

## **Executive Summary**

What would a dream school look like? Over 20 years ago, a group of visionary educators and dedicated parents came together spending over three years researching, planning, and dreaming to create Anser Charter School; the dream school they knew was possible. Now entering our 21<sup>st</sup> year as an EL Education (Expeditionary Learning) school, Anser is built upon a strong foundation of success. Anser was named the inaugural Governor's Charter Star honoree, has been designated a Mentor school within the EL network, was among the first EL Credentialed schools, was recognized by Idaho Leads as a Studio District of Innovation and was named a Boyer Center School of Character. Building upon two decades of experience, we strive to build on the dreams of our founders through a large-scale expansion to grow our reach into underserved communities in the Treasure Valley.

Anser's EL Education model and our unique combination of Expeditionary Learning, Community, and Service offers opportunities for students to learn outside of the four walls of the classroom in a way that no other school has done in the Treasure Valley. Imagine a student who funds a library for a rural school in Africa or a student who develops, product tests, and starts her own business selling lip balm. Imagine 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders making over 5,000 lunches in one year to feed the homeless in their community. This is not just the stuff of dreams. These are real world accomplishments of Anser students. As we grow and reach more deeply into underserved communities, we will bring together these rare and powerful learning opportunities with a larger, more richly varied community of families. Through this, students will continue to be life-long learners with a sense of connection and responsibility to their community and to their world.

## **A. Grant Project Goals**

**Mission:** Anser's mission is to educate the whole child in a collaborative learning community where individuals are inspired to achieve their academic potential, be self-motivated and feel a sense of connection and responsibility to the world.

**Vision:** Anser's vision is to foster learning that imagines a better world and works toward realizing it; set high academic standards; promote creativity, discovery, reflection and balance; embrace diversity; and use developmentally appropriate practices and real-world experiences to educate within a climate of collaboration, community, character, and compassion.

The following Grant Project Goals will leverage the support of the Idaho Communities of Excellence Funding to further Anser's Mission and Vision.

**Goal 1: Anser will expand the number of high quality charter school seats in Idaho through an expansion of our nationally recognized EL Education school.** Anser's planned expansion includes growth at all grade levels at our current location in Garden City. Expansion will begin at the K-5 level and grow the 6th-8th population as students advance. Anser's student population will grow from 373 to 675 over four years. This growth will be tracked using Anser's Student Information System and will support Anser's mission to build a more diverse, equitable and collaborative community of students. **Goal 2: Anser will provide a rigorous EL Education model of education to serve a K-8 student population that mirrors the demographics of the Boise School District (within a 5% margin) and will forge relationships and develop our community model to serve more economically and educationally underserved students..** Currently, Anser's student population mirrors the demographics of Boise School District within 5% among Asian, Hispanic, Native American, Multiracial and Special Education student subgroups but falls

below this goal within English Language Learners (ELL) and economically disadvantaged subgroups. Anser seeks to increase the number of students from traditionally underserved populations that make up our Anser community. EL Education and Anser have years of demonstrated success in increasing academic outcomes for underserved populations (see Section B3). Anser is the only EL Education model school in the Treasure Valley. Anser has grown its own unique programmatic approach to the model that includes a focus on experiential learning, putting students at the center of their learning, and facilitating extensive opportunities for Service and Adventure. These unique aspects of Anser's program require investments in technology, Makerspace supplies, art supplies, program-related equipment, and adventure equipment. These needs are planned for and included in the Budget template, as well as outlined in the Budget Narrative. In order to meet this goal, we will provide transportation between home and school, add a breakfast program to our National School Lunch Program and invest significant funding in an intensive and focused recruitment and parent engagement strategy (Section E). Success will be measured through analysis of Anser and District demographic data from the Idaho Report Card. **Goal 3: Anser's 3<sup>rd</sup> -8th grade students will exceed state proficiency and growth standards for English Language Arts and Math.** Anser's mission is to develop learners that are inspired to reach their academic potential. Anser has planned investments in math coaching, and a robust EL Education Professional Development contract will build upon current success, to prepare teachers to offer rigorous, engaging, collaborative learning that provides differentiated support to meet the needs of educationally disadvantaged students. As a result, Anser students will continue to exceed the state proficiency and growth standards in Math and ELA, as evidenced on Anser's

Idaho Report Card. **Goal 4: Anser's Professional Development Framework will ensure that teachers and staff are continuously focused on serving a diverse student community within a culture of equity, inclusion and collaboration that supports every student in achieving their potential through the EL Education model.** Anser has experience with growth and bringing on a large number of new teachers and students, as the school doubled in size in 2008. Anser has established case studies and expeditions in order to ensure that the high quality student outcomes persist during growth. Anser will make extensive investments in teacher and school leader professional development as well as in the creation of replication documents to support new teachers in teaching the expeditions. Anser's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Advisory Committee will also support professional development for the board and staff on creating a culturally responsive, equity focused school environment. These plans are outlined in detail in Section G and in the Budget Narrative. Success of this goal will be measured by staff pre and post surveys on professional development needs and outcomes.

