

Dear Members of the Board,

Purpose: Our purpose in submitting this application is to request a waiver from Board rule R277-419-4(1)(a) which requires LEA to provide at least 990 hours of instruction and 180 school days. We are providing this summary of American Leadership Academy's proposal to move to a four-day school week, which would require exemption from the 180 school day calendar while meeting the 990 instructional hours. In the summary we will explain our process, our educational program, the benefits, and its operation in a simple, straightforward manner. We will also demonstrate how this proposal is consistent with state statute 53A-1a-503 outlining the purpose of charter schools in the state of Utah and ties to our school mission statement. .

Origin: The origin of the four-day school week proposal at American Leadership Academy came from a grassroots effort led by a group of teachers looking to solve issues related to teacher and student burnout as well as scheduling conflicts which took students out of class.

Criteria: The ALA administration established benchmarks to be used in evaluating the feasibility of the four-day school week. First, at least 80% of the teachers would need to be in favor of the four-day school week. Secondly, the Board of Trustees would need to be in favor of the four-day school week proposal. Finally, we would need to have at least 60% of the parents in favor of the four-day school week. If any of these criterias were not met then the proposal would be dropped.

Process: As an effort to be true to our charter we received feedback from all of the stakeholders through the process.

-March 9, 2016: An outline of the four-day week proposal was presented to teachers at an ALA faculty meeting.

-March 18, 2016: An outline of the proposal with a survey was sent to all teachers asking them to express their preference. In the initial survey teachers supported the four-day school week in an overwhelmingly 90% approval.

-March 28, 2016: Summary and survey results were shared with ALA Board of Trustees with the request to pursue a four-day school week proposal. The Board of Trustees requested a parent advisory board be formed to give parental feedback and discuss the feasibility of the option.

-May 19, 2016: Parents of 10 families were invited to sit on the committee to represent both elementary and secondary families along with ALA Director Rich Morley to discuss pros and cons on a four-day week.

-July 12, 2016: A follow-up meeting with the parent advisory committee was held to address concerns and questions.

-September 6, 2016: A survey and a video explaining the four-day proposal was sent to 877 ALA families. From 1687 emails sent, we received 525 survey responses. 61% of respondents were in favor, 27% were opposed, and 12% were undecided.

-September 8, 2016: A Q & A was sent to the parents and then a letter clarifying some of their questions was sent to the Board of Trustees and to the faculty.

-September 14, 2016: Three public question-and-answer meetings were held in conjunction with our parent-teacher conference.

-September 22, 2016: A second survey was sent out to parents and teachers requesting feedback on potential academic calendars and bell schedules along with overall interest in the four-day proposal. The strong majority wanted a 8:00-3:15 start time and a shorter calendar year.

-September 22, October 26, October 31, November 7, 2016: Additional open Board meetings were held with clarification about the proposed plan.

-November 14, 2016: The Board of Trustees at American Leadership Academy voted to approve an amendment to the American Leadership Academy charter which would offer a four-day school week with a Friday enrichment and remediation plan.

Research: American Leadership Academy reviewed a variety of sources and documents related to the four-day school week. Most of the research available about four-day school week deals with small rural districts that have implemented the four-day school week in an effort to save money by reducing energy consumption, reducing employee hours, and eliminating 20% of busing demands. While the researchers themselves indicated there is not a large enough sample to make a definitive statement, their findings indicate that there is no correlation between poor academic performance and the four-day school week. In fact their research indicated that many districts experienced a slight increase in academic performance after going to the four-day school week. This was beneficial research, however American Leadership Academy's intention in moving to the four-day school week is not to reduce costs but to improve academic performance, and provide more educational options for our stakeholders. American Leadership Academy looked at a charter school in Arizona, Heritage Preparatory Academy, which has a long-standing history with the four-day school week and high academic performance. We also contacted parents in Utah's Rich School District and received favorable responses for how the four-day

school week has provided additional family time, extended educational opportunities, and increased student attendance.

The Plan: American Leadership Academy's plan is to better fulfill its charter agreement to increase academic achievement for our students by increasing teachers' professional development, increasing teacher and student attendance, and increase student achievement by providing more time in remediation and enrichment. ALA will meet the 990 hour requirement for secondary students by starting at 8 a.m. and running until 3:15 p.m. four days a week for 157 days. It is understood that passing time and lunch time cannot be included in the calculations at the secondary school.

8 a.m.-3:15 p.m. (7.5 hrs - 55 min.[.92] For lunch and passing time)= 6.33 hrs.
6.33 hrs X 157 days = 993.81 hours of instructional time for secondary students.

ALA's elementary school would be able to meet the 990 our requirement by starting at 8:30 AM and running until 3:15 PM.

8:30 a.m.-3:15 p.m. 6.75 hrs (6.75hrs - 20 min. [.33] Lunch)=6.42hrs.
6.42 hrs. X 157 days = 1007.94 hours of instructional time for elementary.

Please see the calendar addendum for scheduled times and school days.

