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CSP GRANT APPLICATION 2025

PROJECT NARRATIVE

Executive Summary

Lava Hot Springs Academy (LHSA) is a transformative opportunity for the children and families of Lava Hot Springs, Idaho. Opening its doors to students in Kindergarten through 6th grade, LHSA will create 90 much-needed seats in its first year, with the capacity to grow to 225. In a region where educational options are limited and traditional schools force students to move at the same pace regardless of content mastery, LHSA is taking an entirely different approach.

Rooted in a mastery-based model, LHSA empowers students to move forward when they have demonstrated mastery of content. This isn't just a method; it's a mindset that puts children's growth and confidence first. Through multi-age classrooms, small group instruction, and hands-on, experiential learning, LHSA offers an environment where students feel both supported and academically challenged. It's a place where students thrive—where learning becomes exciting, achievement becomes personal, and every child is given the chance to rise.

Mission Statement

At Lava Hot Springs Academy, we empower students to rise by mastering their learning—at their pace, in their way. Through personalized instruction, multi-age classrooms, and hands-on experiences, we create a supportive and challenging environment where every child builds confidence, grows with purpose, and thrives academically and personally.

Vision Statement

We envision a future where every child in Lava Hot Springs is supported and set free to achieve their fullest potential—where learning is driven by mastery, not time, and where education ignites a lifelong love of growth, discovery, and achievement.

Part II: A. Grant Project Goals

GRANT PROJECT GOAL #1: Increase the number of high-quality Idaho K-6th charter school seats. At full growth, LHSA has the capacity to serve 225 K-6 students. During the grant period, LHSA will add 90 seats in year one and an additional 27 seats by year two in grades K-6. Completion of this goal will be tracked through enrollment in LHSA's student information system (SIS).

GRANT PROJECT GOAL #2: Implement Schoolwide Mastery-Based Learning. LHSA will implement a schoolwide, mastery-driven instructional program aligned with its mission to ensure academic excellence. This model will leverage personalized instruction, multi-age classrooms, and hands-on experiences. By the end of the 2025–2026 school year, 100% of students in grades K–6 will engage in mastery-based learning across all core subjects. This will be measured using a school-developed rubric. The first year will set a baseline of academic performance, with the goal of increasing by at least 10% annually, reaching at least 80% proficiency by Year 5 (2028–2029). This goal directly supports LHSA's mission and vision by using evidence-based methods and technology to help students explore, shape, and contribute to an increasingly complex world.

GRANT PROJECT GOAL #3: Students in grades 4th-6th will meet or exceed the state proficiency and growth average in English Language Arts and math on state standardized assessments. LHSA will use ISAT results annually to monitor and evaluate student progress. This goal reflects LHSA's commitment to high-quality teaching and learning, with a focus on both student achievement and academic growth.

GRANT PROJECT GOAL #4: LHSA will serve students in grades K-6, mirroring (within a 5% margin) the student population of local district demographics. LHSA believes that a diverse student body enhances learning for all students and is critical to equitable educational outcomes. Demographic data will be captured through LHSA's Student Information System (SIS) and compared to the local district demographics. LHSA is committed to serving all students—regardless of race, income, or disability status—as part of its mission to prepare every student for success.

Part II:B. Educational Philosophy, Instructional Practices, and Curriculum

At Lava Hot Springs Academy (LHSA), we believe every child deserves an education that meets them where they are and moves them forward—confidently, purposefully, and at their own pace. In a region where students too often fall behind or get left behind, LHSA is breaking the mold. We are proud to introduce Marsh Valley's first **mastery-based learning model**, where learning is not dictated by arbitrary timelines but by each student's progress and mastery.

Our philosophy is rooted in a single, powerful truth: all children can learn—and thrive—when they are given the right environment, time, and support. Mastery-based learning shifts the focus from seat time to meaningful growth and deep understanding. Students advance when they've shown they truly understand the material through rigorous assessments, performance tasks, and real-world projects. This model doesn't just improve academic outcomes—it fosters confidence, motivation, and self-direction.

Research strongly supports the efficacy of mastery-based learning. A 2018 report from the Aurora Institute (formerly iNACOL) highlights that personalized, competency-based education

leads to higher engagement, deeper learning, and improved academic outcomes—particularly for students who have struggled in traditional, time-based models (Sturgis, 2018).