#### **B. Educational Philosophy, Instructional Practices and Curriculum**

*"If you want your child to be surrounded by caring people, challenged to dig deeply in their learning and develop as a whole person, Anser is the place!"*

*Christina - Anser Parent*

At Anser, we embrace an educational approach that addresses the development and needs of the whole child, academically, socially, emotionally, and personally. Stimulated by an innovative and collaborative learning environment, students are self-motivated to discover their talents and to achieve more than they thought possible. Students and teachers become a community of learners committed to learning deeply about our world and our place in it. We believe in creating classrooms where learning is relevant, curiosity is nurtured, questions are

encouraged, and dialogue is robust. Students hone skills of academic accomplishment including critical reading, writing, mathematical as well as skills that build personal character such as discipline, courage, integrity, respect, responsibility, and compassion. We believe that a deep and relevant understanding of our world, and a sense of compelling responsibility to it, is accomplished by focusing our educational practice around three **key elements**.

- **Expeditions** – Anser motivates and engages students by providing a real-world learning experience, both inside and outside the classroom. It is a framework for engaged teaching and learning, which challenges students to think creatively and take an active role in the classroom and beyond.
- **Community** – Anser consistently encourages building connections with each other and our community. We support students by fostering a collaborative and cooperative learning environment. This is evident in our motto, “We are crew, not passengers.”
- **Service** – Anser teaches students to serve others at school, at home, and in the community. Students discover empathy and compassion for others and a deeper sense of who they are by giving back, mentoring fellow students, and assisting others.

## **B1. Educational Model**

For 20 years, Anser has been an active partner in the EL Education network. EL Education is a leading K-12 education model offering a comprehensive approach to school design and implementation. EL Education approaches are grounded in the philosophy of John Dewey and his vision of experiential education that puts the student, not the content, at the center of the educational process [1]. Dewey’s work influenced German educator Kurt Hahn, whose schools in Germany and Scotland gave rise to Outward Bound and subsequently to

Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (ELOB). Today's EL Education practices and core beliefs are linked inextricably to Hahn's beliefs including the necessity for developing a complete person (intellectually, morally, aesthetically, even physically), a commitment to active learning, an appreciation for the power of failure in building a road to perseverance and success, and the need for students to take responsibility for their own learning and self-assessment [2]. EL Education promotes **active classrooms** that are alive with discovery, problem-solving challenges, and collaboration. EL Education students have both the capacity and the passion to build a better, more just world. School **structures and traditions** such as crew, community meetings, exhibitions of student work, and service learning ensure that every student is known and cared for, that student leadership is nurtured, and that contributions to the school and world are celebrated. Anser has implemented the EL Education model at a consistently high level. Anser's success in the EL Education network has led us to serve as a Mentor School for more than 10 years and as a credentialed school for the past five years.

## **B2. Curriculum**

Anser has a strong foundation in developing a rigorous, unique curriculum that aligns with Idaho State Standards. With few exceptions (i.e. math), our school does not use published curriculum packages. Rather, Anser teachers use the framework provided by the EL Education core practices to design and create curricula that are developmentally appropriate, accessible to all levels of student need, and rich in local connections. Teachers work in grade level teams to map out Idaho State Standards in the content areas, and then create a sequence of instruction and learning around compelling topics through a unique interdisciplinary, **learning expedition**, where learning comes alive around real-world issues. **Learning expeditions** forge

together powerful learning tools and experiences: a compelling topic, guiding questions, case studies, projects, fieldwork, service learning, guest experts, anchor texts, inquiry lessons, and more to create dynamic learning for all students. An example is the 2nd-3rd grade “Pollination Expedition” during which students explore the connections between butterflies and other pollinators and plants, focusing on a case study of the Painted Lady butterfly. Students start with caterpillars to grow and study these butterflies, they read nonfiction texts, create scientific drawings and take multiple trips to the Boise Foothills to conduct fieldwork. Students consider the questions, *“What happens when the city meets wilderness?”* and *“What are the connections between the weather and human impact on the Boise Foothills?”* Working with local experts, students learn firsthand about trail repair and how to help lessen the damage caused by erosion. With help from Radio Boise, students create PSA’s to advocate for responsible trail use to help sustain the trail system and natural environment. Throughout this expedition, students are meeting standards in science, social studies, reading, writing, and speaking. Additionally, students are building skills in artisanship, collaboration, and character throughout. The expeditionary approach allows teachers to adapt the curriculum to student needs, to pivot to new situations, and to address changing local issues. Teachers regularly evaluate, adapt, and update expeditions based on our students, our community, and on vital issues.

