative use of limited available spaces. For example, MCAA's storm shelter doubles in use as a multi-purpose building. All classrooms are full and sometimes utilized by multiple teachers. School capacity to enroll more students is bounded by the number of core classes for a particular grade. Thus, MCAA's leadership regularly reviews its strategic planning in order to enroll and accommodate as many students as is possible with the given resources.

English Language Arts (ELA) Proficiency: A Signature Strength

All MCAA Students: (Figure 1: MCAA Academic Performance at a Glance).

- FY22: 61.07%
- FY23: 59.32%
- FY24: 55.62% (State: 52.80%, District: 42.53%)

Economically Disadvantaged Students: (Figure 1: MCAA Academic Performance at a Glance).

FY22: 50.00%

- FY23: 52.48%
- FY24: 46.79% (State: 42.85%, District: 35.59%)

For three consecutive academic years (FY 22, 23, 24), MCAA students—including overall and within the economically disadvantaged subgroup—outperformed state and district averages in ELA proficiency by strong margins of difference. This is particularly noteworthy given MCAA's high proportion of students who entered MCAA below their grade level in reading. Such robust outcomes validate the impact of our literacy framework which blends standards-aligned instruction, guided reading, and targeted small-group interventions.

Math Proficiency: A Challenge with Clear Progress

All MCAA Students:

- FY22: 15.15%
- FY23: 13.74%

- FY24: 17.84% (State: 31.15%, District: 23.15%)

Though math proficiency was below state and district averages, FY24 marked upward performance movement reflecting early gains in MCAA’s rigorous math improvement plan. Key aspects of the plan feature schoolwide implementation of small-group remediation for sets of students selected by aptitude, and faculty professional development in conceptual math strategies aimed at consistently accelerating gains throughout the next charter term. As a noted positive micro-trend, MCAA’s percentage of students showing growth in Math was nearly 91% in FY24, an improvement of 5% from FY23. Given the omnipresence of internet-connected and “smart” devices across the whole-of-society upon which people of all ages rely for routine math tasks coupled with much publicized statewide deficits in Math over recent years from pre-[COVID]pandemic levels, MCAA leadership reviewed the Alabama Numeracy Act (2022) and emerging math-improvement initiatives to strategically address math deficiencies. Data from other districts suggests there may be variation across grades and gaps between different sets of students. Accordingly, MCAA’s approach and plan address the Math learning process in regards to curricular content and volume, pedagogical (teacher focused) and acquisition (student focused) math strategies, and individual as well as small group learning formats. (Figure 1: MCAA Academic Performance at a Glance).

In order to improve student math testing scores, MCAA’s approach is multi-tiered. First, MCAA is rendering higher quality math instruction in alignment with the strategies enumerated above. MCAA hired new teachers with significant experience of work with students struggling in math, in addition to having purchased Math Nation—a research-based curriculum structured across math classes. Second, MCAA provides a free of cost after school Math intervention program to help students catch up to grade-level proficiency, and all MCAA students can participate regardless of skill level (Attachment: Math Nation). Third, MCAA has Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) working together by content area and by grade-level to create sub-goals towards the larger math goal. In particular, MCAA will measure those goals using Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) MAP Growth testing analysis. This independent standardized test in core content areas measures growth of students from the beginning of the year to the end. MCAA currently is administering the NWEA MAP Growth tests in core classes and will repeat the process at the end of the school year to measure growth and identify specific math skills not yet mastered. This data will inform which students must participate in math interventions, both in school and before/after school as applicable. Fourth, MCAA is providing all juniors with an ACT preparation course. The course builds student confidence in taking the ACT while honing in on helping those students struggling with math to identify gaps in math acquisition, proficiency, and mastery. While the ACT is not used to measure MCAA progress towards all math goals, it contributes to the overall success of each student in mathematics and continuing education. Fifth and finally, MCAA’s Instructional Coaching Team comprised of the principal, instructional

coach, assistant principal, and college and career readiness coach, works with teachers individually to help teachers find strategies to incorporate skills across the curriculum, especially in math classes. MCAA's overarching math goal for students is to increase individual student mathematical proficiency by developing a solid understanding of core concepts and problem-solving strategies, build confidence through consistent practice and success, and forge meaningful connections for students of math applied in real-world situations. Through this multi-tiered approach, MCAA aims to foster a contextualized understanding for students of math relevance and use in everyday life, future careers, and practical problem-solving.

Annual MCAA Academic Growth: A Standout Strength All MCAA Students:

- FY22: 90.65%
- FY23: 85.73%
- FY24: 90.77%

Academic Growth rates above 90% mean that the overwhelming majority of MCAA students have made measurable academic progress each year, in spite of many students having entered MCAA performing well below their grade level. Growth is one of the most important and remarkable metrics for MCAA, given our mission to *re-engage and accelerate the learning of students who have experienced academic setbacks*. With the exception of Math discussed above, almost all objective academic measures and outcomes improved for MCAA in FY24. This statistic highlights the resiliency and vision of leadership, the resourcefulness and skillful training of faculty, and the active growth and engagement of the students throughout each grade in the whole of their learning journeys. The ultimate goal of any school is to provide the space, tools, knowledge, and support for students to take ownership of their educational development whether in school or beyond, and the demonstration of sustained annual academic growth ranks among the most profound indicators that students have embraced and self-actualized the many processes of learning.

b. Supplemental Evidence Supporting the Framework

Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) is a standardized test that measures student achievement and growth within a school year. Beyond state accountability metrics, internal NWEA MAP growth results confirmed that MCAA students make gains in reading across nearly all grade levels when comparing students' growth from Fall to Spring semester. The gains on NWEA testing are small but consistent. For example, the percentage of students who met growth projections is close to 50% for all grade levels, with 6th graders demonstrating 60% growth above projections (Attachment: NWEA Student Growth Summary Report). By comparison,

MCAA's average for the 2021-2022 school year was around 30%, indicating that MCAA students have progressed over time. Taking into account the level and complexity of the needs of its students served, MCAA demonstrates significant improvements as measured by student growth. Additionally, internal results showed improvement in Math for students participating in targeted interventions, one of the highlighted elements of MCAA's Continuous School Improvement Plan. Further, MCAA seeks to improve math scores on the NWEA Map Growth testing this current academic year, as well as to improve the percentage of students scoring lowest on the ACT to benchmark by 20% with additional focus on underperforming students. More MCAA students reached their benchmark on the ACT than on the pre-ACT in most content areas with Math results having remained the same. (ACT Data – Math Focus, spring 2025). As another indicator of overall success, MCAA annually facilitates a KELVIN Student Culture and Climate Survey distributed to teachers, students, and parents/guardians. These surveys measure satisfaction in school operations, school climate, and well-being of students, staff, and families. (Attachment: Kelvin Student Culture and Climate Survey)

D. Mission-Specific Academic Goals

MCAA's mission-specific goals prioritize:

1. Re-engaging students who have left or struggled in traditional schools.
2. Restoring academic confidence through personalized learning.
3. Achieving accelerated growth in core subjects.

Evidence of mission impact includes:

- Students are making significant progress in all content areas. MCAA is seeing more students achieve benchmark on the ACT than did on the pre-ACT (ACT Data – Math Focus).
- Students have higher mean composite scores than the State Average (Average ACT Scores Statewide).
- ELA proficiency rates for economically disadvantaged students outperform both state and district averages every year by significant margins.

E. Strategic Response to Academic Shortfalls

In direct response to Performance Framework Measure 1.6 (Math Proficiency), MCAA launched its aforementioned comprehensive math improvement plan. This plan is comprised of:

- Targeted intervention for students who are struggling with math concepts including individualized and small group remediation.

- Instructional Coaching to support teachers in evidence-based strategies that target underperforming students in addition to professional faculty development in conceptual math strategies. MCAA's coaching team is comprised of the principal, instructional coach an assistant principal, and the college and career coach. This team works together to create a plan for improving instruction in every classroom by making frequent visits with authentic feedback to teachers and providing collaboration in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).
- Purchase of Math Nation, a research-based curriculum for math instruction. This provides a structure across math classes, as well as vertical alignment.
- MCAA hired highly-qualified math instructors with a depth of experience. There are currently four TEAMS contracts for teachers of math and science. MCAA also offers student clubs that support math instruction including chess club. Faculty perform Weekly Data Review Meetings to monitor formative student assessment results and adjust instruction in real time as specific deficits in content areas or skills are identified. Each team consists of teachers, instructional coaches, mental health professionals, an academic counselor, special services, and administrators who come together to discuss the needs of struggling students. The teams create a plan for students who are struggling. Plans may include intervention measures, tier 2 instruction, or a referral to special services.
- The MCAA Continuous School Improvement Plan already has resulted in an increase in math proficiency from 13.74% in FY23 to 17.84% in FY24, (ALSDE (Alabama State Department of Education) State A-F Report Card), a trajectory that MCAA expects to accelerate in the coming years by and incorporating additional data-driven strategies for elevating individual student outcomes and adapting successful modalities reported from other districts, as deemed applicable by MCAA leadership and content-area faculty. (Attachment: ALSDE State A-F Report Card)

F. Conclusion

When looking at MCAA's overall academic performance, it is vitally important to contextualize the academic indicators with MCAA's mission and growth in enrollment. In English Language Arts, MCAA students consistently have performed above their peers by 3%, and 4% for its economically disadvantaged population, even while serving a substantially higher percentage of economically disadvantaged students today compared to the inaugural year (ASLDE State A-F Report Card). Most notable is the growth MCAA students have made each year. Some 90% of MCAA students have shown measurable growth in ELA proficiency (Attachment: ALSDE State A-F Report Card). As referenced in the 2025 Renewable Report from the Alabama Public Charter School Commission, MCAA is not cited alone in its need to prioritize Math proficiency, as Alabama schools statewide likewise share this focus. MCAA has demonstrated early progress in this priority through hiring, coaching, interventions and data-driven instruction. And indeed, the most recent nationwide mathematics assessment from the National Assessment of

Educational Progress (NAEP) reveals lingering pockets of stagnation or scoring below basic proficiency for many student populations when compared to pre-pandemic (2019) assessments. NAEP results help illuminate macroscale trends that underscore the need for both math prioritization and the type of multi-tiered strategic approach of MCAA. (Attachment: Alabama Public Charter School Commission Renewal Report 2025)

As indicated throughout, MCAA's mission draws students who have not been thriving in their prior school environment or who are otherwise disconnected from public school carrying additional academic struggles. One of the most typical academic struggles is Math. The improvement from FY23 to FY24 in overall grades and math performance stands as but one clear example of the resilience of MCAA's students and staff, serving as a testament to the careful and methodical culture of learning that is greater than the sum of all the constituent parts; by definition this includes the school facility, administration, staff, students, and families residing throughout the numerous communities that MCAA serves.

Looking forward, renewal for five more years is not merely about maintaining what MCAA does well, but about an opportunity for building upon foundational strengths by deepening attention on the math proficiency gap and expanding the impact for those students across communities who need MCAA most. The track record of meeting promises and bolstering the long term vision positions MCAA to accomplish better results in the years ahead, as evidenced through the successes of our commendable students and our diligent staff in the face of myriad challenges overcome to date.

Organizational Performance

This section provides an opportunity to describe the organizational performance of the school. Schools should reference the evidence contained in the organizational section of the school's Renewal Performance Report and give context on the metrics contained therein. Schools may also submit evidence that is not contained in the Renewal Performance Report that enhances or explains the organizational performance of the school. Submissions may include evidence of current compliance in areas for which the school was found previously to be non-compliant or other updates relevant to the Renewal Performance Report. Please reference the specific Performance Framework measures to which the information applies, as appropriate.