At LHSA, inquiry-based learning is the engine that drives mastery. Guided by constructivist theories, our students learn by doing—by exploring, questioning, creating, and reflecting. This approach transforms passive learners into engaged thinkers. Lozander & Harmsen’s (2016) research demonstrates that inquiry learning, when supported with structure and guidance, leads to stronger critical thinking, motivation, and long-term retention. For LHSA students, this means science experiments that matter, social studies debates that connect to their lives, and Discovery Pathways projects that spark creativity and voice.

Instructional practices at LHSA are intentionally designed to promote mastery and engagement. Our multi-age classrooms (1st/2nd, 3rd/4th, and 5th/6th) foster mentorship, leadership, and deeper community. Younger students benefit from exposure to advanced content and role models, while older students reinforce their own learning by teaching and collaborating. Kindergarten remains a single-age cohort to support early developmental needs with smaller class sizes.

We prioritize small-group instruction in ELA and math, informed by frequent, high-quality assessments. Flexible grouping and personalized instruction ensure students get exactly what they need—whether that’s reteaching, acceleration, or hands-on reinforcement. Our paraprofessionals play a critical role, especially in the first two years, when many incoming students may have academic gaps. This targeted support, made possible by requested CSP funding, ensures every child gets the support they need to get on track.

Differentiation is not an add-on—it's embedded into every classroom. Teachers adjust content, process, and product to match each student's readiness, learning style, and interests. Our discovery lab, held daily, allows students to solve real-world problems and express their learning in meaningful, creative ways. Hattie ([2009](#)) and Furtak ([2012](#)) both found that student-centered approaches significantly boost learning.

Our classrooms are built for learning and belonging. Flexible seating, natural light, and zones for focus and collaboration create an environment where students feel safe, supported, and ready to learn—particularly important for students with unique learning needs.

We dedicate 90-minute ELA and math blocks each morning to maximize focus and ensure time for instruction, practice, and intervention. These systems were developed in collaboration with Alturas International Academy, a proven Idaho charter school model, ensuring we launch with effective, sustainable practices. Curriculum materials are carefully selected to support mastery, inquiry, and alignment with Idaho Content Standards:

- **ELA:** [Amplify/CKLA](#), grounded in the Science of Reading, supports foundational skills and comprehension with performance-based assessments. MClass with DIBELS 8th Edition guides data-driven reading support.
- **Math:** Zearn ([by Great Minds](#)) blends digital and teacher-led lessons, supports self-paced mastery, and gives teachers real-time data for intervention.
- **Science:** [Mystery Science](#) provides an inquiry-based framework that fosters experimentation, reflection, and real-world application.
- **Social Studies:** [Hillsdale College](#) curriculum emphasizes critical thinking, civic understanding, and historical analysis through rich primary sources and storytelling.

- **Kindergarten:** Waterford, LiPS, Zearn, and foundational tools like ABC Mouse ensure early learners build strong literacy and numeracy foundations.

Enrichment is essential to whole-child development. LHSA offers weekly enrichment classes which may include art, music, PE, health, and Spanish to extend learning beyond the core.

Technology is a tool—not a crutch. Students use Chromebooks, tablets, and Smart Boards to support mastery, collaborate, and access personalized content. Tools like Infinite Campus, MClass, and Zearn help teachers monitor progress in real time. Families will be trained to use Infinite Campus to stay engaged in their child’s learning journey.

LHSA’s charter status allows us to be responsive to student needs and support them toward excellence. From our flexible scheduling to our mastery-based grading, everything we do is designed to serve the unique needs of Lava Hot Springs families. At LHSA, students aren’t racing through content—they’re rising with it. Every child, every day, gets the opportunity to succeed.

Part II: C. Teaching and Learning

LHSA will be the first school in Marsh Valley to implement a mastery-based learning model, prioritizing deep understanding over pacing. Students work toward clear, rigorous learning targets and only advance after demonstrating mastery through assessments, projects, and performance tasks. Grounded in Bloom’s Mastery Learning model ([1968](#)) and supported by current research, this approach emphasizes individual growth, retention, and self-directed learning while reducing gaps and shifting focus from competition to comprehension.

LHSA will use a range of formal and informal assessments to evaluate instructional effectiveness and student progress, including performance tasks, rubrics, and standardized tools. The Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) will be administered to K–3 students each fall, winter, and spring, with daily and monthly I-Station use to support reading development. Students in grades 3–8 will take the ISAT annually in ELA, math, and science. NWEA MAP assessments in fall, winter, and spring will offer growth data to guide differentiated instruction. Trained paraprofessionals will proctor all assessments to ensure fidelity.