Anser uses published curricula for math. In grades 6th-8th, we use Connected Math Project 3™ (CMP). CMP is a problem-centered curriculum that puts student conceptual understanding first, rather than rote memorization, and supports group problem solving and dialogue around big ideas. CMP is the most widely used middle school math curriculum nationally. Anser uses College Preparatory Math™ (CPM) course for students ready for high

school mathematics content. Both Connected Math and CPM have strong alignment to Idaho State Standards (ISS). In grades K-5, Anser uses Bridges in Mathematics™, which promotes deep understanding of concepts, working in groups, using visual models and solving novel problems. In a study of 4th and 5th grade students, children who received instruction using Bridges curriculum showed significantly greater improvement in mathematical skills than students who did not learn math using Bridges [3]. The Bridges curriculum received strong ratings from EdReports.org for its rigor, coherence and alignment to CCSS.

### B3. Research Evidence on the Impact of our Educational Program

**Network Results.** EL Education network schools have documented substantial impact on student achievement.

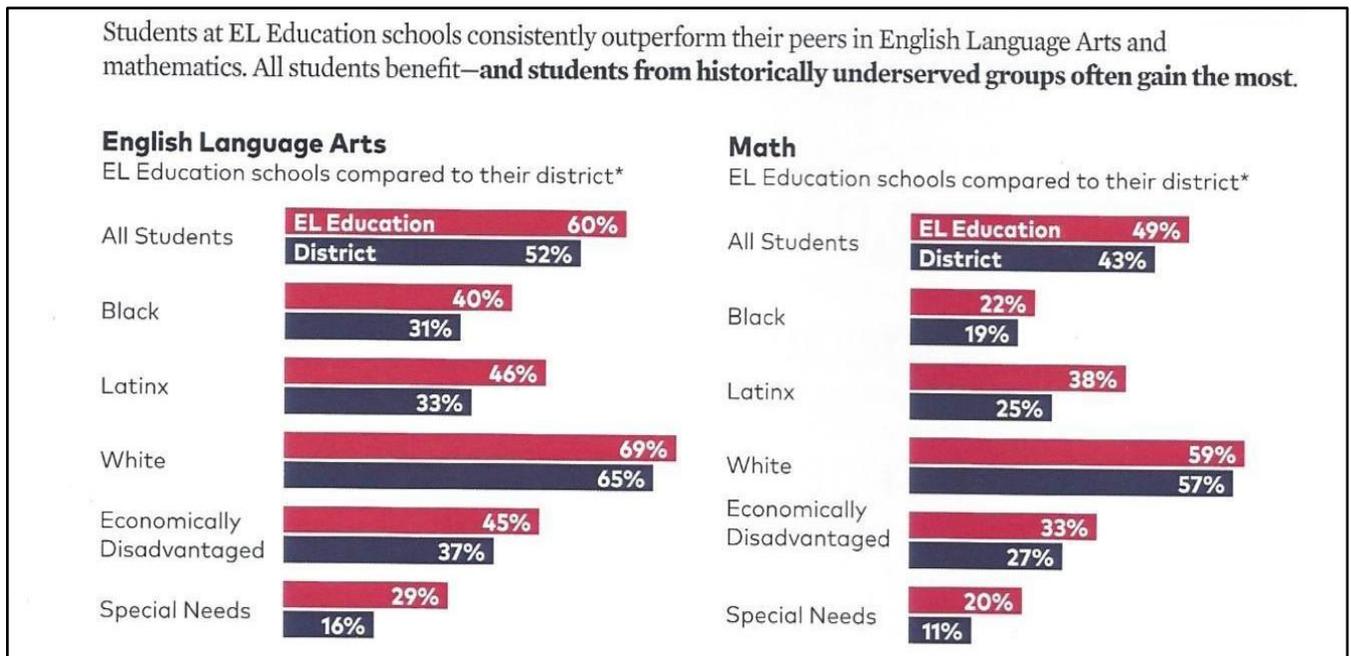


Figure 1. 2017-2018 Proficiency % for all EL Education Credentialed Schools, of which Anser is one.

In its 2018 annual report [4], EL education documents that for EL credentialed schools

(including Anser) students consistently outperform their peers from their district-run schools, and students from underserved groups often see the greatest gains (Figure 1, above). In an independent study of five EL Education middle schools, Mathematica Policy Research found that EL students experienced the equivalent of seven additional months of learning growth in reading and an additional 10 months of learning growth in math after three years in an EL education school [5]. The students in these five schools were more likely to be Hispanic and more likely to be English Language Learners. These positive results confirm our commitment to the EL Education model and support our desire to bring this rigorous approach to an increasingly diverse population.

