

## Questioning Charter Schools?

American Leadership Academy (ALA), a publicly funded Charter School founded in Spanish Fork, Utah, will open its doors fall of 2005. We are thrilled to be able offer the families in Utah County a choice in education and hope we can serve many of you.

So you can better understand more about charters schools, and particularly ALA, we offer these questions and answers to help you in your educational choice.

### **1. What is a Charter School?**

Charter schools are public schools open to all students. They operate on public funds without tuition. The goal of charter schools is to provide additional educational options with quality outcomes for students and parents.

### **2. How are charter schools financed?**

Charter schools are funded on the principle that state funds follow the student, just as in traditional public schools.

A charter school may not charge tuition or require students or parents to make donations and is subject to the same rules regarding school fees as other public schools.

### **3. What kind of teachers will you have?**

Our teachers are wonderfully suited to inspire young women and men to greatness. We seek to hire teachers/mentors that are humble, ever-learning, and passionate about the subjects they teach. We will have new teachers, seasoned veterans, teachers that are leaving private business to join our team, and teachers that have the ability to teach more than one subject effectively and thoroughly. We are asking them to model a love of learning and a love of truth and virtue in all they say and do.

We hope to also tap into the incredible talents and abilities of parents and community members to help inspire these youth to recognize their personal greatness and pursue their chosen purpose.

### **4. What types of benefits are offered to teachers?**

At ALA, our teachers will receive benefits comparable to traditional public schools. We are part of the state retirement plan and we will have health benefits that compare very nicely to other school districts and schools.

### **5. What type of curricula will you be using?**

We will be using original and primary source documents in much of our teaching. We want students to read from the original authors, whether it be a speech given at the Constitutional Convention of 1787 or one given by Frederic Douglas (a former slave and abolitionist) in 1881. ALA will align its curriculum to the state

standards and objectives just as all other public schools do. We will incorporate a variety of teaching methods and styles to accommodate the learning needs of students throughout the grades. (You can go to the **Curriculum tab** on the website for more detailed information about the methods we will be using.)

The elementary curriculum is based upon the Core Knowledge sequence, which meets or exceeds the Utah Core in every area. From this foundation, we will provide educational opportunities which actively engage the students in the learning process.

**6. Is a Charter School accredited?**

Yes and no. ALA has three years to meet accreditation standards but as we work toward accreditation, our students will receive valid diplomas just like those in traditional public schools.

**7. May a charter school limit its enrollment to certain students?**

No. A charter school is part of the public education system and must be open to all students, without discrimination, on the same basis as other public schools.

**8. Can my child return to their previous school if I am not pleased with the Charter School?**

Yes. We realize that parents and students need and must have choice in their education and realize any particular school may not serve the needs of each family.

**9. What about athletics, drama, music and other extracurricular activities?**

Depending on the Charter School, all or some of these are offered. For example, a Charter School in St. George focuses a great deal on Drama and other fine arts while one in Orem focuses on Math and Science.

At ALA, we will be offering all of these. We believe in helping students to become as well-rounded as they choose to be. In addition, as we are a smaller school, we hope more students will have more opportunities to be involved in the activities of their choice.

**10. What kind of flexibility can my student expect in a Charter School?**

This, again, depends upon the Charter School and its particular emphasis. At ALA, we plan to individualize the education of each student to the best of our ability. We believe that each student has specific gifts, talents, and abilities that can only be discovered and developed through as much individual tailoring as is reasonably possible. Parent's help will be significantly critical in this area.

**11. Are charter schools subject to the same laws and regulations as other public schools?**

As a general rule, yes. Laws and regulations relating to religion in the schools, school fees and tuition, health and safety, civil rights, annual reports, prohibitions

against advocacy of unlawful behavior, screening of potential employees or volunteers for competency and fitness, and most other matters are the same for both charter schools and other public schools. The State Board may waive any of its rules for a charter school or other public school, if the school applies for a waiver and the State Board finds that the waiver would not violate applicable law or cause harm to students or the school.

A charter school is exempt from existing negotiated agreements relating to the hiring, employment, and dismissal of employees. A charter school's governing body may determine the level of compensation and the terms and conditions of employment for its employees. Charter schools may only employ educators who hold valid teaching certificates or who meet State Board requirements for alternative certification or authorization.

## **12. How are charter schools held accountable for what they do?**

A charter school must make the same annual reports as other public schools, including an annual financial audit and monthly budget report. Additionally, the charter school must participate in the statewide testing programs. Charter schools submit all reports to the Utah State Board of Education.

In addition, Charter Schools, just like other public schools, are accountable to the parents and families that support and attend them. At ALA, we believe that parents can have the greatest influence on their student's education and we look at parents as our clients and customers. We depend on their active involvement in the education of their children and we are thrilled to partner with them. We also believe very strongly that students are ultimately accountable for their own learning and achievement and hope to mentor them towards individual greatness.