(a) Provide a narrative on governing a school which prioritizes the interests of the public. Address the challenges encountered over the review period by the governing board with oversight and accountability on behalf of the school community. Include a discussion of how the board holds school leadership accountable, and attach all board approved and reviewed evaluations of school leadership. Refer to the Renewal Performance Report in your discussion.

From its inception and by design, MCAA prioritizes the interests of the public by engaging with community members to hear their needs and to respond accordingly. The original design of the school was based upon the feedback and input from the community. Design features that reflect the needs of the public include, bright colors, soft bell and notifications, no lockers, P.E. classes that require no clothing changing, and a facility “therapy” dog. MCAA staff facilitated focus groups with potential students and the design team to ensure the needs of the students were integrated into the design. During the original MCAA charter school application, the public was heavily involved and invested in MCAA success. Numerous community supporters attended all public charter hearings; community stakeholders offered financial support exceeding \$2.5 million; and the board of directors of Birmingham AIDS Outreach articulated its own full approval and support. Since approval of the MCAA charter in 2020, the public has exhibited steadfast ongoing engagement with MCAA as follows: monthly donations from Amazon; community mural designed by students and completed through a community event with mural experts Bendy Knees; periodic community book, clothing, and school supply drives; steady volunteers to facilitate Friday clubs such as chess, cooking, sewing, and Dungeons and Dragons club; Big Brothers / Big Sisters coordination of a program at MCAA; and the The Boys and Girls Club recently started an after-school program.

To sustain and foster engagement with families, MCAA’s principal meets with the Parent Advisory Team (PAT, in which any parent/guardian can participate) monthly to discuss emerging community needs, review actions and plans made by the school, and to invite and integrate community feedback. The PAT reviews the instructional goals of the school, new policies, and initiates feedback as to how MCAA can better serve families and communities. Parents are empowered to contact school leadership for any concerns they may have pertaining to their student. Dr. Furman and the leadership team meet with the parents/guardians in person whenever requested. MCAA hosts a yearly parent “open house” where the parents/guardians meet school leadership, teaching, counseling, and administration team members. MCAA hosts a fall festival coordinated by the PAT at which students play games and socialize. During each August and February, MCAA hosts a talent night for the community. Also, MCAA’s theater department performs two public plays yearly including a full musical performance in the spring (*Attachment: MCAA Theatre Program*).

To facilitate dialogue, parents/guardians are given log-in permission on ParentSquare to communicate with teachers and receive frequent updates on school happenings. All communication with parents/guardians is distributed in English and Spanish. Parents/guardians are also able to use the PowerSchool application to see their student’s most up-to-date grades and attendance. Similarly, MCAA teachers are empowered to hold discussions with parents/guardians concerning student accomplishments, challenges, and areas for improvement. In congruence with its truancy and absenteeism policies, MCAA phones parents/guardians when their student is not at school. Collectively, all of these opportunities and mechanisms for

dialogue and engagement prioritize and elevate community interests to center students and their families.

MCAA's board of directors is responsible for oversight and accountability. The board consists of community leaders, former principals, former state superintendent, parent/guardians, and charter school experts and meets monthly (except in December) in person. All board minutes for open meetings, monthly financials, and monthly agendas are posted on the MCAA website (magiccityacceptanceacademy.org). The board of directors hosts a budget public hearing in August and September. Two parents of currently enrolled MCAA students are board members, as well. The MCAA board of directors includes an executive committee consisting of Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. The BAO board of directors has one representative that serves on the MCAA board of directors. Current board members include: Dr. Tommy Bice, Dr. Larry Contri (Chair), Dr. Ezra Shine (Vice Chair), Cece Lacey Kennedy (Secretary), Dr. Tracee Synco (BAO Representative), Jody Thrash (parent), Jim Wilson, esq., Kaamilya Mahdi, Amber Lopez Martinez (parent), and Abbas Merchant (*Attachment: MCAA Board of Directors Bio*).

MCAA's Principal/Superintendent (Dr. Patton Furman) and CEO (Dr. Karen Musgrove) report to and are evaluated by the board of directors. The community has the ability to communicate to the Board of Directors through their individual email addresses, which are linked on MCAA's website. The grievance policy is also posted. These avenues give parents and stakeholders an avenue to voice their concerns about any aspect of the school. It is important to MCAA that every family have the ability to express themselves to the Board of Directors. Every board meeting, the CEO and Principal/Superintendent publicly present to the board the current financials, open staffing positions, outstanding issues, new policies and procedures, and review a month-by-month report. The board provides meaningful public feedback for the CEO and the Principal/Superintendent to ensure that school leadership upholds all policies and procedures. The CEO performs a yearly evaluation of the Principal/Superintendent (*Attachment: Evaluation Template*) and are reviewed during an executive session of the board meeting. Additional evaluation of MCAA leadership is conducted by the board through internal Executive Session meetings that take place outside of monthly board meetings that are not recorded. School leadership positions are tasked with addressing issues and making decisions that often involve the private interests and rights of other staff, students, and legally confidential materials that are not appropriate for public review. This mechanism of evaluating leadership via Executive Sessions effectuates accountability while ensuring privacy in the discussion and review of such matters as insurance, payroll, conflict and grievance resolution, security, and other aspects of maintaining MCAA's business operations with high fidelity and integrity.

Similarly, evaluation of the Chief School Financial Officer (or vendor equivalent) is conducted internally again due to the legally sensitive content involved in such reviews. MCAA utilizes New Schools for Alabama in its financial and accounting practices and procedures. Mr. Russell

Raney serves as Chief Financial Officer bringing extensive experience to the financial services at New Schools for Alabama, having served as Chief School Financial Officer with multiple school districts in Alabama. He has also holds numerous relevant certifications and has served as finance director for the Alabama Association of School Boards. Ms. Melanie Haynes serves as Senior Director of Accounting at New Schools, having spent three years in a private school system and seven years in various roles within a newly formed Alabama public school system bringing additional expertise to MCAA's leadership.

Yearly, MCAA is audited by an outside certified professional accounting firm. The audit is presented to the MCAA board of directors, posted on the MCAA website, and uploaded to the state of Alabama required portal. Each year, MCAA has received a clear audit with "no findings" (Attachment: MCAA Independent Certified Public Accountant Audit). MCAA has not experienced any challenges encountered over the review period by the governing board with oversight and accountability.

Renewal Performance Report that enhances or explains the organizational performance of the school.

b) Provide a narrative on creating a great place for employees to work and students to learn. Include a discussion on how employees are evaluated, supported and their legal protections. Address student recruitment and onboarding, students' rights once enrolled, and non-academic support in place for students. Refer to the Renewal Performance Report in your discussion. Provide supplementary documentation as needed.

Magic City Acceptance Academy (MCAA): A Supportive Environment for Learning and Work

MCAA Staff/Employees:

To cultivate professional development and staff retention, MCAA prioritizes a stable and supportive workplace environment. MCAA maintains a comprehensive employee handbook, a structured framework for evaluations of all levels of staffing, and promotes a fair process for employee review and rebuttal, thereby allowing educators to demonstrate growth and the development of skills over time. MCAA's instructional coaching team engages in meaningful, ongoing conversations with teachers to strengthen instructional practices. Professional development is central to school culture. All staff members are certified in Mental Health First Aid, equipping them to address the social-emotional needs of students effectively. Teachers and staff also are trained each year on de-escalation techniques and classroom management skills and techniques. Teachers provide lessons to students that are created by a Mental Health Coordinator about topics relating to emotional self-regulation, interpersonal skills, communication, self-care,

and healthy lifestyle on a weekly basis. In the 2025-2026 year, four (4) TEAMS (Teacher Excellence and Accountability for Mathematics and Science) contracts are filled with two for science and two for math. Teachers who receive TEAMS contracts are highly qualified, certified experienced teachers.

Mental Health staff are supported in their licensure through licensure payment, continuing education credit opportunities, and required supervision by the BAO mental health staff. Teachers are able to attend the yearly conference, MEGA, a large comprehensive development event for educators facilitated by the Alabama Department State of Education hosted in Mobile. Administrative staff have the opportunity to attend educational conferences such as the Charter School Conference, ALSDE (AL State Department of Education) conferences, and many others throughout the year. MCAA values and rewards its employees with competitive salaries, annual raises, and full State of Alabama benefits. In FY23, the state of Alabama gave teachers a 4% merit/cost of living raise; MCAA gave the teachers 5%. In FY 24 and FY25, the state of Alabama gave the teachers a 2% merit/cost of living raise; MCAA gave the teachers 3%. For FY26, the state of Alabama did not give teachers a merit/cost of living raise; MCAA gave the teachers 3%. MCAA leadership strives to provide an exceptional pay rate to staff. MCAA staff also are invited to attend community events free of cost when tickets are given to BAO. Such events include Sidewalk Film Festival, KultureCity Ball, Barons baseball tickets, and other local occasions. These benefits, coupled with a collaborative and mission-driven culture, help encourage MCAA's educators and support staff to thrive and grow in their career.

BAO—with whom MCAA collaboratively partners—operates a medical facility known as the Magic City Wellness Center (MCWC) where MCAA staff can obtain medical care, counseling, referral services, labs, pharmacy services, and specialty care such as diabetes management. Co-pays, additional fees, lab fees, and balances after insurance are not charged to MCAA staff. Once a year, MCAA offers a free wellness clinic at the school for staff featuring a medical checkup helpful for health insurance and flu/COVID vaccines. During the staff wellness appointment, teacher's classes are covered by administration staff so teachers do not have to utilize sick/leave time. At the end of each calendar year, all staff and board members of BAO and MCAA are invited to a year-end celebration hosted by BAO and at which each staff member is given a \$25.00 gift to card sponsored by BAO's board as a "thank you."

Since the 24-25 school year, MCAA has engaged an Instructional Coach who leads the coaching team consisting of MCAA administrators specializing in instruction. The coaching team reviews data, sets goals for instructional improvement, and organizes Professional Learning Communities (PLC). All MCAA teachers participate in weekly PLC meetings as follows: one departmental PLC, one grade-level PLC, one department head PLC, and a flex PLC. The meetings are designed to create space for teachers to discuss data from standardized testing, classroom observations, classroom assessments, and surveys. The goal is to create a culture of collaboration

toward improving teaching and learning. Having an instructional coach has helped foster consistency beyond meetings with administrators tasked with other responsibilities that limit scheduling availability.

It is imperative that a school maintain a clean, welcoming, and happy building. Each summer, the entire MCAA building is deep cleaned and painted (at a cost of \$10,000) including classroom interiors. One BAO staff member works 20 hours/week over the summer months at MCAA painting outside picnic tables, pressure washing all walkways and steps, and making miscellaneous repairs as needed. The MCAA building is inspected daily by the director of operations and repairs are made immediately upon identification. BAO has shared its box truck and storage facility, available to MCAA for storage of theater props/sets, extra furniture, and donated items to keep the school clutter free. This constant attention to the facility and grounds allows MCAA to maintain classrooms, bathrooms, and public areas at a high standard year round that is conducive to the overall learning environment shared between teachers and students.

Onboarding Staff: When new employees are hired, MCAA uses a checklist to ensure a smooth transition. This checklist includes filling out paperwork to get their MacBook Air and other technology issued by the school. It also includes forms needed for tax purposes and to satisfy payroll needs. Teachers and staff are assigned to an instructional coach who helps to maintain academic standards of the school. Coaching staff at MCAA are dedicated to helping each teacher reflect and adjust to meet the school's instructional vision. New staff members are also partnered with another teacher to help them have another employee to answer questions and orient them to the building and staff.