**Anser Results.** The percentage of Anser students meeting proficiency on the ELA and Math ISAT exceeds that of students in the Boise School District (BSD) and the state of Idaho. The most recent ISAT results show our school continues to surpass the BSD and the state in the percent of students performing with proficiency on ISATs in ELA, math and science (Figure 2).

	% Students meeting Standards with Proficiency (Grades 3 - 8)		
	Math	ELA	Science
Anser	53%	66%	72%
Boise SD	47.4%	58%	59.4%
State of Idaho	43%	55.6%	59.6%

Figure 2 - 2019 ISAT Comparison - Percentage of Students performing at Proficiency

When we look at subgroups of students in our school population, these positive results hold true for Anser students in these groups. Low-income students, students with disabilities and Hispanic students all show better levels of proficiency in ELA and Math when compared to the results of these subgroups from the BSD and statewide. For example, on the 2017-18 ELA ISAT,

72.5% of Hispanic students at Anser were proficient compared to 33.6% in Boise and 35.5% in the state. The math ISAT for that same year showed that 56.6% of Anser's Hispanic students were proficient, compared to 26.7% and 24.4% for BSD and the state, respectively. Across the nation and locally, the EL Education model works for all types of learners and is especially beneficial to Hispanic and English Language Learners. Anser's consistent and successful implementation of the EL model offers the opportunity for traditionally underserved groups to have access to high quality education and to achieve high academic success (Goals 2 & 3 in section A).

#### **B4. Technology**

Anser teachers and students have widespread and consistent access to technology to implement our EL Education model. Chromebooks, iPads, and cameras are available at every grade level for student research, content creation and assessment. Hand-held Vernier sensors and probes, and graphing calculators are used to gather and interpret data in science and math. 3-D printers, graphic design, video production, and coding software allow students to create using 21<sup>st</sup> century tools. Technology supported **assessments** include Developing Mathematical Thinking Institute (DMTI) online math assessments, STAR, ISAT, IRI and others. These assessment and progress monitoring tools support differentiating instruction for each learner. Teachers are able to use real time **data to inform instruction, differentiation, progress monitoring** and to ensure IEP goals are achieved. Websites such as *NEWSLA* provide differentiated texts on a vast array of topics, to support readers at every level of comprehension. *Scholastic ¿Que tal?* supports listening and literacy in Spanish, for fluent and emergent Spanish language learners. Investments in technology to support and advance our

education program are included in the Budget Narrative.

### **B5. Charter School Autonomy**

Anser has the **autonomy and flexibility** to analyze, revise and create new programs to be responsive to our students and to meet the mission of the school. The EL Education model and the autonomy and flexibility it provides allows Anser to **adapt units** to address current events, rather than being tied to textbooks. Teachers can build upon the interest of the students in their classrooms, shifting case studies or pairing with new community partners to meet **the needs of our community** of learners and inspire their passion for learning. The rich offerings our students have in STEM, art, service and adventure are vastly different from what is offered in the local school district, are developed each year based upon student voice and community need, and are adaptable as the needs of our community shift.

### **C. Teaching and Learning**

Our instructional approaches are diverse, flexible, and dovetail with our expeditionary approach to curriculum detailed in section B2. Teachers scaffold learning experiences based on what students already know and do so in a way that supports and challenges a variety of learners. Teachers choose from a wide variety of lesson formats including direct instruction using the Workshop model, discovery-based lessons, protocol-based lessons, simulations, labs, video lessons and many more.

Understanding the needs of each learner begins with our **crew** structure. A **crew leader** (certified teacher) supports a classroom of students to form a bond of community that we call **crew**. The crew structure allows students to make personal connections with each other and with the crew leader; it ensures that each student is well known and supported by peers and

adults. Crew structure helps teachers understand the needs of the whole child to meet the needs of each individual student.

To monitor and assess each student's progress, teachers use daily written work, exit tickets, group work, frequent check-ins for understanding, formative and summative assessments, and more. Anser teachers make a practice of debriefing lessons to help students articulate and reflect on their learning. These **classroom-based assessment** practices are coupled with our system of **progress monitoring using standardized tools**. These tools include the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI), AIMSweb Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM), CORE Phonics Survey, STAR Reading, STAR Math, and Words Their Way Primary and Elementary Inventories. This broad array of tools provide data about student progress, student achievement, and informs teachers about needs for adjusting instruction for the class and for individuals. **Differentiation strategies** include (but are not limited to) using flexible groupings of students, using high-quality differentiated texts, providing multiple pathways for meeting learning targets, providing supplemental materials, selecting diverse texts, and tiering of problem sets.