Data analysis is not passive—teachers are trained to translate assessment outcomes into specific instructional actions. Every week, PLCs follow a protocol to examine student performance, regroup learners, modify pacing, and update interventions. These data-informed adjustments are documented and reviewed regularly by leadership.

A comprehensive Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) ensures students receive help as soon as gaps emerge:

- **Tier 1:** High-quality, differentiated instruction in all classrooms using flexible grouping and inquiry-based learning.
- **Tier 2:** Targeted, small-group instruction for students scoring between the 10th–24th percentile on benchmarks.
- **Tier 3:** Intensive, individualized intervention for students scoring below the 10th percentile. Services are provided by trained interventionists and supported by paraprofessionals funded through the CSP grant.

With students enrolling from five different feeder schools and many entering with academic deficits, diagnostic testing before the school year begins will inform placement and instruction.

CSP funds will be used to hire an additional paraprofessional for two years to assist with remediation. Supports such as scaffolding, manipulatives, and one-on-one instruction will be implemented based on data. Specialized instruction will be guided by collaboration among the special education coordinator, ELD specialist, and intervention teacher. Students will receive push-in services to remain engaged in core instruction. IEPs will be developed by a team including the student, parent or guardian, general and special education teachers, and the special education director, and reviewed every six weeks for compliance and progress monitoring.

LHSA is committed to equitable access and outcomes, adhering to IDEA, state special education laws, Title I, Title III, and the McKinney-Vento Act. English Language Learners will be identified using Home Language Surveys and supported through individualized language plans, bilingual staff, and language-learning software. Gifted students will be identified by third grade using Idaho's Best Practices Manual and provided with enriched instruction to meet their advanced needs.

All staff will receive professional development in inclusive practices, culturally responsive teaching, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings will support teacher collaboration and continuous improvement. Teams will analyze student data, align instruction to Idaho content standards, develop rubrics, and share evidence-based practices. The PLC process includes the first level of the RTI system, helping educators identify and address student needs in real time. The school director will conduct daily classroom observations and provide monthly feedback to support instructional quality and ongoing teacher development.

Part II: D. Student Academic Achievement Standards

LHSA's Performance Management Plan will use robust data practices, clear evaluation frameworks, and well-defined systems to monitor academic performance and drive continuous improvement for all students. Sound assessment practices will be valid, reliable, and actionable, ensuring that collected data directly informs instructional decisions, professional development, policy updates, and management strategies.

Before school begins, the Director, along with a general education or special education teacher, will meet individually with each student and at least one parent or guardian to review expectations, policies, and build strong school-home partnerships. At the start of the year, all students will complete a Child Find Screening and a diagnostic assessment to evaluate academic levels, identify learning challenges, assess emotional well-being, and detect potential gaps.

Administration and teachers will immediately analyze this data to develop individualized educational plans, inform small-group instruction, and identify necessary interventions.

Based on the assessment results, LHSA's administration and Board of Directors will collaborate to set interim benchmarks for the year, including quarterly academic goals for reading and math, attendance targets, behavioral expectations, and teacher professional growth indicators.

Benchmarks will be reviewed and adjusted annually based on performance trends and subgroup needs.

Mastery-based learning is the cornerstone of LHSA's instructional model. Students will progress through academic content based on demonstrated understanding—not seat time—ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to achieve deep mastery before moving forward. Instructional pacing will be personalized based on ongoing formative data, allowing each child to grow at a

pace that builds both confidence and competence. Mastery is not just a method, but a mindset that informs everything from goal setting to daily classroom instruction.

Student performance data will be collected from multiple sources, including state standardized assessments (IRI and ISAT), benchmark assessments (NWEA MAP and STAR), classroom formative assessments, attendance and engagement metrics, and student portfolios. Teachers and administration will analyze formative and benchmark data weekly, administration will aggregate and review summative data quarterly, and the Board of Directors will review overall performance data every six weeks, conducting a comprehensive annual analysis to measure progress toward LHSA's Performance Certificate goals.

LHSA's instructional model also features multi-age classrooms that allow for flexible, peer-supported learning environments. Teachers will group students dynamically by readiness rather than grade level, enabling more targeted instruction and meaningful collaboration. These structures, paired with personalized pacing, ensure that each child is both supported and academically challenged.

Hands-on, experiential learning is embedded across all content areas. Students will engage in real-world tasks, project-based learning, and performance assessments that deepen engagement and promote critical thinking. Student portfolios will showcase growth through authentic work samples, reflecting both academic mastery and individual progress.