(Attachments: MCAA Staff Handbook, MCAA Onboarding checklist, MCAA ACIP)

MCAA Students:

MCAA is the sole public charter high school serving grades 6-12 in Birmingham, Alabama. Though serving a student population with a higher proportion of low-income families, the school has ranked in the top 20% of Alabama high schools over the past three years, maintaining a 4-star rating from SchoolDigger (SchoolDigger.com). Most students enrolled at MCAA entered seeking a different educational experience from their past experience. MCAA strives to meet and respect each student and their individual needs. MCAA is rooted in trauma-informed care and teaching. According to the most recent Kelvin Culture and Climate Survey, 55% of MCAA students feel supported by adults at school. Over half of students feel their teachers are genuinely interested in how students are doing and would be excited to have them again. MCAA has created a culture and curriculum that creates a safe supportive space for our students. (Attachment: Kelvin Student Culture and Climate Survey).

(Attachment: Parent Letter)

Regarding student recruitment, MCAA offers a dynamic and welcoming community for students as well as staff. Campus features that are popular among students include bright, inviting spaces with flexible seating, sensory rooms, and comfortable common areas designed to foster engagement and belonging. Students and their families have access to a wide range of supports including mental health services, food assistance, and clothing resources. Students are given all supplies, books, computers, and materials needed for school; parents/guardians are not given a list of items to purchase to attend school. School fundraisers are limited to the theater department and graduation fees. MCAA does not pressure students to sell items to raise money for the school or to attend an event.

When new students are interested in attending, MCAA schedules one-on-one tours with the prospective student whenever possible. Parents/guardians and their students can look around the school and hear from current students about the culture and the daily school life at MCAA. Prospective students are encouraged to shadow a current student for a day, whereby they may attend classes, eat lunch, meet grade-level teachers, and socialize with currently enrolled students. During the summer, MCAA conducts a *New Student Orientation* that prospective students and parents/guardians may attend. This orientation helps students who join in the summer to become acclimated to the campus and observe school schedules, classrooms, and operations for the upcoming school term. Any student who enrolls at MCAA receives the written MCAA student handbook. (Attachment: MCAA Student Handbook.)

To support student wellness, MCAA mental health staff includes a licensed social worker, two case managers, a licensed professional counselor, and a registered nurse. The ratio of social workers / licensed professional counselors is 1 for every 75 students. MCAA prioritizes having mental health staff with more manageable ratios in comparison to most school systems. Mental health staff provide weekly wellness checks for students and families as needed, regularly conduct student support groups, and host special programs for students on specific mental health issues such as depression, patient health questionnaire (PHQ-9), substance abuse, emotional regulation, eating disorders, anxiety including anxiety screening (GAD-7 screening), and risk assessments. Further, mental health staff administer needs assessments to determine students' and family resources including food, clothing, mental wellbeing, home visits. MCAA's mental health staff work as a team supporting both staff and students. A future attainable goal is to increase available mental health staff to one per grade level. As a widely popular additional wellness measure, MCAA is home to a full-time facility dog, Fire Lilly, trained to meet the needs of students. Having been a fixture of MCAA for five years, Fire Lilly is professionally trained by Roverchase to perform tasks for various needs such as responding to medical crisis and sensing anxiety and depression. Available to both students and teachers, Fire Lilly is based in MCAA's library but can respond to needs that may manifest around the entire campus.

Through a current partnership with Jefferson, Blount, Shelby Mental Health Authority (JBS), MCAA employs a full-time, on-campus licensed professional counselor to ensure timely mental

health support without impacting instructional time. MCAA's mental health team partners with other outside agencies such as SightSavers, Jefferson County Family Court, Be Kind Birmingham, United Way, RestoreMore, Children's Aid Society, Magic City Wellness Center, BAO, Family Connections, Jefferson County DHR, NewCircle eating disorder center, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and many others. The mental wellness team works to provide students and their families the support they need. For example, instruction at MCAA is guided by a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) that is continually refined to meet the evolving needs of all learners. Every student has access to counseling services, and our admissions process, conducted through a public lottery when capacity is reached, ensures equal opportunity for enrollment and success. As part of upholding accessibility and transparency in MCAA services, MCAA clearly outlines student rights in the student handbook posted on the school website for clarity and openness with families and the community.

An indicator of progression through grades, MCAA's 4-year graduation rate for the 2023-2024 school year was 90.0% which measures above the state average (schooldigger.com). MCAA strives for a 100% graduation rate and celebrates the graduation rates achieved this year to date. In its first year, MCAA graduated 11 students. By the second year, MCAA graduated 23 students. And by year four, 34 students graduated. Last year, MCAA celebrated as 43 students walked across the graduation stage. MCAA anticipates 46 graduates at the conclusion of the 2025-2026 school year. As part of graduation ceremonies, MCAA has invited a variety of community leaders to give remarks. Esteemed speakers have included Danny Carr, Esq., District Attorney for the Tenth Judicial Circuit of Alabama; Dr. Tonya Perry, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs of Miles College; and Dr. Carlos Aleman, CEO of the Hispanic and Immigrant Center of Alabama (HICA); (Attachment: MCAA Graduation Programs, years 1-4).

To assist students post-graduation, MCAA has utilized a College and Career Coach who supports college and career exposure, applications, and attainment throughout middle and high school. Middle school programs include classroom presentations focused on building exposure to different career fields and readiness for part time employment, soft skill development, classroom presentations from professionals, and career and industry tours throughout the community. In high school, the College and Career Coach provides more personalized coaching and support for students exploring colleges and training programs through research and campus and industry visits, preparing for standardized tests like the ACT and WorkKeys, career exploration and aptitude testing, resume building, college and scholarship essay review, financial aid support, FAFSA completion, and future-focused mentorship.

In a typical academic year, the College and Career Coach has organized 7-10 lunchtime career presentations called Career Cafes with 150 student participants annually, 12 Job Shadowing visits engaging 153 students and 12 community partners, and 4 college campus visits to 4 institutions engaging 182 students; supported 84 college applications resulting in 65 acceptance offers; provided 45 individual financial aid support sessions resulting in \$377,700 scholarship

funding and 75% FAFSA (federal student aid) completion; facilitated 85 classroom presentations annually on topics such as career planning, resume building, ACT readiness, academic preparation, equipment certification, interviewing skills, and financial aid; managed 35 ACT registrations; coordinated Dual Enrollment and Early College applications and registration for 28 students in collaboration with Jefferson State Community College and the University of Alabama; provided 5 family sessions on college and career readiness topics; and participated with the Coaching Team to support teachers instructional strategies. Collectively, each of these student supports and programs has helped MCAA recruit, retain, and graduate students from dozens of different zip codes.

(Attachment: Birmingham City, Homewood City Schools, and Magic City Acceptance Academy compared, Source: ALSDE State A-F Report Card Data Comparison Data)

Attachment Birmingham City, Homewood City Schools, and Magic City Acceptance Academy compared, Source: ALSDE State A-F Report Card Data Comparison Data, compares two local school districts and their diversity numbers. Column 1 is Birmingham City Schools, Column 2 is Homewood City Schools, and Column 3 is Magic City Acceptance Academy.

Although other school districts host thousands more students, MCAA's diversity rate impressively speaks for itself. Further, MCAA utilizes fewer resources as a small district even while serving exceptionally high needs. MCAA students are taught in classrooms that strive for a ratio of 22 student to 1 teacher for core classes. Adherence to this ratio results in a more student-centered class experience in which teachers are able to individualize instruction to meet specific student needs. A major aspect of ACIP in the present school year is a process through which teachers have more intentional opportunities to truly learn about their students. That process and knowledge includes familiarity with each individual student's background and specific needs for scholastic achievement and success. A core tenet of this process is that detailed knowledge of the individual student is paramount to educational progress.

For Spanish speaking families, MCAA offers Family Engagement events such as Hispanic Heritage Month activities. The school sends every communication in English and Spanish, so everyone has the opportunity to stay connected and informed with what is going on at the school. Many Hispanic students, along with other interested students, have a soccer team at MCAA. The team plays friendly matches with Birmingham City Schools and has never lost a game. MCAA is expanding to high school basketball scrimmages, too. MCAA's Spanish-speaking staff members are greatly involved in maintaining open communication and engagement with Spanish-speaking families and communities. All MCAA teachers receive monthly training on strategies to support English Language Learners in the classroom. For example, a simplified text may be produced and read with instruction in Spanish, thereby allowing those students opportunities to speak or hear their home language when they need a "brain break" or if they have difficulty with comprehension of a topic.

When first envisioning MCAA, leadership and stakeholders understood that students would be coming to the school from numerous different school districts, some having to travel many miles to attend. Perceiving that transportation presents a considerable barrier for some parents/guardians for their student to attend, MCAA's leadership made a commitment in the first year to ensure that free transportation would be provided. Accordingly, MCAA contracts with Student Transportation Services (STS) to provide 4 buses for transporting students to and from school. Bus routes are determined based on the needs of the students and involve a centrally located drop-off location, for instance a convenient local Wal-Mart. On average, some 80 students ride the bus daily to/from MCAA. Many if not most of these students would not otherwise have the opportunity to attend without a bus option.

For student nutritional needs, MCAA contracts with SLA Management (a custom food management service company) to provide breakfast and lunch during the school year. 52% of MCAA students qualify for the federal free/reduced lunch program, roughly comparable to the state average of 55%. SLA Management ensures that meals are balanced and meet federal food nutritional requirements.

Beginning in year four, MCAA amended its school calendar year to include additional breaks for students and teachers. Dr. Furman researched the benefits of providing a week-long break in October and a week-long break in February, ultimately approved by MCAA's board of directors. Scholastic studies suggest that these two months correlate to times of increased depression, burnout, and stress for both teachers and students. One advantage of an academic calendar balanced with additional breaks is that stress reduction, which proponents of the model assert can help reduce burnout among teachers and students (The Pros and Cons of Year-Round School Calendars | K-12 Schools | U.S. News). MCAA is the first school in Alabama to start the fall school year (July 30/31) by taking a week-long break in October, a week-long break at Thanksgiving, a standard Christmas/December break, a week-long break in February, and a week-long spring break in March, with the final day of school set to early May. Recognizing that this amended calendar might pose a challenge for certain working parents/guardians who need to arrange childcare during breaks not in alignment with their work schedules, MCAA leadership made another commitment to parents/guardians that during the October and February breaks, the school will host free camps for students. Thus, students can come to MCAA during those breaks with supervision by MCAA staff. Camps host fun activities such as art classes, movies, downtime, and games with breakfast and lunch provided (Attachment: MCAA 2025-2026 School Calendar).

C. Provide a narrative on the educational program requirements necessary to operate a public school in Alabama. This includes requirements for special populations. Reference evidence from the Renewal Performance Report. Provide supplementary documentation as needed.

Educational Program Requirements: Narrative

MCAA operates in compliance with the educational program requirements set forth by the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) and the Alabama Public Charter School Commission (APCSC). These requirements encompass curriculum standards, instructional delivery, student supports, and services for special populations, all of which are reflected in MCAA's operations and outcomes and outlined in the MCAA Staff Handbook (Attachment: MCAA Staff Handbook).

Standards-Aligned Curriculum & Instruction

MCAA delivers instruction aligned to the Alabama Course of Study in all content areas. Teachers employ evidence-based strategies and participate in ongoing professional development to ensure instructional quality. As per the Renewal Performance Report, MCAA's ELA proficiency rates for all students and economically disadvantaged students consistently exceed state and district averages, demonstrating MCAA's successful implementation of state standards and effective instructional practices. MCAA's instructional model incorporates a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to provide targeted interventions based on individual student needs. This framework ensures that students performing below grade level receive timely, structured academic support(s), as those students performing above grade level are provided enrichment opportunities (<https://alabamalearningexchange.org/courses>).

Requirements for Special Populations

MCAA meets or exceeds federal and state requirements for serving students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students.