When a student is not making academic progress or has concerning behavior, classroom teachers implement a focused intervention and then monitor the progress of the intervention. Should the student not respond to the intervention, the classroom teacher engages the help of the **Building Intervention Team (BIT)**. This team consists of one to two classroom teachers, special education teachers, the Education Director, the Literacy Specialist, and the Student Support Specialist as needed. The BIT will review the student's academic data, work samples, and classroom observations related to the area of concern, and will determine if there is

sufficient reason to suspect the student has a disability. The BIT will also provide support to teachers when the area of concern is behavioral rather than academic.

**D. Student Academic Achievement Standards**

Anser has a school-wide system for monitoring student academic achievement. The Continuous Improvement Committee of the Anser Board of Directors is charged with monitoring the school’s academic performance, setting annual student achievement goals and providing support for academic growth. Working with the Education Director (ED), they oversee the **achievement-monitoring plan**. Under the direction of the ED, the plan is developed and implemented by the Literacy Specialist, classroom teachers, and Exceptional Child Services staff. The timeline for standardized testing is outlined in the table below.

**Assessment Timeline**

	Kindergarten - 3rd grade	2nd - 8th grade
Fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) using I-Station computer adaptive test               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reading screener &amp; diagnostic</li> </ul> </li> <li>● DMT Institute’s Primary Math Assessment (PMA)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Math screener and diagnostic (K-2 only)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Renaissance STAR - benchmark               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Math</li> <li>○ Reading</li> </ul> </li> <li>● AIMSWeb Curriculum-Based Meas. (CBM)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reading fluency (4th - 6th)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● DMTI’s Benchmark Assessment               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Math (3rd - 6th)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Winter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) using I-Station computer adaptive test               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reading - progress monitoring</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Renaissance STAR - progress monitoring               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Math</li> <li>○ Reading</li> </ul> </li> <li>● ISAT interim - progress monitoring (3rd-8th)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Math</li> <li>○ ELA/Literacy</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) End of Year               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reading</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Renaissance STAR - End of Year               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Math</li> <li>○ Reading</li> </ul> </li> <li>● ISAT Summative - (3rd-8th)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Math</li> <li>○ ELA/Literacy</li> <li>○ Science (5th &amp; 7th only)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

On-going		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Renaissance STAR - progress monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Math</li> <li>○ Reading</li> </ul> </li> <li>● ISAT interim - progress monitoring (3rd-8th) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Math</li> <li>○ ELA/Literacy</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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**Annual academic performance targets** are set for each grade level for math and literacy based on previous performance results. Analysis of individual student data is done by the classroom teacher, with support from the Literacy Specialist. Teachers use the STAR math and reading benchmark results to plan interventions for individuals and groups of students, to develop groupings for differentiation of instruction, and to support student advancement. The results from the Idaho Reading Indicator allow teachers to create flexible student grouping for targeted, small group instruction. Developing Mathematical Thinking Institute (DMTI) staff support teachers in the analysis of the Primary Math Assessment (PMA) and the benchmark assessment results, including identifying specific math concepts that need targeting for individual students and for the class. Throughout the year, teachers use STAR to guide instruction and to monitor student progress. STAR allows teachers to identify students with urgent deficits, with intervention needs, students on watch, and students at or above the benchmark in math and reading. Individual results from standardized assessments are used by the Building Intervention Team when recommending and planning interventions.

Grade-level teams of teachers examine grade level cohort data (including subgroups) to inform instructional practices and to inform school leaders of trends in performance. These grade-level teams mentor new teachers in understanding each assessment and in interpreting results. The school provides teachers access to in-person and online training about each assessment. At a school-wide level, data is used for making decisions about resource allocation

and staff professional development. **Trends in student data have driven decisions** about the scheduling of instructional time and the staffing of instructional blocks. Additionally, data has prompted school leaders to seek resources from outside the school to support the improvement of math performance.

Each fall and spring, the entire teaching staff does a school-wide data dive using a data analysis protocol. Based on this analysis, a staff-wide goal is set that becomes part of the benchmarking plan. This year the staff set a goal around math scores for baseline, mid-year and year-end performance.

#### **E. Student Demand and Community/Local Support**

**E1.** Anser currently serves 373 students in K-8. Each year Anser typically has around 40 openings, and over 400 students apply to enter the lottery. Over 90% of families that apply do not receive admission. Though Anser recruits underserved families to apply, the large percentage of unmet need restricts our ability to serve a diverse population of families. Expansion allows Anser to address both issues. Expansion plans target growth at the lower grades where the waiting list is extensive, growing only one or two classes per year. Over 4 years, Anser will grow from its current 373 to 675 K-8 students. This strategic expansion capitalizes on our current waiting list, but will also include extensive outreach to the broader community and underserved communities to ensure a more diverse and equitable student body. Anser is building upon current recruiting practices to be more effective in reaching more underserved students [6]. The addition of breakfast to Anser's Food Service program, as well as the provision of transportation and full day kindergarten will increase the viability of

