A.3.1 Mastery and Promotion

The target population at AZACS is students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). AZACS has researched the enrollment trends of other charter schools around the country with a focus on students with autism and has found that approximately 98% of their applicants are diagnosed with autism and are on an Individual Education Plan (IEP). The other 2% of students applying to these types of charter schools are students who have other diagnosis but are on an IEP as well. Based on interviewing school leaders at six other charter schools around the country targeting students with autism, it is rare for typically developing students to apply to these schools. Therefore, based on AZACS' target population it is expected that most students will be diagnosed with ASD and be on Individual Education Plans (IEPs). In the unlikely case AZACS were to enroll a student who did not qualify for an Individualized Education Plan because he or she was not learning disabled and was working at grade level, that student would still have an individualized program of instruction in the form of a Personal Education Plan (PEP). Children at AZACS will be working on their own individualized goals from their IEPs or PEPs based on either the Arizona Common Core Standards or the Alternative State Standards. IEP and PEP goals will be written using assessment results from the Vineland, the Assessment of Basic Language & Learning Skills Revised (ABLLS-R), the Verbal Behavior Milestone Assessment & Placement Program (VB-MAPP) and specific academic curriculum pre-tests. These assessment tools are considered the most accurate and effective in the field of autism education.

For example, if assessment results, baseline data and teacher observations for a 1st grade student indicate that the student is not able to answer questions from a text in order to demonstrate a basic understanding of content, then a goal would be written to address this need. Using the ADE 2010 ELA Standards, a goal will be written with the purpose of providing intensive and rigorous instruction in this area until the student can perform this skill with 80% accuracy. At AZACS, goal formation will follow a 5 step process.

Step 1) Analyze baseline data, assessment results, and conduct observations to form actionable present levels of performance for each AZACS Core Content area (Ex- Student is able to independently and accurately point to 10 out of 50 tested pictures of objects in a text, when the instructor names those objects).

Step 2) Identify the corresponding ADE 2010 State Standard (Common Core Standard) (1.RL.1- Ask and answer questions about key details of a text).

Step 3) Conduct a task analysis of the components required for the student to be able to perform that standard with mastery, given their current level of functioning. Formulate benchmark objectives for each goal that will lead to the successful acquisition of the goal. Examples:

Objective A) Point to 50 pictures in a book when named with 80% accuracy.

Objective B) From a text with pictures, the student will name 50 different items with 80% accuracy.

Objective C) From a book containing pictures, the student will answer 5 different "What" "When" and "Who" questions with 80% accuracy.

Objective D) The student will ask simple questions about a text that contains pictures with 80% accuracy.

Step 4) Instructor collects data specific to that goal and objective and determines how often the progress will be monitored based on initial rate of acquisition and opportunities to practice the skill.

Ex: Method of Collection: Percentage of correct responses out of 20 opportunities to respond in a teaching session, scored on a AZACS data sheet.

Method of Analysis: To be graphed daily by teacher in an Excel spreadsheet as a percentage correct.

Step 5) Submit the completed goal, data collection/analysis process, and criteria for mastery to the IEP/PEP team for review and approval.

These goals will be written for a one-year period of time and students will be targeted to meet these goals as well as maintain previous goals throughout the course of the school year. IEP and PEP meetings will be held a minimum of once per academic year with the school team, parents and outside support personnel, to establish individualized goals and determine specific criteria for achieving these goals. IEP and PEP meetings can be held more frequently if any member of the team feels that a change to the student's plan is necessary. Progress reports and graphs will be sent home each quarter to show progress on IEP and PEP goals. Conferences and/or team meetings will be scheduled on an as needed basis if student performance is not keeping pace with benchmark objectives.

IEP and PEP goals will be worked on daily throughout all school activities. Teachers and support personnel will be responsible for collecting data throughout the day. Data will be graphed at the end of each week and reviewed biweekly by a supervisor. If a student performs below 50% accuracy on a particular goal for three consecutive days and there is no upward trend in the rate of skill acquisition, the teaching program will be modified to ensure for more success using scaffolding, differentiated instruction, shaping, prompting, errorless learning strategies or other methods identified in the AZACS teaching methods.