- **Students with Disabilities:** MCAA provides exceptional education services in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are developed collaboratively with families and implemented through a combination of inclusive and specialized instruction. The Renewal Performance Report confirms that MCAA's achievement rates for all students remain near the state average, even with a rising proportion of high-needs learners. MCAA currently has 69 students with IEPs representing 22% of its entire student body, compared to 15% for all public school students (Education Week). Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act requires schools to provide services for students with disabilities that impact their ability to succeed in school. MCAA has 29 students representing 10% of the student body with 504 Plans (Source: MCAA PowerSchool), compared to the National Average of all public school students at 2.3 – 3.3% (US Department of Education).
- **English Learners (ELs):** Services for EL students comply with Title III of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). MCAA develops IELP, conducts WIDA assessments, implements sheltered instruction strategies, and provides targeted language development support. MCAA currently has 18% of students in its EL program.

- **Economically Disadvantaged Students:** As the Renewal Performance Report notes, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students at MCAA increased from 18.22% in FY22 to 58.81% in FY24 (Attachment: Renewal Performance Report). Despite this increase, economically disadvantaged students at MCAA have maintained ELA proficiency rates above state and district averages every year. This proficiency reflects the effectiveness of MCAA's instructional supports, access to counseling, and wraparound services such as food and clothing assistance. In 2022, 47.28% of students were proficient in ELA across the State, whereas at MCAA 61.07% of students were proficient in English Language Arts. In 2024, 52.8% of students across the state of Alabama were proficient in ELA, whereas 55.62% of MCAA students were proficient. These statistics held while MCAA's proportion of economically disadvantaged students rose, in spite of an added increase in MCAA students requiring and receiving specialized services.

Student Support Services

MCAA's educational program integrates academic, social-emotional, and behavioral supports as follows:

- Full-time, on-campus licensed professional counselor through a partnership with JBS Mental Health Authority.
- Staff certifications in Mental Health First Aid to respond effectively to student needs.
- Sensory rooms donated by KultureCity contain flexible seating and comfortable common areas to create an inclusive learning environment for students with sensory processing needs or anxiety-related challenges.
- One Mental Health Coordinator who is a licensed Master Level Social worker. Additionally, MCAA has two bachelor social workers/case managers. Through a partnership with JBS Mental Health Authority, MCAA houses one Licensed Professional Counselor.
- Mental Health services for all students, not merely those identified in special populations. Services include small group counseling, resource fairs, meal boxes, and clothing with services rendered through MCAA's team of social workers and case managers.
- Free individual and family counseling offered by the Magic City Wellness Center Counseling staff.
- Instruction that takes into account individual student experiences, mental health, and home circumstances. Teachers who practice this approach create classrooms where relationships are centered more than rules, where patience is offered more freely than punishment, and where curiosity about a child's behavior replaces quick judgment. MCAA teachers train throughout the year to operate in this manner with regards to

assignments, discipline, and expectations, while balancing accountability for student behavior and learning.

Enrollment, Equity, and Access

MCAA follows federal and Alabama laws pertaining to equitable admissions. Each February, applications for returning students are sent to the parent/guardian as an intent to return in the new school year. In June, applications for enrollment are promoted in the public and available to any qualifying student. To qualify to be a MCAA student, a student must live in the state of Alabama. If necessary, MCAA may use a public lottery when applications exceed capacity. The school maintains waiting lists when at capacity and ensures there is no discrimination in admissions based on disability, economic status, or prior academic performance. At the beginning of the calendar year, current students are asked to complete an intent to return survey. After the intent to return survey deadline, a lottery is created through PowerSchool for new students wanting to attend MCAA. When students apply for admission, no question is asked concerning a protected class thus ensuring no decision is based upon a protective class answer. Student are notified of their acceptance by the administration staff. Student rights are clearly communicated in the Student Handbook and posted publicly on our website (Attachment: MCAA Student Handbook)

Compliance & Accountability

As required by federal and Alabama state laws, MCAA maintains legal compliance and accountability through a number of structured processes and mechanisms of review (Attachment: *Compliance Monitoring Documents, Performance Report, report from Alabama Charter Commission visit*). As elaborated herein, MCAA is governed by an active board of directors and is administratively operated through accomplished leaders with strong credentials and deep experience in their fields. The board and administrative leaders are both supported by and held accountable through active community member involvement and engagement with the families/guardians of enrolled students. Community feedback and input is provided through regular meetings with the Parent Advisory Team in addition to monthly public meetings of the board of directors. MCAA offers varied means of engagement for parents and community members such as through community events like the Open House, the availability of the Principal and other administrative leaders for meetings, and the manners in which MCAA apprises its families of important news, events, deadlines, et cetera. Moreover, MCAA has hosted several site visits by the APCSC (Alabama Public Charter School Commission) including as pertains to compliance thus maintaining a highly collaborative relationship with the APCSC particularly regarding compliance. MCAA highlights the following aspects of its record (Attachment: *Compliance Monitoring Documents, Performance Report, report from Alabama Charter Commission visit*):

- Meets annual state assessment participation requirements including virtual and in-person site visits.
- Provides services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and IDEA while maintaining student privacy rights under FERPA.
- Provides a board-approved school calendar and schedule that meets all state requirements.
- Conforms with all state standards pertaining to graduation and promotion from each grade while simultaneously offering guidance services for helping students and their families check progress and stay on track for graduation.
- Meets state curriculum guidelines for core courses including making curricula publicly available through the school website and otherwise.
- Submits all required reports to ALSDE and APCSC, as verified in the Renewal Performance Report's Organizational Performance section.
- Maintains staffing with adherence to guidelines for statewide testing, certification of staff for federal program funded positions, and otherwise appropriate programmatic staffing.

Conclusion

MCAA's educational operations meet statutory and regulatory requirements for public schools and exceed them in its demonstrable commitment to serving diverse learners. The Renewal Performance Report provides clear evidence of success with special populations, particularly economically disadvantaged students and students with disabilities, even given a rapidly changing demographic profile. These results highlight and underscore MCAA's capacity to deliver a compliant, equitable, and high-quality educational program over the next charter term.

(d) Provide a narrative on providing a safe and positive learning environment. Address the challenges encountered over the review period in providing facility space for school operations, and actions taken to address those challenges. Include information on responding in case of an emergency. Refer to the Renewal Performance Report in your discussion. Attach supporting documentation.

Commitment to Safety and a Positive School Culture

MCAA prioritizes the creation of a safe, inclusive, and positive environment where students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. This commitment extends to the physical safety of the campus, the emotional well-being of students, and the cultivation of a respectful and affirming school culture. The Renewal Performance Report confirms that MCAA meets the state's organizational performance standards for providing a safe and positive learning environment (Attachment: MCAA Renewal Performance Report). This environment includes

maintaining safe facilities, implementing proactive student behavior policies, and ensuring compliance with all applicable safety regulations (Attachment: MCAA Student Handbook).

Facilities and Space Challenges

During the review period, MCAA faced challenges with limited facility space. This was the result of two major factors: rapid enrollment growth and the unique programmatic needs of students. Enrollment increased quickly and with it came a sharp rise in the percentage of economically disadvantaged students from 18.22% in FY22 to 58.81% in FY24. This growth is a direct reflection of outreach efforts and success in serving students who need MCAA most. It also created greater demand for specialized learning environments such as sensory rooms, counseling offices, and areas for small-group interventions. Because the educational model is inclusive, MCAA needs spaces for special education services, mental health counseling, and quiet zones for students with sensory sensitivities. These programmatic needs make flexible and purposeful use of space essential. To meet the demand, leadership found creative temporary solutions. Existing offices were converted into small-group instructional areas, common spaces were expanded for flexible learning, and mobile furniture was introduced to make classrooms more adaptable. These adjustments allowed the school to continue meeting the needs of students within the physical and spatial limits of MCAA's current facility.

Actions Taken to Address Facility Constraints

To meet the growing and diverse needs of students, MCAA made several intentional changes to the way space is used on campus. Classrooms now include flexible seating and modular furniture, rendering class spaces easier to reconfigure the layout as lessons or student needs shift throughout the day. Rooms designated as sensory and de-escalation spaces offer students safe places where they can regulate their emotions when needed, for instance, during moments of acute stress. To strengthen academic support, rooms also have been designated for small-group instruction and services tied to individualized education plans. Common areas have been enhanced to function as multi-purpose spaces, supporting both academic programming and wellness activities. Together, these changes have enabled the use of every part, corner, and space of the MCAA facility in ways that directly benefit learning and student well-being.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

MCAA maintains a comprehensive School Safety Plan in compliance with Alabama Code §16-1-44 and APCSC requirements. Emergency preparedness is an integral part of operations and is coordinated by the MCAA Director of Operations, James Gibbs (Attachment: nSide Safety Plan). Key elements of these protocols include:

- **Regular Drills:** MCAA conducts fire, severe weather, and lockdown drills in alignment with state mandates and best practices, logging each drill for compliance review (Attachment: MCAA Drill Log).

- MCAA completes one safety drill [REDACTED] as suggested by the Alabama State Department of Education.
- MCAA has one safety drill [REDACTED] that students are in the building. One severe weather drill is conducted in September, October, or November and one severe weather drill is conducted in January, February or March.
- Active shooter drills are conducted the [REDACTED] of school in both first semester and second semester.
- Fire drills are conducted [REDACTED] when students are in the building. MCAA schedules drills for each month before the start of the school year.
- **Partnerships with First Responders:** MCAA collaborates with local law enforcement, fire, and EMS agencies for safety planning and rapid response coordination. MCAA has built relationships with the Homewood Police Department located across the street from campus. Law enforcement officers are invited in periodically, and the Principal has met with supervisors of the Homewood Police Department towards maintaining connection with the department. Homewood Police Department officers frequently drive around the school during school hours as part of safety practices. MCAA staff also work with Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to work through safety issues that may arise. Dr. Furman is a member of the FBI Citizens Academy, which grants access to local federal law enforcement, as well as a direct line of communication about events happening in the area. Likewise, MCAA is connected to resources for schools available through the FBI's partnership with the private sector, InfraGard, and the Homeland Security Information Network.
- **Trained Personnel:** All MCAA staff are certified in Mental Health First Aid and receive annual training in emergency protocols, including evacuation, shelter-in-place, and crisis communication. Mental Health First Aid helps teachers and staff members know how to deescalate situations with students in crisis. This training was provided by a Licensed Professional Counselor who is certified by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, Kim Bailey. MCAA's building has been inspected and assessed for safety vulnerabilities by the Department of Homeland Security as well as the ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) trainer, Lt. Debbie Sumrall. Lt. Sumrall assessed the building and trained staff on crisis management in the event of an active shooter or other violent threat. Dr. Furman has also received extensive training in active shooter response tactics and trains staff on an ongoing basis. All school training is documented with sign in sheets (Attachment: MCAA Training Sign in sheet).
- **On-Site Safety Personnel:** [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- **Communication Systems:** [REDACTED]

- **Safety Features:** [REDACTED]

*Information redacted due to a disclosure of security information of the school.