attendance at the school for low income and English Language students. Anser has a Community Engagement Coordinator (CEC) position (see Budget Narrative) who will work in conjunction with Anser's DEI committee to identify and implement recruiting strategies to reach underserved communities. **Planned recruitment initiatives** include (but are not limited to) offering activities for students at local school fairs, at library branches, and at the locations of the Idaho Foodbank's "Picnic in the Park" free summer meal program. Anser runs an **extensive social media campaign** and has **radio ads in Spanish** and English. Anser has local, community and political support for expansion and extensive connections within the refugee community. Some of these connections include local refugee business owners and agencies such as the Agency for New Americans, with whom the CEC can work to **recruit underserved families**. The CEC will organize parent meet-ups, schedule translation services for completing enrollment processes, work with the school's social worker to connect families with community resources, and will ensure families understand transportation, meal options, and important school events. These **investments** will lead to enrollment of a higher percentages of Hispanic (15% vs 13%), economically disadvantaged (45.04% vs 21.04%) and educationally disadvantaged (13.04% vs 11.68) students than its surrounding district, by the end of the grant period. (See Demographic Calculator.)

**E2.** Anser's plans for expansion have been **developed in collaboration** with current and prospective families through parent and student feedback committees, parent feedback nights, surveys, "Coffee Talks" with the school administrators, and engaging its Family Council members in the annual Board Retreat process to ensure **their voice** is heard in **planning the future of the school**. Family Council will also continue to serve as the **parent voice in decision**

**making** at the school, including holding a position on the Board of Directors. Through 20 years of student service in the community, Anser also has connections with Genesis Community Health, Lolly Wyatt Head Start, Giraffe Laugh Early Learning Centers, The Idaho Foodbank, Boys and Girls Club of America, the Garden City Library and Boise Bike Project. The CEC will leverage these connections to develop relationships with **prospective families** served by these programs to learn more about what opportunities they want the school to provide their students, and to build trust in, and excitement about, the school.

#### **F. Effectively Serving All Students**

Our school culture is infused with a sense of community and a belief that all students are celebrated and can achieve their highest potential; we are a place where everyone belongs and can succeed, no matter their background. Serving all students effectively requires us to identify student needs and support all learners through a continuum of services and programs. Many of our services and programs address the needs of both **students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds** and **students with disabilities**, beginning with the identification of these students and understanding their needs. Our screening and identification process begins with enrollment, when families complete the home language survey and provide educational background about their child. These tools identify students who are English Language Learners (ELL) and students who may have been on a learning plan at a previous school. Before the school year starts, teachers meet with colleagues to discuss student needs and brainstorm strategies. Classroom teachers work to establish strong relationships with families and communicate consistently to learn about each student. For our kindergarten students, teachers conduct home visits for every incoming learner. Other screenings we conduct include

annual hearing tests in 1st and 6th grades and GATE eligibility in 1st grade.

Classroom teachers, in coordination with our Exceptional Child Services (ECS) team, work diligently to identify student needs and monitor student progress. Our ECS team includes highly trained, specialized educators who work in coordination to offer a broad array of services including Special Education plans, Response to Intervention (RTI), GATE, and 504s.

To every extent possible, all students complete the same standards and work towards the same learning targets. Students on IEPs spend the majority of their learning in the general education classroom. An IEP team (consisting of the classroom teacher, a Special Education teacher, the ED, and the school psychologist) determines the services, accommodations, and any needed curricular modifications based on the needs of each student.

For students who need specialized support, including support for behavioral issues, staff develop a learning plan tailored to that student's needs and supported by a variety of tools. ESC provides the following:

- Small group instruction and academic support for K-6 students who need special education services and supports;
- Inclusion support (provided by special education teacher and paraprofessionals) in the classroom to support students with special needs;
- Study Skills classes for 6th-8th grade students who need special education services; and
- Use of research based programs for academic instruction (Expressive Writing, Read Naturally, Language Arts, Core Knowledge Language Arts Program, Explode the Code, activities developed at the Florida Center for Reading, Connecting Math Concepts, Ascend Math, Bridges Math Intervention, Touch Math).

ESC staff are highly trained, are certified in their specialized field, and seek ongoing professional development. Special education staff have received training on a variety of topics through **Special Education Support and Technical Assistance (SESTA)** of Idaho. All ESC staff, both full time and paraprofessionals have been trained in **Right Response** (de-escalation strategies, etc.) for working with students with behavioral needs. Before school begins each fall, our ESC staff meet to assess students in need and identify possible referrals. This team also presents intervention/referral processes to the general education staff.