Data trends will directly inform instructional practices, intervention strategies, professional development priorities, resource allocation, staffing, and potential curriculum adjustments. Special attention will be given to disaggregated subgroup data, including English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students, ensuring that

interventions are equitable and appropriately targeted. When performance gaps are identified, LHSA will apply Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) frameworks, with unified Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) systems to monitor progress and adjust instruction through increasingly individualized tiers of support.

Differentiated instruction will be embedded into all classrooms by adjusting content complexity, instructional methods, assessments, projects, and learning environments to meet the diverse needs of students. Small group instruction, scaffolded supports, flexible groupings, sensory accommodations, and individualized learning plans will be core to LHSA's instructional approach. Standards-based grading, complementing mastery-based learning, will be used to focus student assessment on clear, specific, measurable learning targets. Students will be assessed on a 1–4 rubric scale, with 4 representing exceeding standards and 1 representing performance below standards. Parents will receive training to understand standards-based report cards and the shift toward measuring mastery rather than traditional letter grades. This transparency ensures families are active partners in each student's learning journey.

The LHSA Board of Directors will actively oversee academic progress by reviewing assessment data every six weeks and conducting an annual comprehensive analysis. Data will drive decisions regarding school improvement strategies, policy adjustments, benchmark goal revisions, and resource allocation.

Teacher performance will be evaluated through daily informal observations, formal biannual evaluations using Danielson's Framework for Teaching, instructional self-assessments guided by Jim Knight's coaching model, student achievement growth linked to instruction, lesson plan alignment reviews, PLC participation, and parent feedback. The continuous cycle of evaluation

will ensure targeted professional development, peer coaching, and collaboration with high-performing teachers when needed.

Through this Performance Management Plan, LHSA will uphold rigorous academic standards, ensure strong oversight and accountability, foster continuous improvement, and support successful outcomes for all learners.

Part II: E. Student Demand and Community/Local Support

In rural towns like Lava Hot Springs, a school is more than a building—it's the heart of the community. When the district voted to close Lava Elementary, local families united to support a new charter school that better reflected their values and educational priorities. That vision became Lava Hot Springs Academy (LHSA), a tuition-free, mastery-based charter school committed to personalized, student-centered learning for grades K–6. LHSA offers a locally grounded alternative that restores consistency, community presence, and high-quality academic programming.

Community support for LHSA has been strong and growing. Info sessions in homes and community centers regularly drew 20–60 attendees. Families expressed support for a local, mastery-based model focused on relevance, engagement, and student growth. In our spring 2025 lottery, 98 students applied for 90 available seats, and a waitlist has already formed for grades 2, 3, and 4. While LHSA's primary attendance area is Lava Hot Springs, applicants came from across Bannock and Caribou counties, demonstrating regional appeal. According to Idaho Department of Education data, Bannock County serves approximately 6,700 K–6 students, and Caribou County serves about 1,000. These figures affirm strong potential for sustainable enrollment growth in future years.

LHSA is committed to maintaining enrollment of educationally disadvantaged and underrepresented students at levels no more than 5% below district averages. Year 1 projections include: 40% economically disadvantaged, 10% special education, 5% ELL, and 5% non-white students.

Marketing efforts have included bilingual outreach, newsletters to 230 subscribers, flyers at community hubs, and social media campaigns. The CSP budget includes funding for digital/print marketing and events like parades, fairs, and community meetings. We are also engaging local educators—former teachers, substitutes, and retirees—to support hiring and strengthen community trust. We understand that past changes led some families to relocate their children, and that trust must be rebuilt. LHSA is focused on building lasting trust through transparency, communication, and high-quality programming that reflects community values. With deep local roots and consistent outreach, we are confident that families will view LHSA not as another transition, but as a stable, long-term solution that meets their educational priorities.

LHSA's Growth Plan:

<i>2025-26</i>	<i>2026-27</i>	<i>2027-28</i>	<i>2028-29</i>	<i>2029-30</i>	<i>2030-31</i>
<i>90 students</i>	<i>117 students</i>	<i>138 students</i>	<i>154 students</i>	<i>168 students</i>	<i>182 students</i>

Family engagement is a central value at LHSA. Events like Back to School Night, science fairs, and student showcases will welcome families into the life of the school. Parents will offer feedback through surveys, forums, and public board meetings, fostering transparency and shared responsibility. Through meaningful partnerships and deep local roots, LHSA is building a sustainable future driven by community need and parent voice.