Positive and Supportive Climate

Beyond physical safety, MCAA fosters a positive learning environment through:

- **Clear Behavioral Expectations:** The values of MCAA are *Community, Voice, Passion, Ownership*. The SGA (Student Government Association) suggested the values that MCAA students should strive for, thus creating a buy in from the student body. These values are then repeated through signage, the news broadcast, and lessons in advisory period. The advisory classes, that meet weekly, have activities through which students work to enforce these values. During the first days of school each semester, Advisory teachers are given slide decks of expectations to review with students. These cover topics such as making good choices and interpersonal skills. MCAA teachers also have lessons in advisory about the contents of the MCAA Student Handbook, which includes expectations. The administration of MCAA holds assemblies to go over policies and expectations that students need to know. (Attachment: MCAA Student Handbook)
- **Wraparound Supports:**
 - Access to a full-time licensed therapist (through JBS Mental Health partnership), on-site counseling for all students.
 - MCAA has a robust family resource program through which we provide food, clothing, hygiene products to students and their families as needed.
 - MCAA's mental health team checks in on students on a weekly basis as needed to evaluate and coordinate what, if any, services are needed for the mental health of our students.
 - Referrals for students and families/guardians to the Magic City Wellness Center, which provides medical and free mental health treatment.
 - Partnership with KultureCity for sensory needs, equipment and training.
 - MCAA students have access to all applicable programs offered through BAO including drop-in center, attorneys, mental health, medical facility, adolescent eating disorder center, and community outreach programs.
 - MCAA partners with RoverChase which provided a facility dog, training, and ongoing support for students struggling with anxiety and other mental health issues.
- **Inclusive Environment:**
 - Brightly colored, student-friendly spaces; sensory rooms; and common areas that encourage collaboration and a sense of belonging.
 - KultureCity designed a sensory room and provides ongoing training to teachers to support students with sensory needs.
 - MCAA supports students who are neurodivergent by providing sensory items throughout the building, including in classrooms, offices, and sensory rooms. Each hallway in the school is painted with a different color, to help those who have trouble remembering where their classes are located.

- MCAA has held silent discos, where music is only heard through headphones which the students can control the volume; students and adults have loved this event.
- MCAA is inclusive to Spanish-speaking families. The school includes all parental communication in English and Spanish. The only language other than English spoken by MCAA families/guardians is Spanish.
- MCAA students requiring special services receive the services they require, which may include psychometry, Speech and Language, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and the like in their least restrictive environment. MCAA has students who require a velcro aid or teacher (one-to-one support person) for help with certain needs. For example, a student may require academic assistance in each class, such that a support person could accompany the student and help the student navigate classes throughout the day.
- MCAA leaders and stakeholders identified the location for the school through an intensive search of the City of Birmingham and Homewood. The location at 75 Bagby Drive shares close proximity to the I-65 interstate, Homewood Police Department, and other buildings that are potentially available for MCAA expansion. The architectural designers and stakeholders sought advice from students by asking “how to design a school you would like,” “what environment would help you learn / distract you from learning,” and “how to make schools better.” MCAA features originally identified or designed by students include:
 - Bright colors on the walls dividing the building: students who might struggle to remember room “200,” will relate easier to recalling that their class is in the “purple area.”
 - Elimination of lockers: students described the locker area as being a place of bullying and stress remembering their locker combination. Consequently, MCAA eliminated all lockers from the building design.
 - Sensory room: 1 in 4 individuals have a sensory need or invisible disability (KultureCity.org). Students stressed the need for a place to relax and de-sensitize, especially those who are neurodivergent or autistic. Through a grant from KultureCity, MCAA offers a dedicated sensory room that can be reserved by students for a 15 minute time-out opportunity to decompress. The room is equipped with a camera so front office staff can ensure the student is alone and safe in the room. As the world’s leading nonprofit on sensory accessibility and acceptance, KultureCity helped create sensory accessibility and inclusion for those with invisible disabilities in an acclaimed partnership with MCAA.

- Furniture: students commented that they need furniture beyond a traditional desk. MCAA furniture is on casters and can be moved into a variety of configurations. The teacher and students can move the furniture based upon the needs of the students.
- Loud bells: students recommended MCAA staff find a new way to signal class changes different from traditionally jarring loud bell sounds. Thus, MCAA students are notified of class changes by a simple chime over the sound system.

Conclusion

The *Renewal Performance Report* underscores and highlights how MCAA consistently has met standards for providing a safe and positive learning environment in the midst of navigating facility constraints brought on by rapid enrollment growth and expanded service offerings (Attachment: *Renewal Performance Report*). As an example, the *Renewal Performance Report* cites the following:

- Competitive ELA growth for all grade levels
- Improvements in Math proficiency year to year
- Overall academic achievement for all students
- Meets standards in every category
- Creating a great place to work for MCAA employees
- MCAA's adaptive use of space, comprehensive safety protocols, and unwavering commitment to student well-being that meet both the letter and spirit of state operability requirements.

As enrollment stabilizes and facility plans evolve, MCAA will continue to invest in infrastructure, training, and support systems to ensure that safety and a positive climate remain foundational to the mission. In sum, MCAA is fulfilling its mission: “The Magic City Acceptance Academy (MCAA) facilitates a community in which all learners are empowered to embrace education, achieve individual success, and take ownership of their future in a positive learning environment.”

(e) Provide a narrative on all outside accreditations obtained or sought, with a description of how these accreditations fit into the school model. Evidence of specific accreditations appears in the supporting documentation section.

MCAA reached an important milestone during the 2024–2025 school year by earning full accreditation through Cognia. Cognia Accreditation is respected around the world, providing an independent mark of quality in over 100 countries (Cognia.org). This accomplishment was more

than a formality; it represented an affirmation of MCAA's vision and practices. For a charter school, accreditation provides credibility in the broader educational landscape and signals to families, partners, and the state that our model meets rigorous standards. Cognia, in particular, is known for recognizing the innovative approaches that charter schools bring to education. For MCAA, the accreditation validated the student-centered philosophy while also creating new opportunities. One immediate benefit has been the opportunity for MCAA to host student teachers. By welcoming aspiring educators into classrooms, MCAA has established a pipeline for recruiting young, dynamic, and talented teachers who are already immersed in MCAA's mission and instructional approach. This, in turn, strengthens the school's long-term capacity to sustain excellent teaching and learning

(Attachment: *Cognia Certification*).

Cognia accreditation also affirmed what leaders and stakeholders know to be true about MCAA: the MCAA model is built on both academic rigor and teacher development. MCAA has designed a school culture where professional growth is expected and supported, and where instructional practices are continually refined to improve student outcomes. In this way, the Cognia process validated the progress MCAA has made to date while positioning the school to grow in ways that deepen the community impact.

Equally important to MCAA's mission is work in support of each whole child. MCAA recognizes that students cannot fully engage in learning if their mental health needs are unmet. For that reason, MCAA leaders took the step of certifying every teacher on staff in Mental Health First Aid through the National Council on Mental Wellbeing. This training equips educators with the skills to recognize and respond to signs of mental health or substance use challenges and to connect students quickly with professional help when necessary. The training is evidence-based and community-specific, using scenarios and activities that mirror real-life challenges students are likely to encounter. By completing this certification as an entire school, MCAA has distinguished itself from most schools in Alabama, where such training is not common. This benchmark of professional development likewise reflects MCAA's deep commitment to addressing individual barriers to learning by ensuring that every student feels supported academically, socially, and emotionally.

(Attachment: *Mental Health First AID Certification*).

MCAA has also invested in additional layers of safety and preparedness through Managing Crisis Safely (MCS) training for all staff. Developed by Glenwood Inc., MCS emphasizes prevention and de-escalation first, while also preparing staff to manage aggressive behavior if it cannot be avoided. The program includes strategies for calming situations, protecting students and staff, and, when absolutely necessary, conducting safe physical interventions. By equipping staff with these tools, MCAA proactively trains and plans for crisis management in effective but

compassionate and careful protocols. Moreover, this training showcases a preparedness stance: MCAA's staff do not wait for challenges or crises to escalate but instead work to prevent them while maintaining a practiced readiness to mitigate. Considered in totality, these varied layers of preparation—Cognia accreditation, Mental Health First Aid certification, and MCS training—illustrate the depth of MCAA's commitment to excellence, safety, and student well-being. Aptly, these measures also demonstrate that MCAA is focused on meeting academic standards with intentionality in sustaining a safe, supportive, and innovative learning environment where students can thrive.

Finally, MCAA has amply demonstrated its organizational strength through positive feedback from Compliance Monitoring with the Alabama State Department of Education. Across the past four years, MCAA's compliance record has been consistently strong. A small number of minor compliance findings have been quickly resolved meriting near-perfect scores in Federal Programs, Exceptional Education, and Operations. Specific auditor items identified and corrected are as follows:

- **Child Nutrition Program (CNP) Poster:** This required poster stating that students and families could receive free lunch during the summer was not posted in a location that could be seen by students or families/guardians. This poster is now visible in a general public location.
- **Special Education Services percentages:** MCAA had a disproportionality finding with student Special Services percentages. This was rectified through a deeper review of MCAA enrollment and IEP (Individual Education Plan) data. Because MCAA attracts students for enrollment who already have IEPs, MCAA houses a disproportionate number. Auditors found that students with exceptional needs have sought out MCAA having heard that it is a positive environment for such students. Working with ALSDE, Dr. Furman described and explained in detail each IEP and that a majority of IEP students enrolled at MCAA already had been identified with IEPs in previous school systems. Each student IEP needs were met by MCAA; the percentage of students with IEPs at MCAA is notably high given the mission.

These results reveal that MCAA operates with both accountability and integrity in ensuring that all systems, resources, and practices are as strong as the instruction in classrooms.

(Attachment: *Compliance Monitoring with the Alabama State Department of Education*).

Going forward, these accomplishments provide a solid foundation for continued growth. Accreditation has conferred MCAA with credibility and a teacher pipeline. Training initiatives have strengthened school capacity to support students holistically. And consistent compliance successes exhibit responsible management of resources and operations. Together, these achievements position MCAA to deepen its impact in the next charter term and to continue delivering on community promises.

(f) Provide a narrative on the findings from the most recent ALSDE Compliance Monitoring report. Address actions taken to be in compliance.

To date, MCAA proactively has addressed and resolved each finding from recent compliance reviews. Examples include:

- Exceptional Education: Finding: MCAA case managers had been balancing too many students on their individual caseloads. MCAA leadership immediately reviewed the personnel budget and rectified the case overload by hiring and onboarding another teacher. Because Alabama does not have strict caseload limits in special education, the Alabama State Department of Education's (ALSDE) recommendation for a maximum of 20 students with disabilities per case manager serves as guidance.
- Word of mouth of MCAA's exceptional education services has increased the number of students who are neurodivergent. MCAA has had to increase staff members in order to serve the rising number of students in its Exceptional Education program. Students with IEPs are choosing to attend MCAA at a higher percentage than local school systems. The students/guardians are drawn to MCAA stating that our mission and focus on students first is what is needed for their student to thrive. The additional exceptional education students are resulting in a surplus of students from other districts, MCAA's case managers are more susceptible to developing disproportionality in the student-to-teacher ratios. This challenge is amplified by all MCAA students having chosen to attend our school with numerous students entering MCAA already identifying with disabilities. Students have enrolled at MCAA having found their community of support, as is essence of the school's mission.
- For the 2025-2026, MCAA hired an additional Exceptional Education teacher and another hire will take place before December 2025. Two paraprofessionals were also hired to support students needing 1:1 support in their classrooms.
- In 2025, MCAA hosted Charter Commission members several times for comprehensive in person facility site visits resulting in no reported findings.

Federal Programs Compliance reports reviews, no findings (Attachment: Federal Programs Compliance Report). Notable MCAA achievements include:

- All in-house records were in good order
- All applications and e-Gap 2.0 up to date
- No findings from reviewer Jason Isaacs, ALSDE

Highlights of the Federal Programs Compliance Report significantly include that MCAA had no findings for Compliance Monitoring in Federal Programs.

(g) If applicable, provide a narrative on mission specific operational goals. Please include how these goals are measured and how the school determines success. Provide evidence of success. This section is optional.

- Financial Performance

This section provides an opportunity to describe the school's financial performance over the years reviewed. Schools should reference the evidence contained in the financial section of the school's Renewal Performance Report and give context on the metrics contained therein. Schools may submit evidence that is not contained in the Renewal Performance Report that enhance or explain the financial health and sustainability of the school.

(a) Using the measures contained in the financial portion of the Performance Framework, provide a narrative on the financial health and sustainability of the school. Please reference only evidence from the Renewal Performance Report.