Once a student has mastered a goal, it will go through a generalization check to make sure that it can be generalized across three different settings, three novel individuals (e.g. teachers, aides, parents) and a variety of novel materials. For example once a student has learned to count using one-to-one correspondence when asked "count these things", the team will run a generalization check to make sure he can do this using various items and in different situations. The team will also check to make sure he can perform this task when asked by unfamiliar adults and peers. Lastly, the team will check to make sure he will answer the question when it has been phrased differently ("Can you count these items?"). Natural Environment Teaching should allow for generalization to happen naturally throughout the teaching process; however some skills need to be taught in an isolated setting making natural

generalization more difficult. Criteria for mastery on a generalization check will be the same as the teaching phase.

Once a skill has been generalized it will go into weekly maintenance. Data will be collected once a week until criteria for mastery has been met for three consecutive weeks. Once this has been achieved, the skill will go into monthly maintenance. Data will be collected once a month until criteria for mastery has been met for three consecutive months. If at any time during the maintenance process a skill drops below 50% accuracy, it will be reviewed and the team will determine if it needs to go back into the teaching program. This process will take place for all academic goals outlined in students' IEPs and PEPs.

Student Promotion

IEP and PEP goals will be written for a one-year period of time and students will be expected to meet these goals to be promoted to the next grade level.

Autism is a spectrum disorder and therefore, there are students diagnosed with autism who have the intellectual ability to perform at or above grade level. Unfortunately, most of these students are performing multiple years below grade level because they are not able to access the curriculum through traditional teaching strategies. AZACS will empower these students by offering intensive individualized instructional programs grounded in the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis that will eliminate the achievement gap and help them produce work that is at or above grade level. AZACS will have rigorous academic goals for these students that are reflective of high-performing college preparatory programs in the Phoenix Metro area. These students will be given intensive supports to achieve mastery in all content areas; which means they must achieve 80% or above in summative assessments in the areas of math, language arts, science and social studies. The goal for these students will be to diminish their autism symptoms and help them acquire the social and functional skills necessary to transition successfully into a mainstream, general education environment. The ultimate goal for these students will be to have the skills to compete academically with high-performing typically developing peers. AZACS will partner with other high-performing charter schools in the Phoenix metro area to transition students with autism who are ready to attend school in a mainstream educational environment.

There are other students with autism who have significant intellectual disabilities and are considered "lower-functioning" on the autism spectrum. AZACS will also have ambitious, rigorous goals for these students and will push them to achieve their full potential through intensive, individualized instructional programs founded on the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). AZACS' goal will be to ensure that at a minimum, students on the lower end of the autism spectrum make at least one academic year of growth in one academic year and don't lose any previously learned skills. In other words, if a 10 year old student enters the school performing at a first grade level, AZACS will aim to get that student performing at a second grade level by the end of the academic year. One year of growth would be significantly more successful than the current results for these types of students. As noted in a 2005 report in the journal Research in Developmental Disabilities and local autism experts, students who are significantly impaired by their autism can make less than two months of progress in one academic year or may even regress in their skills during an academic year due to ineffective teaching strategies. By delivering a curriculum using evidence-based, individualized programs grounded in ABA strategies, students with autism who have significant intellectual disabilities can have the best chance at accessing the Common Core standards and making progress toward meaningful grade level promotions**.**

Process and Criteria for Grade Level Promotions:

AZACS will make grade-level promotion decisions based on students' performance on unit assessments aligned with individual education plan goals (IEPs/PEPs) and results of cumulative summative assessments in each academic content area. Data will be gathered daily, graphed and analyzed weekly by teachers and reviewed by Curriculum Director at least biweekly. Parents will be notified at least biweekly of the student's progress toward promotion in each content area. Students not making progress toward promotion will be identified early on and targeted remediation plans will be developed to help student attain mastery and achieve promotion. The following lists the criteria for promotion in each content area:

Language Arts-Reading/Writing:
Students in grades K-5 must either:

a) Perform to Mastery (80% or above) on summative assessments measuring performance on Common Core Standards and have a passing grade on Reading and Writing sections of the AIMS (for students in 3rd-5th grade).

b) Perform to Proficiency (70%-79%) on summative assessments measuring performance on Common Core Standards and have a passing score on Reading and Writing sections of the AIMS test (for students in 3rd-5th grade). These students must be willing to do special projects, participate in tutoring or other remediation so that they achieve mastery by the next grading period. Must also have 88% attendance.

c) **IEP students must**: Grow at least one grade level in Language Arts as measured by the same assessment tool taken at the beginning of the school year (Vineland, ABLLS and/or VB-MAPP) and maintain an average of 70% or higher on summative assessments measuring performance on each IEP goal in Language Arts.