Part II: F. Effectively Serving All Students:

LHSA is committed to ensuring that every student, regardless of background, ability, or economic status, has equitable access to a high-quality education. This includes students who are English learners, have disabilities, are economically disadvantaged, homeless, in foster care, migrant, academically at risk, or identified as gifted and talented. LHSA embraces an inclusive, student-centered approach that begins with the foundational belief that every child is a capable learner. As a public charter school, LHSA leverages its flexibility in staffing, scheduling, and curriculum design to implement an innovative mastery-based instructional model that would not be feasible in a traditional school setting. This autonomy allows LHSA to adapt quickly to student needs, customize learning pathways, and provide integrated support services aligned with its mission.

To identify and support educationally disadvantaged students, LHSA will implement a thorough intake and assessment process. This includes enrollment and home language surveys, diagnostic assessments to determine academic baselines, family interviews, student learning profiles, and coordination with local LEAs to obtain existing IEPs, 504 plans, or other relevant documentation. Early identification allows staff to develop individualized support plans before students fall behind. This process ensures that interventions are proactive and aligned with each student's unique learning needs.

The school's instructional model is built on mastery-based, inquiry-driven learning, which provides flexibility for students to move at their own pace while engaging with rigorous, real-world content. This model supports all learners by incorporating small-group instruction, flexible pacing, and scaffolded tasks. Students performing below grade level will be grouped by

instructional level and receive targeted supports that allow them to access the same high-level tasks as their peers, with appropriate assistance.

Multi-modal learning opportunities—including visual, tactile, kinesthetic, and linguistic formats—will be integrated throughout instruction. Tools such as graphic organizers, sentence frames, and oral language development strategies are embedded into inquiry units to support comprehension and participation. Instruction is intentionally designed to align with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, promoting multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression.

For English learners, language development will be embedded in all content areas rather than isolated in a separate curriculum. Teachers will be trained in sheltered instruction, and lessons will integrate vocabulary development, language structures, and culturally responsive strategies that promote access and academic growth.

For students with disabilities, LHSA will follow all federal and state requirements, including implementation of the Idaho Special Education Manual. The school has budgeted for a certified special education teacher and will provide training to general and special educators on co-planning, inclusive practices, and legal compliance. Special education compliance will be monitored by the School Leader and/or contracted SPED Director, ensuring fidelity to IEP implementation and legal requirements. Instructional time will be structured to support reteaching and intervention. Daily blocks of 30 minutes or more, called WINN - What I Need Now - will be allocated for small-group work and individualized supports. Strategies may include manipulatives, audio-assisted reading, learning centers, and kinesthetic activities to reinforce retention and deepen conceptual understanding. LHSA embraces inclusive education

and will integrate students with disabilities into the general education classroom to the fullest extent possible, with support from both general and special educators. Gifted and advanced learners will also be supported through curriculum compacting, opportunities for acceleration, and deeper inquiry within the inquiry-based framework. Data from baseline diagnostics and classroom performance will guide identification and differentiation for gifted students.

LHSA is also committed to addressing the basic needs that impact a student's ability to learn. A designated lunchroom and scheduled lunch period will be provided for all students. While LHSA does not intend to participate in the Federal Lunch Program at this time, a sustainable, in-house meal program is planned. Meals will be prepared on-site and offered at cost, currently estimated at \$4.50 per meal. If staffing or enrollment do not support full implementation, families will be asked to send lunches, and community restaurants have expressed willingness to provide monthly meals during the first year. Regardless of the delivery model, LHSA will offer free or reduced-price meals to eligible students based on income data collected at enrollment and annually thereafter. No student will go without food due to financial constraints.

To ensure attendance is not hindered by lack of transportation, LHSA plans to offer busing services to students in the primary attendance area. These services will be provided through a contract with the Marsh Valley School District. As indicated in the grant request, LHSA will use purchased or leased buses or vans for expeditionary learning. Transportation access is a key concern among prospective families; early interest forms indicate that at least 20 families from surrounding communities will only enroll if busing is available. LHSA is committed to maintaining reliable, accessible transportation options that support both enrollment and daily attendance. The school will keep families informed of routes and will make adjustments as needed to align with enrollment and demand. Students with disabilities will receive

transportation accommodations as required by their IEPs, including support such as trained drivers or a bus buddy system. Through this comprehensive approach—early identification, personalized instruction, integrated supports, and attention to student well-being—LHSA is prepared to meet the needs of a diverse student population and ensure all students have the opportunity to succeed.