MCAA Operational Goals

- Goal 1: improve building security every year. This is measured by building leadership and the Operations Director. This year MCAA has added new cameras in blind spots and improved schoolwide communication through a new intercom system.
- Goal 2: Maintain a clean, welcoming environment. This is measured by building leadership and the Operations Director. The Operations Director ensures that the building is well-maintained and clean. It is painted every year and organized on a monthly basis.

(a) Financial Health and Sustainability

MCAA has demonstrated its stalwart commitment to fiscal responsibility and long-term sustainability, as evidenced by performance against the financial indicators in the Renewal Performance Framework (Attachment: Renewal Performance Framework). The Report enumerates the ways in which MCAA maintains financial stability, exhibits sound financial and accounting practices, and builds sustainable operations for a meritorious pathway into the next charter term.

Near-Term Indicators

MCAA consistently meets the near-term financial health indicators of the framework, which assess the school's ability to manage cash flow, maintain adequate reserves, and operate without financial distress. The Renewal Performance Framework report shows that MCAA has maintained positive cash balances throughout the review period, evidencing its ability to meet short-term financial obligations without disruption to instructional programs. As stated, many schools face financial hardships at some (or multiple) snapshot points in time with the most consequential ramifications necessitating cuts or restrictions in instruction and operations; such

hardships have not been the case for MCAA. In addition, the current ratio demonstrates that MCAA has sufficient current assets to cover current liabilities, a critical measure of short-term fiscal health. (Attachment: Renewal Performance Framework). Positive near-term indicators noted include:

- MCAA's change in short-term financial position in FY23 was driven by increases in expenditures in FY22 including significant investments in instructional services and supports, corresponding to enrollment gains of 44% from AY2021-22 to AY2022-23.
- With enrollment gains concentrated in high school grades where the size of classes more than doubled, MCAA needed additional high school subject matter teachers and support which contributed to costs in instructional investments and a higher Average Daily Membership (ADM) for FY24.
- MCAA's financial position stabilized upon finishing FY24.

Sustainability Indicators

On longer-term sustainability measures, MCAA continues to demonstrate prudent fiscal management. The Renewal Performance Framework report confirms that MCAA's debt-to-asset ratio remains within acceptable thresholds, reflecting responsible use of financing while protecting overall asset value. Furthermore, MCAA's audited financial statements indicate a commitment to clean financial practices, with no material weaknesses or financial compliance issues noted. (Attachment: Renewal Performance Framework). Though MCAA's enrollment growth from AY2021-22 to AY2022-23 increased a sizable 44%, state funding (based on previous year ADM) did not increase proportionally over this time. However, state funding rebounded in FY24 (based on the higher AY2022-23 ADM)

Unlike most charter schools, MCAA has a collaborative partnership with another nonprofit organization, Birmingham AIDS Outreach (BAO). BAO is a \$20 million+ organization with over 40 years of incorporated status and experience. Through partnership, BAO conducts the financial oversight of MCAA. Moreover, BAO has the cash reserves to meet unforeseen events at MCAA, which the Renewal Report does not contemplate or address in its assessment of carryover and related sustainability measures. Also, MCAA's fiscal year for audits runs from October 1 to September 30 of each year, thus resulting in a skewed financial snapshot of the MCAA school year that runs from approximately July to May each year (with slight year-to-year variation in the calendar Academic Year). Additionally, MCAA demonstrates financial flexibility in attracting non-governmental funding, meeting the informal benchmark each year for FY22, FY23, and FY24. MCAA is supported not only by BAO but by local foundations,

individuals, corporations, religious and faith-based organizations, and research partners; select supporters include Mike & Gillian Goodrich Foundation, Alabama Power Foundation, Regions Financial Corporation, IPC (Independent Presbyterian Church), Charter School Growth Fund, NewSchools Venture Fund, New Schools for Alabama, Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, JBS (Jefferson – Blount – St. Clair) Mental Health Authority, KultureCity, Walmart Foundation, Amazon, Books-a-Million, Porch Creek Indian, Fred Says Foundation, University of Montevallo, Interfaith Alliance of Central Alabama, and Jefferson State Community College.

Budgetary Practices and Fiscal Oversight

The Renewal Performance Framework report underscores that MCAA’s financial performance is the result of deliberate and transparent practices. Per the Charter Commission, MCAA has met each and every aspect of compliance with state and federal requirements, oversight on financial decision-making, and transparency for all stakeholders as evidenced in metrics for Governance, Financial Policies, Financial Reporting, Audit Findings, and overall Rating for FY22, FY23, and FY24. (Attachment: Renewal Performance Framework). Positive budgetary practices and fiscal oversight indicators noted include:

- Board agendas and minutes that include monthly financial position are posted on the MCAA website, as well as annual budgets, furthering openness and transparency with the community and stakeholders.
- “The board’s bylaws and school’s policies on financial matters are in line with expectations for a public school in Alabama.” (Renewal Report)
- “Reviews of the FY22, FY23, and FY24 audits reveal no findings.” (Renewal Report)
- “There have been no direct reports to the Commission from other constituencies on financial reporting issues [...] Compliance Monitoring (CM) – LEA Accounting & Reporting section had no findings on reporting.” (Renewal Report)
- Magic City Acceptance Academy is in good standing with financial reporting to the Commission and reviews of the FY22, FY23, and FY24 audits reveal no findings.
- Magic City Acceptance Academy maintains transparency to the community through postings on its website (as well as through numerous means detailed herein).

MCAA’s governing board receives regular/monthly financial updates and has established oversight mechanisms to ensure compliance with state requirements as well as public accountability. The monthly budget to actual reports are generated by New Schools for Alabama accounting team. The reports are explained in the MCAA board of director’s monthly meetings and the financials, bank reconciliations are approved by the MCAA board of directors. The monthly check registers and financials are posted on the MCAA website (Attachment: Monthly

Financial Report Example). In addition to the MCAA board of directors, the BAO board of directors is updated on the financial stability of MCAA. MCAA is audited each year by an outside independent certified professional accounting firm. Budget-to-actual reports show that MCAA operates within approved budgets while strategically allocating resources to instructional priorities and student supports, two integral areas of demonstrable school strength.

Regarding expense practices, Dr. Furman approves every purchase order and check request for MCAA. Each expense must have a revenue source attached to the expense, receipt, and explanation of expense. The purchase orders/check requests are sent to the New Schools for Alabama finance team. Weekly, Dr. Musgrove receives a spreadsheet of each expense and approves Melanie to make a payment on each expense. This dual approval for payment of expenses ensures the financial stability of MCAA. Dr. Furman and Dr. Musgrove have a standing Zoom meeting weekly with the New Schools for Alabama financial team, Melanie Hayes and Russell Raney. The purpose of the weekly meeting is to discuss outstanding invoices, pending funding, budget trends and projections, and reimbursements. The New Schools for Alabama back-office services also includes federal grant reimbursement assistance. Dr. Furman meets monthly with Bernard Mitchell from New Schools for Alabama to go over all federal and state funding and programs. Bernard ensures that all federal and state funding is applied for, billed, and spent. Lastly, MCAA utilizes team members at BAO and New Schools for Alabama to help ensure that MCAA takes advantage of all state and federal funding, that expenses are adequately documented and approved, and that the highest accounting standards are observed and upheld. These levels of oversight and collaboration make MCAA a fiscally responsible and strong charter school.

Conclusion

The Renewal Performance Framework Report verifies that MCAA has “established and maintained key elements of financial health required under the Performance Framework” (Attachment: Renewal Performance Framework). Positive near-term indicators, responsible debt management, clean audits, and strong board oversight all demonstrate that the school is financially healthy and well-positioned for sustainability in the renewal term. These objectively measured indicators provide clear and convincing evidence that MCAA is meeting the financial expectations of the Performance Framework and can continue to deliver strongly on its mission without significant fiscal risk.

(b) Provide any supplemental evidence or documentation on the financial health and sustainability of the school. Please provide context for the evidence.

The vision of MCAA was initiated by the board of directors at Birmingham AIDS Outreach (BAO). BAO acquired the charter school certification to create the Magic City Acceptance Academy. BAO operates closely with MCAA as a donor, fiscal agent, and employer of the CEO, Dr. Karen Musgrove (Attachment: BAO/MCAA Organizational Chart). Once the Alabama Charter School Commission approved MCAA, MCAA acquired its own 501c3 non-profit status. The BAO board of directors remains committed to the financial sustainability of MCAA and has pledged to cover the expense of the building, utilities, and case management staff not covered by state funding, as well as a percentage of the CEO salary and fringe (such that all pledged costs total \$1.5 million dollars every fiscal year). The revenue generated at the Magic City Wellness Center, BAO's medical facility, is used to cover the expense. The CEO of BAO is also the CEO of MCAA and this relationship is written in the by-laws of MCAA. One member of the BAO board's executive committee serves on the MCAA board of directors. The MCAA monthly financial statements and school information is given to the BAO board of directors at the board meeting. In the first two years of MCAA, New Schools for Alabama had not created the "back office" services, so BAO provided all administrative and fiscal oversight and services. In the event MCAA should require funding or cash to cover an expense while waiting for reimbursements or accounts receivable, BAO is able to cover costs for MCAA. For example, the lease for the student computers was to be renewed this year and BAO was able to cover the entire cost of the computers (\$171,196.00), thereby saving the expense of interest rates and fees (\$28,248.00) for taking out a loan from the computer company. MCAA will pay this expense back to BAO over the next year without fees or interest. Another example from the beginning of this school year involved a newly enrolled student at MCAA. This student enrolled and entered already having an IEP, which necessitated a teacher to be assigned to the student throughout each school day in its entirety for close full-time use. The expense of a new full time teacher is not covered by any federal or state funding and was not part of the operative MCAA budget. Dr. Furman and Dr. Musgrove were able to quickly acquire funds to support the new teacher from a BAO reserve account and posted the new teacher position the very same day.

The BAO development team is integrated into MCAA providing support in grant writing, thank you notes, donor relations, and maintaining a donor database. BAO staff move between the two agencies utilizing resources from both organizations. BAO is able to leverage its history, community name recognition, and community support for MCAA. Within the fiscal year 2025-2026, BAO will hire a full-time development staff member who will be dedicated to MCAA financial development, special events, and grant writing. BAO/MCAA development goals for 2025-2026 include:

- Acquire funding to hire additional case managers/social workers so that each grade has an assigned case manager/social worker
- Host a community fundraising event for MCAA
- Create a marketing plan/development plan to increase enrollment at MCAA

The collaborative relationship between BAO and MCAA is unique and promotes a stronger school by making available additional funding, support, staff, and experience. Both the MCAA and BAO boards are committed to the mission, vision, and future success of MCAA.

(c) Please comment on any findings found in the most recent financial audit for the school.

MCAA is audited every year by an outside independent certified public accounting firm. All comprehensive financial and accounting audits have resulted in no findings. Additionally, the board of directors reviews financial statements monthly during its public meetings. The Principal and CEO keep the board informed of significant financial developments with timely attention to emergent issues. The regularity of monthly board of directors meetings is a key mechanism for maintaining fiscal budgetary fidelity and timely tracking of all fiduciary responsibilities. (Attachment: MCAA audit)

(d) Please describe any financial challenges that have occurred since the school's opening and how the challenges have been resolved.

MCAA's charter application was approved in 2020 with the school opening date in August 2021. BAO identified an empty building in need of wholesale renovation. Around January 2021, BAO worked with CCR Architecture & Interiors to design what would become an award winning beautiful state-of-the-art school facility designed for students in grades 6 through 12. The costs of reconstruction in the midst of the global COVID pandemic proved more expensive than initially projected with some costs not covered by allotted state and federal funding. In particular, prices of steel, electronics, and staffing increased substantially during COVID. *(Attachment: MCAA Design Layout)*. BAO accepted the cost of the yearly building rent (\$1,000,000.00). This donation from BAO covering facility costs allowed MCAA to allocate state, federal, and grant-related funding on direct student and educational programs.