Our school has been building its capacity to meet the needs of **economically disadvantaged students** beyond our academic and special education programs. We have a full-time Student Support Specialist who is a trained school social worker. She assess and supports the social, emotional, physical, and safety needs of students and their families. She actively seeks training opportunities to expand her skill set in the areas of diversity and ethics, as well as training that will benefit the students and staff at the school. The Student Support Specialist conducts staff training regarding the effects of trauma on students, how to recognize trauma, and how to support students through safe and predictable structures. This staff member oversaw the implementation of Second Step™ to support student social/emotional growth. This curriculum helps students with problem solving, emotional awareness, and empathy building. These aptitudes can help students gain life-long skills including active listening, self-awareness, and self-regulation, which help with academic and social success.

Our Student Support Specialist has developed connections with community resources to provide community referrals and partnerships for students and/or families with basic needs- clothing, utilities, rent, and food, including the following:

- Utilized the Vineyard Church’s food bank to help food-insecure families;
- Assisted families in accessing monies for rent/utilities through the Idaho Power Community Funds; and
- Secured winter clothing and school supplies through the Assistance League of Boise’s Operation School Bell/Operation Teen Retail.

The school social worker will continue to build community partnerships to support students and families as the needs of the population increase. These might include having a weekend backpack food program, creating partnerships for community in schools programs to assist families in having a centralized location at the school to access social service agencies, etc. Anser is in close proximity to the Boys and Girls Club and many students access their after school services for working families who need the extended child care at a low cost.

### **G. Staffing and Professional Development Plan**

Small class sizes, multi-age classrooms, inclusion model services, learning outside of the classroom, and the integration of content areas are all part of the EL Education model. At the K-1 level, classes have 22 students and a paraprofessional for a 13:1 ratio. At 2nd-3rd and 4th-5th, classes are capped at 25 students. In 6th-8th grades, content class sizes range from 22 to 28 students, but crew size stays at 26 or fewer students. At expansion, Anser will employ three full-time Special Education teachers, a reading interventionist and approximately eight paraprofessionals to provide services in the classroom whenever possible. Learning outside of the classroom involves our adventure coordinator, electives teachers and community-based curriculum instructors. All these instructors work with parents and community partners to offer unique, community-based opportunities to explore the arts, service, adventure, and more.

These instructors also serve as our teachers in Art, STEM, PE and Adventure.

Anser has a rigorous hiring process that has garnered excellent results. Positions are advertised nationally on the EL Education website, Idaho Schools website, Anser website, on social media, and are posted at the local universities. Anser accepts applications for its hiring pool year round, and contacts all interested applicants when positions are available. Typically, Anser has 20 applicants per opening. The ED and a screening committee of teachers review applications and select applicants to do an interview with the committee. Three to four applicants per opening move forward in the process. The interview team includes a parent, board member, student representatives, the ED, and teachers. Applicants teach a lesson, interview directly with students, and write a reflection after the lesson.

During expansion, Anser will begin advertising in September 2020, and will take additional steps to **recruit** by attending teacher job fairs, advertising on LinkedIn, and posting on the Idaho Hispanic Chamber of Commerce job site. Training in EL Education practices is critical to ensuring high quality implementation. Anser builds **14 days of professional development** (PD) into its calendar to provide collaboration and learning among all teaching staff. Additionally, new staff attend a **weeklong “EL 101”** training and attend monthly mentor classes during their first three years at Anser. Staff also have the opportunity to attend the EL Education National Conference and site seminars. During expansion, existing teachers will be paid to document their expedition curriculum and serve as mentor teachers. An Assistant Education Director (AED) will be hired by July 2020 to assist the ED with hiring and with developing intensive training for a larger volume of new staff. An Instructional Guide (IG) will begin to assist with the organization of curriculum materials and training in Fall 2020. All staff

will start one week early in the initial expansion year, August 2021 to receive additional math and DEI training (See Budget Narrative).

#### **H. Financial Management and Monitoring Plan**

**H1.** Anser undertakes this expansion from a strong financial position. Please see our three-year Operational Budget and Budget Template for evidence of long-term sustainability

**H2.** Anser plans to remodel and expand its current facility. (See Budget Narrative).

**H3.** Anser consistently provides a higher level of Special Education staffing than the BSD and we use state Literacy Funds to cover a Literacy Specialist. Anser's Lunch Program has been successful and will roll out to include breakfast upon expansion. Anser employs a Student Support Specialist, Behavioral Support staff and will add additional supports. (See Budget Narrative)

#### **I. Board Capacity and Governance Structure**

**I1.** The Anser Community Board (Board) is charged with the governance of the school, the oversight and evaluation of the school's co-directors, and ensuring that the mission and vision of the school are being realized. Annually the Governance Committee analyzes current expertise of board members and ensures members with these key areas of expertise are represented: Education, Finance/Accounting, Capital/Fundraising, Governance, Organizational Leadership, Law, Construction/Facilities/Real Estate, and Non-Profit/Community Relations. (See Board Member Resumes). If there are gaps, Governance recruits new members, striving to recruit at least 50% from outside of the Anser parent community.