Increasing academic achievement through providing more professional development for teachers:ALA's charter admonishes the school to hire and retain innovative teachers by providing professional development and flexibility. Through the years we found it difficult to have time for meaningful and sustainable professional development opportunities, and dynamic professional learning communities. Because it is not ALA's intention to reduce hours or cut salaries, the new proposal will have teachers coming into work every other Friday throughout the year creating 25 additional teacher development days. These work Fridays will be used to develop and practice teaching strategies, receive mentoring and feedback, address student learning concerns, encourage more effective and frequent parent communication, provide a more effective PLC environment, and provide tutoring/student support and extended enrichment discovery days for students. Each of these innovations are supported and in some cases required by our charter agreement.

Increase academic achievement through remediation and enrichment: ALA's charter encourages frequent interaction between teachers and students to promote an academic plan for each child. ALA anticipates that approximately 20% of our student population will want support in one form or another on Friday. The ALA plan focuses on high academic achievement by

providing a Friday school option for all students. The Friday school option would be subsidized for students qualifying for at-risk assistance, special education, or Title I. For the elementary students ALA will have teachers available on Friday to provide targeted language arts and math instruction along with a variety of other educational activities to promote learning and fun. The Friday school option would begin at 8:30 a.m. and continue until 2 p.m. The parent advisory committee also suggested that ALA provide tutoring options for secondary students available in two hour blocks. Teachers from the math, science, and English departments will be available in two-hour increments on Friday to assist students with assignments or remediation. Teachers providing professional services for students on Fridays, not designated as work days, will receive additional compensation for their time. In conjunction with ALA's remediation program there will be an enrichment program available for students who would like additional learning experiences. The four-day school week will provide unique opportunities for teachers to extend the classroom into one of Utah's science or art museums, concert halls, state or national parks, colleges or universities, or to engage in large multidisciplinary (STEM) work projects or experiments without the students missing any classes. This will provide a powerful opportunity for teachers to assist students to participate in leadership opportunities and prepare for college or career readiness by allowing students and teachers to connect, discover, and learn together in hands-on experiences.

Increase academic achievement through improved student attendance: Research supports our charter's emphasis on attendance and indicates that attendance is a key component of academic achievement. Some of the reasons identified for students missing large amounts of school include medical or dental appointments, sickness (physical or emotional), student burnout, extracurricular activities, and family vacations. The four-day school week proposal addresses most of these concerns and will result in higher rates of attendance. Research on the four-day school week does demonstrate that attendance increases when there is a four-day a week requirement. This is attributed to having a non-school day during the week that parents are able to schedule appointments for their children.

Teacher attendance: In the proposed plan, teachers at ALA would have every other Friday off, allowing them time to schedule appointments and plan personal activities, reducing the need for teachers to schedule time off work. Decreasing the number of school days that students spend with substitute teachers will also have a positive academic impact on student achievement and outcomes. The time off coupled with the additional professional development days will dramatically decrease the teachers' burnout and support a better work/life balance, leading to overall better health and thus higher teacher attendance rates. Reducing the burnout rate will make it easier for us to reach our charter requirement of attracting and retaining high quality teachers.

Summary: Much has been written about the importance of student engagement in the classroom, and teachers have made great strides in providing differentiation in the classroom to promote this engagement. In speaking with teachers over the years, one of the things that has come up over and over again is the idea that students have to choose to be engaged in the educational process. This proposal really allows the best of both worlds. By providing a day for remediation and enrichment it allows students that are performing at or above their desired proficiency rate to engage in self-directed activities and explore additional avenues of interest while allowing families with students who are not reaching and achieving their academic goals to have additional time in a more targeted and lower-stress setting to receive more instruction and practice.

This is in line with our school mission statement, which requires us to partner with parents to provide comprehensive educational experiences, character development through leadership, and individualized student learning for college and career readiness to help all students reach their academic goals. Providing families with the power to choose what is best for them and their children is at the heart of the statute that governs charter schools. The four-day school week proposal fulfills the state statute outlining the purpose for charter schools by providing “different and innovative teaching methods, creating new professional opportunities for educators that allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing learning programs, increasing choice of learning opportunities for students, establish new models of public schools, and provides opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level.” 53A-1a-503 The four-day school week proposal meets these purposes primarily through increasing academic achievement by providing additional professional development for teachers, increasing academic achievement through remediation and enrichment, and facilitating increased student and teacher attendance..

Following American Leadership Academy's process for evaluating the four-day school week, we have concluded that as an LEA, ALA will be able to meet the State of Utah's 990-hour requirement for instructional time and ask that the Board of Education approve a waiver from the 180-day requirement.

Sincerely,
ALA Board of Trustees and Administration

Dear members of the Law and Licensing Board:

I appreciate you taking the time to review our four-day proposal. It has come to my attention that there may be some question about how the four-day week, with its accompanying professional development, would work for our teachers and how our teachers feel about the proposal. This email will attempt to address these questions.

It is important to note that the initial four-day week proposal was initiated by the teaching faculty at American Leadership Academy. The teachers provided input, and will continue to provide input in the development and implementation of the four-day school week. In our full proposal you'll notice that the first criteria that needed to be met in looking at the four-day week option was at least an 80% buy-in by our teachers at the time. When surveyed 86 teachers responded and we had a 89.4% approval rating for the four-day work week with 25 days of required professional development. American Leadership Academy's four-day proposal was not initiated to save money but to increase academic achievement, professional development and morale/motivation. As such, administration and faculty agreed that teacher salaries would not be adversely impacted, and the hours and days worked would be left virtually the same.