Math
Students in grades K-5 must either:

a) Perform to Mastery (80% or above) on summative assessments measuring proficiency on Common Core Standards and have a passing score on the Math section of the AIMS (for students in 3rd-5th grade).

b) Perform to Proficiency (70%-79%) on summative assessments measuring performance on Common Core Standards and have a passing score on Math sections of the AIMS test (for students in 3rd-5th grade). These students must be willing to do special projects, participate in tutoring or other remediation so that they achieve mastery by the next grading period. Must also have 88% attendance.

c) **IEP students must**: Grow at least one grade level in Math as measured by the same assessment tool taken at the beginning of the year (Vineland, ABLLS and/or VB-MAPP) and

maintain an average of 70% or higher on summative assessments measuring performance on each IEP goal in Math.

Science

Students in grades K-5 must either:

a) Perform to Mastery (80% or above) on summative assessments measuring proficiency on Common Core Standards and have a passing score on the Science section of the AIMS (for students in 4th grade).

b) Perform to Proficiency (70%-79%) on summative assessments measuring performance on Common Core Standards and have a passing score on Science sections of the AIMS test (for students in 4th grade). These students must be willing to do special projects, participate in tutoring or other remediation so that they achieve mastery by the next grading period. Must also have 88% attendance.

c) **IEP students must**: Grow at least one grade level in Science as measured by the same assessment tool taken at the beginning of the year (Vineland, ABLLS and/or VB-MAPP) and maintain an average of 70% or higher on summative assessments measuring performance on each IEP goal in Science.

Social Studies

a) Perform to Mastery (80% or above) on summative assessments measuring proficiency on Common Core Standards.

b) Perform to Proficiency (70%-79%) on summative assessments measuring performance on Common Core Standards and must be willing to do special projects, participate in tutoring or other remediation so that they achieve mastery by the next grading period. Students must also have 88% attendance.

c) **IEP students must**: Grow at least one grade level in Social Studies as measured by the same assessment tool taken at the beginning of the year (Vineland, ABLLS and/or VB-MAPP) and maintain an average of 70% or higher on summative assessments measuring performance on each IEP goal in Social Studies.

Remediation

Data collection and analysis will be embedded in every student's individualized program therefore students not making adequate progress toward grade level promotion will be identified early on, before the end of the first grading period. In the event expected progress is not demonstrated, AZACS will use all possible resources to accelerate student learning including but not limited to, additional instructional time, modifying IEP/PEP goals to ensure prerequisite skills are taught, conducting parent-teacher conferences, team meetings with senior teaching staff to identify remediation strategies, additional one-on-one tutoring, etc. Students needing remediation will also be recommended for Extended School Year during the summer.

Retention

Because students on the autism spectrum often have "scattered skills," meaning they excel in one area while having major deficiencies in others, it is common for students to achieve mastery in one content area but need remediation or even retention in another. If the above requirements are not met in a single content area, students can be retained in that content area during the next academic year until meeting the requirement for that subject. Students not meeting promotion requirements in a single content area may be promoted to the next grade level with a remediation plan in the specific content area. If students fail to demonstrate proficiency in two or more of the five curricular areas (Reading, Writing, Math, Science and Social Studies) they may be retained in their present grade. Full retention will occur only after a team meeting including Teacher, Curriculum Director, parents and any other pertinent special education service providers (Speech Pathologist/Occupational Therapist) has taken place to determine extent to which student has fallen short of proficiency and mastery in IEP/PEP goals and an explicit remediation plan has been written. The revised remediation plan will be designed by Teacher and Curriculum Director in collaboration with parents and special education therapists. The goal will be to accelerate student learning so they meet the criteria necessary to be promoted to the next grade level within one year.