**I2.** The Board oversees the educational, fiscal, legal and charter responsibilities of the school through an effective committee structure. Training is provided each year on the

difference between **Governance versus Management** and the documented duties of each committee ensure each provides governance level leadership versus operational management.

Board Committee	Duties
Executive	<b>Strategic planning</b> , agenda development, executing contracts on behalf of the board, ensures Performance Certificate requirements, Authorizer relations, <b>ensures compliance with Open Meetings and Records Law</b>
Governance	<b>Board Self Evaluation</b> , Member recruitment, new member training, <b>quarterly board training, annual policy review development and Conflict of Interest From completion</b> , Organization Director evaluation, employment practices, <b>ensures operational and legal statutory compliance</b> (see operational budget for board training expenditures)
Finance	<b>Financial oversight</b> , budget development and monitoring, financial policy development, debt service requirements, develops salary schedule and oversees faculty contract development
Continuous Improvement	Oversees <b>academic program</b> , reviews student data and sets Continuous Improvement Plan student achievement goals, Education Director Evaluation, supports Professional Development Plan
Resource Development	Supports fundraising efforts and developing community partnerships
Advisory Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)	Provides DEI training and advisement to the board
Ad Hoc Facilities	Leads the facility expansion planning and construction process under the advisement of the board

**13. New Board member training** requires a review of documents that includes (but is not limited to) the Charter Petition, By-Laws, the Articles of Incorporation, the mission and vision statements, financial policies and procedures, school finance and the proper governance role of a charter school board. **All board members** receive annual training in reviewing financial reports, student achievement data, and the goals of the Strategic Continuous Improvement Plan, the role of the board and the administrators, and Open Meetings and Records Law. The Executive Committee **assesses governance practices** and plans additional training for areas

where any deficiency might exist. The Governance Committee implements the **Board Self Evaluation**. The annual budget includes monies for board training in order to access expertise from outside qualified experts, including (but not limited to) the State Special Education Department, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion experts, ISBA, charter governance experts, and legal counsel.

## **J. School Leadership and Management**

**J1.** Anser was founded with, and continues to operate under, a shared leadership model. The co-directors are the Education Director (ED) and the Organization Director (OD), who serve under the direction of the Board of Directors. Each have over 10 years of experience at Anser. The co-directors have developed an organization structure that ensures that they and their staff have **expertise in education, legal, compliance, and finance**. The ED oversees all **educational aspects** of the school. She supervises all certified staff, supports students and families through discipline issues, oversees the Special Education program, coordinates state assessments, and is the liaison with the EL Education network. The ED works collaboratively with the teaching staff to develop PD plans, train new staff, identify areas for continuous improvement, analyze data, evaluate curriculum and educate families about the mission of the school and their role in the success of the school. The OD is responsible for the oversight of all **operational**, non-education staff and aspects of the school. She oversees corporate administration, human resources, compliance and legal matters, authorizer relations, lunch, facilities and IT staff. Operational staff also include a Fiscal Manager, who oversees finance, a Registrar/Programs Director who oversees student records, state reporting, administrative services and transportation, a Community Engagement Coordinator who oversees recruitment,

enrollment, and fundraising and front office staff who serve students and families. The CIC of the Board evaluates the ED annually using a state-approved Danielson framework and feedback from all staff. The OD works with the Governance Committee to develop two-year goals related to advancing the mission of the school and is evaluated annually by the committee and through feedback from all staff.

**J2.** We have identified risk factors that are anticipated during expansion, and have a plan to address them. With a larger student body, we anticipate increased needs for special services. A Special Education/Federal Programs Director will be critical to meeting the needs of all learners. An Assistant Education Director position will be added to support discipline issues with students, conduct teacher observations, train new staff and assist the ED with professional development. This will help ensure that our staff is well trained and well supported to provide a high quality experience to students. An Instructional Guide will assist teachers to implement the EL model with fidelity, equity, and academic rigor, especially during initial expansion. (See Budget Narrative) Anser's school leaders have many years of experience operating a highly effective school. In tandem with a high functioning board and a dedicated and well-trained staff, they are committed and prepared to expand Anser's nationally recognized, whole child, EL Education model to many new learners ready to be served in an equitable, future-ready school community.

#### References

- [1] Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: The Macmillan Company.
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- [6] Potter, H. (2019). *Recruiting and Enrolling a Diverse Student Body in Public Choice Schools: Strategies for School Leaders*. The Century Foundation. <https://tcf.org/content/report/recruiting-enrolling-diverse-student-body-public-choice-schools/>