Breakdown of hours worked by teachers:

American Leadership Academy reports to cactus that are teachers are employed for a total of 1440 hours.

American Leadership Academy's current breakdown is as follows.

Days worked	Hours worked	Total hours
180 instructional days	7.25 hours	1305
5 professional development days	7 hours	35
Flextime/at home	100 hours	100
		1440

American Leadership Academy four-day proposal

Days worked	Hours worked	Totals
157 days	7.75 hours	1216.75
25 day PD/ student enrichment and remediation *	6 hours	150
Flextime/at home	73.25 hours	73.25
		1440 hours

*Any additional time spent in remediation or enrichment over the contract time is paid an additional stipend.

Dear Mrs. Belnap,

I appreciate the opportunity to present the American Leadership Academy plan for your consideration you may have already received some of this information from the state charter school board in preparation for the meeting next week, but it is my understanding that you would like some additional information regarding American Leadership Academy's demographics, and also some of the parental feedback received through the discovery phase of our proposal. I am pleased to provide some information in both of these areas, and would be happy to discuss this proposal with you in person, or through email if you have additional questions after reviewing the proposal.

American Leadership Academy demographics:

Demographic Group	total percentage
Total of ethnic minority	32%
Total disadvantaged population including free and reduced, economic disadvantage	39.9%
Special education	13%
Limited English proficiency	11%
Native Spanish speakers	17%

Anonymous Parent comments: These comments were taken from one of the surveys to the parents about the four-day school week.

Against

“Some students need the fifth day to help them learn how to better manage their behavior while at school, which is directly related to how well they succeed in school. Repetition is vital to learning. Why should the students be punished?”

“Some families are opposed to an extended school year. If you want families to take vacation during the summer instead of the school year, don't cut into their summer.”

“The decision to have a four-day school week should only happen if it is in the best educational interest of the majority of students, and the rest of the student body who chose to have a five

day school week should not suffer. The decision should not be made to make it easier for adults to go on vacation, go to various appointments, or other adult centered reasons. Our top concern should be the education of our students.”

“Both my husband and I work full-time. Our child’s daycare is kind enough to take her to school and pick her up from school. Having our child get the school earlier affects our schedule as well as theirs. It also affects our child, who would have to wake up at least 30 minutes earlier. Because we work, she would still have to go to bed early on Thursday to get up early on Friday. With the amount of homework she has every night, we would be able to spend even less time together during the week so that we could get her to bed earlier. I also don’t think it’s fair to her to have to spend a full day in day care on Friday. That could also affect what we have to pay the daycare, and we may not be able to afford that. She would not be able to do homework on Fridays as a catch up, because we as parents are the ones that need to help with that so we can see firsthand how she’s progressing.”

In favor

“I love the idea! One less place I have to drive to drop off and pick up kids. I’d also love the one extra day of family time with my kids, and I know that they love the extra day from the hard work/exhaustion of school. Would also all really appreciate the extra time to rest on Friday. I also feel that kids who may be don’t enjoy school, or feel it’s a chore, would be less likely to feel that way if they knew they only had to do it four days a week. It seems to me this would lead to higher motivation and more learning in the classroom.”

“I’m excited for the possibility of a four-day school week. I discussed it with my children’s teachers and have a greater understanding of why it would be beneficial to them and help them be better teachers for my student.”

“This is a fantastic idea. I completely support it! I think it’d be a great opportunity for the kids because it’d give them more time to rest and relax, enjoy more time with friends and family and overall their childhood. It would also give kids the opportunity to enjoy more extracurricular and wholesome recreational activities such as family trips, museum visits and even catch up with homework. I strongly believe the school adjustment will not only help kids release a lot of the negative stress associated with school and classes, exams and projects, and getting up early; it will also help them see school in a different light and to appreciate it and their teachers more. I strongly believe this program has something good to offer every single child in the school and will in the long run benefit each one of them in both academic and social development. I understand that just like any new thing, implementing meaningful changes such as this one will raise questions and doubts among some parents, but I’m convinced that if they give this change a chance they will start noticing meaningful changes on their kids within short periods of time. I really hope other parents will support the school and they get to implement this program.”

“I love the idea of a four-day school week. As a teacher myself, I feel that having that extra day to catch up will make such a difference for students and teachers. Allowing students the option

to still come to school on Friday for enrichment and intervention is a great idea. Thank you.
Mom of 2nd grader, 5th grader and 8th grade boys.” Provo school district teacher

Again I appreciate the opportunity to present this information and would be happy to discuss any questions that you may have regarding American Leadership Academy’s proposal. Our charter school services a diverse population of students and believes that our proposal addresses the unique needs of our diverse population while enhancing and promoting choice in education, innovative educational practices, supporting student achievement and addressing teacher burnout and professional development.

Please feel free to contact me with any additional questions you may have.

Rich Morley