MCAA's biggest financial challenge relates to cash flow and the process whereby costs accrue and must be paid prior to reimbursement or scheduled payment of state, federal, and grant funding. When needed, BAO has been able to extend support to pay invoices, payroll, and other expenses when due. MCAA is able to reimburse BAO for expenses when federal, state, and grant funding is received without additional interest or fee costs.

C) LOOKING FORWARD: Plans for the Renewal Term

1. Adjustments to the Performance Framework

This section gives the school the opportunity to address and change aspects of the performance framework to reflect the means the school will use to measure success during the upcoming renewal term.

(a) Describe and state the rationale for any proposed changes in targets for the standardized academic performance measures as stated in the existing Performance Framework.

Academic Performance Narrative

MCAA is dedicated to serving students struggling or failing to thrive. Some students enter school below grade level, many facing economic or social challenges that render traditional learning environments difficult to navigate. MCAA's mission is to provide an education that is both rigorous and supportive, empowering students to grow academically, socially, and emotionally. Every decision—from instructional design to professional development to facility layout—is guided by the principle that all students deserve an opportunity to thrive. To measure progress toward this mission, MCAA examines multiple data sources including the Alabama Charter Commission's Performance Framework, NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), which is administered three times per year, standardized testing data, and internal data, such as surveys and classroom performance. MCAA's Renewal Performance Report highlights that students consistently demonstrate growth with proficiency rates improving steadily over time. NWEA MAP Growth results provide an additional lens into student learning, showing that instructional strategies are accelerating growth for students who begin the year below grade level. Together, these different measures substantiate how MCAA's instruction meets state expectations and drives meaningful learning gains for our students most at-risk of educational stagnation or failure to thrive. (Attachment: *Renewal Performance Report, NWEA Report*).

In English Language Arts, MCAA students consistently outperform peers while the percentage of economically disadvantaged students has grown sharply by rising from 18.22% in FY22 to 58.81% in FY24 (ALSDE State A-F Report Card). This remarkable consistency of high performance demonstrates the effectiveness of MCAA's instructional model as it serves an increasing number of higher-need students. When significant enrollment changes such as occurred in FY23, MCAA nearly doubled its population of economically disadvantaged students, yet students and staff rebounded quickly as seen in improvements to overall grades and math performance during FY24 (ALSDE FY24 State A-F Report Card).

MCAA's growth-focused approach is also supported by intentional facility and programmatic adaptations. Classrooms have been reconfigured with flexible seating and modular furniture to support rapid instructional shifts, and spaces have been dedicated to sensory and de-escalation

needs, small-group instruction, and multi-purpose learning areas. These changes ensure that every student has access to the environment they need and that is conducive to success. MCAA's commitment to the whole child extends beyond academics, as well. During the 2024–2025 school year, MCAA earned Cognia accreditation which validated our instructional model and provided additional opportunities for professional development, such as hosting student teachers who contribute to our growing pipeline of skilled educators. All teachers have been certified in Mental Health First Aid, equipping staff to recognize and respond to student mental health and substance use challenges. MCAA staff also have completed Managing Crisis Safely training to prevent and manage crises with safety and efficacy, thereby contributing to MCAA's toolbox for cultivating a secure and supportive environment for maximal learning.

As indicated, MCAA's operational strength is reflected in consistent positive feedback from Compliance Monitoring with the Alabama State Department of Education. Over the past four years, the school has maintained near-perfect scores in Federal Programs, Exceptional Education, and Operations, with only minimal findings that MCAA quickly resolved. This record emphasizes that MCAA delivers strong academic outcomes with accountability and integrity. Considered in their totality, these objective indicators, different sets of data, programmatic evaluations, and meritorious operational practices reflect how MCAA has met its prior charter commitments and uniquely position our school to accelerate student growth, close proficiency gaps, and deepen the impact of the mission. Renewal provides the opportunity to continue building on these proven strengths and to expand MCAA's ability to support the students who need it most. Accordingly, MCAA's capacity for and record of serving students in need stands as its most meaningful measurement of success, and the greatest standard against which MCAA grades itself in the community.

(a) Proposed Changes in Standardized Academic Performance Targets

ELA and Math Proficiency

Currently, MCAA's target for student proficiency rates in ELA and Math is to measure comparable to state averages. MCAA's proposed target going forward is to maintain proficiency as a central accountability measure while adopting incremental annual improvement goals of +3–5 percentage points in both ELA and Math until state averages are met. The ultimate goal is to exceed state averages, recognizing that the work input must be continual in order to advance incrementally over time with achievable benchmarks set and reached along the way.

MCAA's rationale in setting these targets relates to the Performance Framework report of ELA proficiency improving from 11.36% in FY23 to 19.63% in FY24, and with Math proficiency rising from 13.74% to 17.84% over the same period. These gains were forged through several effective instructional interventions. NWEA MAP data duplicates this parallel progress, revealing that a majority of MCAA students are meeting or exceeding annual growth projections

in reading and math. Incremental proficiency targets engender academic rigor with realistically achievable expectations for continued progress.

Concerning ELA and Math Growth, MCAA's current target is defined by the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expected growth in ELA and Math on ACAP weighted equally with proficiency. MCAA's proposed target is to increase the weight of growth to 60% of the overall academic performance score with proficiency weighted at 40%. The basis for this change once more is outlined in MCAA's Renewal Performance Report, which detailed that 90.77% of MCAA students met or exceeded expected growth in FY24 to outperform both Jefferson County Schools and the State of Alabama. NWEA MAP (administered three times annually) reinforces this MCAA strength of consistent growth across cohorts and simultaneously provides teachers with actionable, real-time data. By increasing the weight of growth, this formula would allow the performance framework to better mirror MCAA's effectiveness in accelerating learning for students entering below grade level.

MCAA's current target for Subgroup Performance is defined by aggregate proficiency in ELA and Math. Our proposed target is to add subgroup-specific metrics aiming for +3–5 percentage point annual improvement in proficiency for economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English learners until reaching state averages. The Performance Framework Report makes numerous references to economically disadvantaged students at MCAA outperforming both Jefferson County Schools and the state in ELA proficiency. NWEA MAP data captures ongoing monitoring of subgroup progress throughout each year, enabling teachers to make adjustments to interventions more rapidly in response to emerging opportunity gaps. The addition of subgroup-specific targets also would strengthen equity commitments and accountability by taking into account more frequently available data allowing for more step-wise and tailored adjustments in the interventions.

Presently, the Performance Framework does not explicitly set forth a target for Science proficiency. MCAA proposes to incorporate Science proficiency in grades 7 and 10 as standardized academic measures, along with annual targets correlated to state averages. Science is assessed under the Alabama accountability system and MCAA is building capacity in this area through project-based learning. NWEA MAP science benchmarks are already administered in certain grades providing evidence of student readiness and growth in STEM fields. The inclusion of Science proficiency targets is in alignment with the Performance Framework's outlining of state priorities while supporting more balanced accountability across the entire core curriculum.

Conclusion

The Renewal Performance Report demonstrates that MCAA's greatest strength is growth with nearly all students showing academic progress. MCAA's proficiency rates, though still below state averages, show steady improvement. Supplemental evidence from NWEA MAP corroborates

these trends and offers multiple checkpoints throughout each year for validation of student progress. By increasing the weight of growth, adding incremental proficiency goals, embedding subgroup accountability, and incorporating science, these proposed revisions to the Performance Framework establish a rigorous but fair system reflective of both state standards and MCAA’s mission to accelerate learning for re-engaged students.

(b) Provide an explanation for any new or refined mission-specific measures to be included in a revised Performance Framework. Include a discussion on any mission-specific measures that have been removed. All mission-specific measures should include at least one metric with an associated target, related to school success.

(b) Mission-Specific Measures – Additions, Refinements, and Removals

A. Overview

MCAA’s mission is to provide The Magic City Acceptance Academy (MCAA) mission is to “facilitate a community in which all learners are empowered to embrace education, achieve individual success, and take ownership of their future in a positive learning environment.” MCAA provides a rigorous learning environment for students who have been underserved, disengaged, or excluded from traditional schools. MCAA’s student population includes a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students (58.81% in FY24, up from 18.22% in FY22), as well as students with disabilities, English learners, and students with prior interrupted schooling (ALSDE State A-F Report Card) In refining mission-specific measures for the revised Performance Framework, MCAA has prioritized indicators that:

- Reflect more directly the success of the mission in both academic and social-emotional domains
- Use clear, objectively measurable targets that allow for ongoing monitoring and accountability.
- Capture both proficiency and growth in recognition of the unique learning trajectories of students.
- Replace less impactful or redundant measures with more mission-aligned metrics.

B. New Mission-Specific Measures

MCAA denotes the following mission-specific measures:

1. Annual Student Growth – NWEA MAP

- Metric: Percentage of students meeting or exceeding annual growth projections in Reading and Math on the NWEA MAP assessment.
- Target: Increase NWEA scores in math by 2%,

- Rationale: The *Renewal Performance Report* confirms high growth rates on state tests (90.77% in FY24), but NWEA MAP provides three data points per year, allowing timely instructional adjustments. This measure reflects our mission to accelerate learning for students entering below grade level (Attachment: *Renewal Performance Report*).

2. Student Engagement

- Metric: MCAA's students will develop into more confident, proficient readers and writers who are **deeply invested** in their own learning and in the power of literacy as a tool for personal and social transformation. Through **meaningful engagement** with texts and purposeful writing, they will learn to analyze, question, and contribute meaningfully to a complex, interconnected world.
 - Target: Increase reading NWEA scores by 2% and increase the percentage of MCAA students checking out (and independently reading) library books by 30% by the end of the 2025-2026 academic year

3. Social-Emotional Wellness & Support

- Metric: Percentage of students reporting a positive sense of belonging, safety, and access to needed supports, measured by an annual school climate survey. The survey will be given once at the end of first semester, and again at the end of the year. The survey will be created and administered through Kelvin.
- Target: $\geq 80\%$ of students report positive results in all measured domains.
- Rationale: MCAA's mission includes providing an affirming environment where all students feel safe and supported. This aligns with wraparound services as cited in the *Renewal Performance Report*, including MCAA's available full-time on-campus therapy, sensory rooms, mental health and crisis training for staff.

4. College & Career Readiness

- Metric: 100 % of all graduating Seniors will have benchmarked in one or more areas according to the Alabama State Department of Education High School Graduation Requirements for College and Career Readiness (CCRI).
- Target: 100% of all graduating seniors will have benchmarked in one or more CCRI assessments.

C. Refined Mission-Specific Measures

ELA/Math Proficiency for Subgroups

- Refinement: Maintain disaggregated proficiency reporting for economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English learners, but add an annual improvement target of +3–5 percentage points until subgroup performance meets or exceeds the state average.

- Rationale: *The Renewal Performance Report* shows MCAA’s economically disadvantaged students outperforming state and district ELA averages. Refining the measure with incremental targets of 1% increases over the previous year will ensure accountability for ongoing progress and equity. The goal will be measured by (Attachment: Renewal Performance Report).

D. Removed Mission-Specific Measures

Student Participation in Extracurricular Activities

- Reason for Removal: While extracurricular participation benefits student development, it is not a direct measure of academic or mission success as defined in the Performance Framework. Participation rates may be influenced by factors outside the school’s control, such as facilities, transportation, or family obligations.
- Replacement: Elements of student engagement will now be captured through the Student Engagement measure and School Climate Survey (KELVIN) results, which are more directly tied to mission outcomes (Attachment: Student Engagement & Retention Measure and School Climate Survey).

Conclusion

MCAA’s proposed mission-specific measures—namely NWEA MAP growth, retention, school climate, and capstone completion—directly track both the academic and socio-emotional outcomes at the heart of MCAA’s mission. Refining subgroup proficiency targets will ensure equitable progress while removing less impactful measures will keep the framework focused, measurable, and mission-driven.

1. Changes to the School Model

This section gives the school the opportunity to address and change aspects of the school model to reflect the anticipated needs during the upcoming renewal term. Substantive changes desired by the school, including, but not limited to, grade span served, program delivery, or target population, may require additional data analysis and research-based evidence after the initial charter is renewed and before the new contract is finalized

(a) If applicable, provide changes to the school mission or vision statements.

MCAA changed its mission statement to reflect the students and communities it serves. The mission reads: *The Magic City Acceptance Academy (MCAA) facilitates a community in which all learners are empowered to embrace education, achieve individual success, and take ownership of their future in a positive learning environment.* MCAA welcomes students who are not succeeding in their prior schools or educational circumstances. MCAA looks for ways to help students succeed when they have fallen behind due to disconnection from their education

system. MCAA works to help students recover credit and further their educational progress and growth through graduation and as they embark upon post-graduation opportunities.

(b) Describe and explain any desired changes to the student population served. This includes changes in the grade span, target community served, target student populations within that community, or substantive (+/- 25%) changes to enrollment targets. Please provide evidence to support the desired changes.

MCAA's goal is to serve the students who choose MCAA from whatever educational background they previously have experienced. Currently, the school has no plans to change grade span or enrollment targets in particular.

MCAA's ultimate goal for enrollment is 500 total students across grades 6 through 12. Due to space limitations in the current building, MCAA has not met that numerical threshold yet. In the first five years, MCAA used a gradual increase goal for enrollment every year, starting at 250 and ending at 350. With the new 5 year charter school contract, the growth of the entire student body to 500 is the primary objective of recruitment and enrollment. Upon approval of another 5 year charter school contract, construction will begin on the building next to MCAA. The new building design plans and re-zoning has been approved by the Homewood City Council and Planning Committee. The new building would allow MCAA to create a "green space" in front of the building and a walkway directly into the second floor of 74 Bagby Drive. The second floor will house a new blackbox theater and band room. The third floor will house classrooms and administration offices. This campus expansion would further allow MCAA to recruit new teachers and increase the student population. Currently, MCAA has four grades with waiting lists: 8th, 10th, 11th, and 12th. Given the number of teachers currently employed, number of classrooms, and aim to keep the core classes small, MCAA does not have space to clear the waiting lists. However, an expansion across the street with concomitant hiring of new staff will make MCAA's goal 500 enrolled students eminently attainable.

(c) Describe and explain any desired changes to the academic program. This includes significant changes to curriculum, delivery methods or assessment methods. Include changes to the school schedule or calendar. Please provide evidence to support the desired changes. This section is optional.

MCAA's leadership resolutely believe in continuous school improvement. Towards this end, MCAA leaders are reprioritizing focus on remediating identifiable gaps in learning among students. Such learning gaps often correspond with socioeconomic factors associated with low-income households, poverty conditions, and general lack of resources. MCAA's leadership fundamentally understands that its student population consists of a large number of students who have been disconnected from education or struggled in prior schooling at some juncture in their

scholastic development or learning journey. Socioeconomic factors significantly contribute to lower proficiency rates among MCAA students. To help bridge these gaps, MCAA has created a robust instructional coaching model. MCAA's coaching team scaffolds support of teachers with more experience alongside those with less classroom teaching experience. The coaching team conducts regularly scheduled meetings with the members of their cohort to collaborate, co-plan, co-teach, problem-solve, or otherwise share teaching strategies. In addition to having an instructional coach, subject department heads also spend time in the classrooms of their department members to offer empirical feedback and constructive pedagogical dialogue. Through these varieties of feedback mechanisms from different contexts, the MCAA instructional coaching model immerses teachers with authentic and pragmatic feedback to elevate specific instructional practices, to widen teacher perspective of good teaching, to instill confidence, and to model collegiality. These mentorship and supportive practices are integral to maintaining the schoolwide environment and culture of positivity and accountability.

As previously discussed, MCAA initiated another important change in the academic program by building breaks from school during traditionally lower performance times in the academic calendar. Hence, MCAA starts a week earlier and ends a week later than in prior academic fiscal years to furnish breaks to students and staff alike around times that may have been more difficult for some (October and February) because students and teachers work together more effectively in shorter chunks of time. Having more breaks in school allows for more productive work times, and shortens the summer. This adjustment shrinks learning loss over summer months by giving necessary time off so students and staff do not burnout as may occur in a more compact academic calendar. Thus, this adjustment ultimately serves to support overall wellness among students and staff, too.

MCAA offers summer school programming each June, which also furnishes students with an opportunity to recover lost credits and have more focused time with electives, in addition to summer camp events. Summer programming supports students who need extra opportunities in a safe place with two meals. Last summer, MCAA hosted the following June free student activities:

- Theater camp
- Middle school credit recovery class
- High School credit recovery class
- Girls Rock Camp (collaborative partnership with Girls Rock Birmingham)

(d) Describe and explain any desired changes to the governance structure. This includes changes to the size and composition of the governing board, the bylaws, or other governance policies. This section is optional.

MCAA is governed by a board of directors that oversees the fiscal, fiduciary, policy, and legal management of the school. The CEO and Principal/Superintendent are supervised by the MCAA board of directors. The MCAA board of director's reviews bylaws and policies annually; each summer the board reviews the student, parent, and staff handbook, as well, approving any new policies and procedures for the upcoming term. MCAA has exercised this governance structure since its formation with management success and community transparency (Attachment: MCAA Bylaws).

(e) Describe and explain any desired changes to the staffing structure. This includes changes to school leadership, support personnel, and teaching staff. Attach a revised staffing chart.

Primary changes MCAA has made to its staffing structure involved the addition of an instructional coach to lead Professional Learning Communities and the Coaching Team. This position has benefited MCAA's leadership team, as this position previously was temporary. MCAA is building up and deploying its instructional coaching model as described herein. MCAA also added three teachers and two paraeducators to support students with IEPs. The school seeks to hire one more math teacher to keep math classes small and further progress towards closing gaps in math acquisition.

Ideally, MCAA would be able to better serve its current student body with an additional teacher per core content area by reducing class sizes to 20 students per teacher. Another desired change would be to increase mental health provider staff. Presently, MCAA employs three social workers/case managers and one licensed professional counselor. Therefore, a reachable goal is to employ one social worker/case manager/licensed professional counselor for each grade level. With mental health office space at maximum capacity, a provision of expansion into the adjacent building (74 Bagby Drive) would be to include additional counseling offices.
(Attachment: MCAA Staffing Chart)

(f) Describe and explain any desired changes to facilities. This includes new locations and expansions. Provide a timeline for desired expansion and supporting documentation if applicable.

In the event of significant expansion to total enrollment and proportionate staffing, MCAA has envisioned a need for more physical infrastructure. MCAA would keep the existing facility and seek to acquire the adjacent building as part of the school campus. Upon approval of another 5 year charter school contract, construction will begin on the building next to MCAA. The new building design plans and re-zoning have been approved by the Homewood City Council and Planning Committee. Construction could begin on the expansion as imminently as January 2026. The second and third floors have been emptied of professional renters allowing for a quick construction timeline. The new building will allow for MCAA to create a "green space" in front of the building and a covered walkway leading directly into the second floor of 74 Bagby Drive.

The green space will be used as the P.E. outside space for soccer, basketball, and other outside activities. The walkway from the greenspace to the second floor will be secured by scan cards allowing only MCAA staff and students to enter the second and third floor. The second floor will house a new blackbox theater and band room. The third floor will house classrooms and administration offices. This proposed expansion will allow MCAA to recruit new teachers and increase student enrollment.

Of note, two vacant buildings exist next to MCAA. The owner is an established business partner of BAO who also owns two other buildings currently housing BAO programs, namely, the Magic City Wellness Center and NewCircle, a new eating disorder center. The vacant buildings will be converted into one and two bedroom apartments. One target population for these apartments are clients of a local nonprofit agency Triumph, Inc. (Triumph.org). Triumph works closely with organizations across the state on service provision for individuals with developmental disabilities. Triumph will house their professional offices on the first floor of the northern building; the southern building (closer to MCAA) will house apartments and an office of the Magic City Wellness Center. The Wellness Center office will house medical staff, counseling staff, and administrative services. It is conceivable that MCAA students could access services at the Magic City Wellness Center and Triumph after graduation. The City of Homewood City Council and Planning/Zoning Committee has approved these plans and re-zoning, with construction greenlit to begin January 2026.

(Attachment: Homewood City Council approval article).

(Attachment: MCAA 2021 Building renderings).

(g) Describe and explain any desired changes to business services. This includes changes to food services or back-office support (bookkeeping, budgeting, federal programs, etc.).

MCAA has coordinated with a variety of companies to ensure business services are efficient and meet the needs of students and staff. Examples include:

- New Schools for Alabama. All “back-office” supportive services. These services include: generating monthly financials, bookkeeping, accounts receivable, accounts payable, federal and state drawdowns and programs, yearly budget presentation to board of directors and approval, assistance with the annual audit, weekly meetings with CEO and Principal, and navigating contracts for large expenses, such as meal services.
- SLA Management Services. The MCAA meal service program is provided by SLA Management. This contract is a collaboration between all charter schools in Alabama and is negotiated by New Schools for Alabama. The meal company ensures federal food guidelines are followed, health permits standards are maintained, and free/reduce lunch paperwork is completed. The SLA Management employs the service/meal providers.
- South Eastern Services. This cleaning company employs one full-time custodian during the day and a crew during the night.

- Student Transportation Solutions (STS). MCAA contracts with STS to provide 4 school buses to and from school each school day.
- Stepping Stones. MCAA contracts with Stepping Stones for auxiliary servicers required by IEPs for students, such as physical therapy, occupational therapy.
- Emergis. MCAA contracts with Emergis to provide a part-time Speech-Language Pathologist.
- Birmingham AIDS Outreach (BAO). MCAA collaborates with BAO for additional administrative assistance including HR, supervision, and support.
- Farris Properties. Ownership of MCAA building (75 Bagby Drive) and the future expansion building (74 Bagby Drive).
- NewSchools Venture Fund: MCAA receives mentorship and financial support through NewSchools Venture Fund. This organization hosts a yearly conference focused on the needs and resources for charter schools.

Having recently embarked upon its 5th year, MCAA has built up a robust infrastructure and cultivated numerous partnerships towards fulfillment of the mission. At this time, MCAA does not anticipate changing business relationships as they have proven effective.

(h) Describe and explain any desired changes to education service providers. This section is optional.

Not applicable. MCAA does not outsource to any education service providers.

(i) Describe and explain any desired changes to the school model that has not been queried in the sections above.

MCAA has a goal of providing a mental health case manager, social worker, or LPC for every grade-level. This would be a noteworthy shift from the traditional school model. MCAA sets this goal based on the growing need for mental health services. MCAA has students who are placed in the hospital for mental health concerns on a monthly basis. These students return to school and require more support than the three case managers can provide. The mental health needs of students at MCAA—and probably in every other school—is staggering. In order to provide a quality education for all of students, MCAA must address academic needs and mental health and wellness. MCAA provides wrap-around services for students and often their families, but those services may fall short due to finite resources. With more staff, space, and funding, MCAA stands ready to provide for families in ways that are truly unprecedented.

(j) Provide a comprehensive financial analysis of the costs associated with making the desired changes outlined above, and the revenue streams available to finance these changes. Attach a preliminary budget summary for the first year of the renewal period.

(Attachment: Preliminary Budget Summary for Building Changes)