Part II: G. Staffing and Professional Development Plan

LHSA recognizes that teacher quality is the most significant in-school factor for student achievement. To ensure strong instructional delivery aligned with its mastery-based learning model, LHSA has prioritized strategic recruitment, development, and retention. This staffing model is intentionally structured to support LHSA's mastery-based, multi-age classrooms by ensuring sufficient staff capacity for small-group instruction, differentiated support, and cross-grade collaboration.

For the 2025–26 school year, LHSA has successfully hired five core teachers. These include a $\frac{3}{4}$ and a kindergarten teacher (both AP3), a part-time special education teacher (P2), a $\frac{1}{2}$ teacher (P5) relocating from Twin Falls, and a $\frac{5}{6}$ teacher (P1) certified in both general and special education. All staff members are selected through a rigorous process that includes resume screening, reference checks, interviews, demonstration lessons, background checks, and final board approval. Contracts follow Idaho's state pay scale. The support team will include a SPED director, secretary, four aides (including a Title I aide), a cafeteria worker, and a custodian/maintenance position. If enrollment does not sustain all support roles, LHSA will engage trained volunteers from the parent and community base under the supervision of certified staff. Class sizes will not exceed a 26 student-teacher ratio.

Learning from previous challenges faced at Lava Elementary, LHSA has adopted a more robust staffing strategy, including developing a strong school culture rooted in mission and collaboration, competitive pay, structured onboarding, mentorship, and incentives from local businesses. LHSA will continue targeted recruitment efforts as future staffing needs arise, using online platforms, local outreach, and marketing campaigns highlighting the school's instructional approach and community values.

To effectively implement a mastery-based learning model, LHSA recognizes the need for ongoing professional development tailored to this approach. All staff will complete 60 hours of pre-service training before the school year begins, followed by four hours of monthly professional development and weekly PLCs. These sessions will focus on implementing mastery-based instructional strategies, aligning curriculum with Idaho Content Standards, developing project-based lessons, building positive classroom environments, and engaging families. Time will also be dedicated to vertical and horizontal alignment, collaborative lesson planning, and data-informed instruction.

Teachers will receive specialized training on how to create rigorous, individualized learning targets, implement assessments that support mastery, and use data to drive instructional decisions. This will include learning how to assess not just academic achievement but also student progress toward mastery, ensuring that each student advances only after demonstrating a clear understanding of the material. Training will cover best practices in scaffolding, differentiated instruction, and formative assessment strategies that align with the principles of mastery learning. Additionally, professional development will emphasize fostering a growth mindset among both educators and students, reinforcing the belief that learning is a continuous,

developmental process. Teachers will also be trained in using project-based and performance-based assessments as authentic tools to gauge student understanding.

PLCs will provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate on their experiences implementing mastery-based strategies, share insights, and refine instructional practices based on student data. The school will also ensure that teachers have dedicated time to review and analyze student performance data, which is essential to assess the effectiveness of mastery-based learning. Continuous feedback loops will be established through bi-weekly or monthly professional development sessions, where teachers will discuss student progress and adjust their practices to better support mastery outcomes. LHSA's mastery-based approach supports multi-age classrooms, differentiated instruction, small group learning, and access to advanced content. LHSA has contracted with Alturas International for training, on-site coaching, and feedback to support implementation. This partnership provides cost-effective, job-embedded support aligned with LHSA's instructional goals.

All certificated staff will receive at least two formal classroom observations and one written evaluation by May 1, per Idaho Code. Teachers whose performance falls below expectations will be placed on a performance improvement plan developed in collaboration with school leadership. Ongoing mentoring will support growth, and outcomes may include removal from probation, continuation on a plan, or dismissal by Idaho law. Parents and guardians will be invited to provide feedback on teacher performance through annual surveys.

Part II: H. Financial Management and Monitoring Plan:

As an independently governed public charter school, Lava Hot Springs Academy (LHSA) embraces its responsibility for ensuring sound financial management, long-term sustainability,

and full compliance with state and federal fiscal requirements. LHSA's financial practices are anchored in Idaho's statutory requirements, the terms of our charter Performance Certificate, and the robust financial policies outlined in the 7000 Series of our Board Policy Manual.

LHSA adheres to all Idaho financial and budget laws, administrative rules, and reporting requirements as outlined in our Performance Certificate (§6). The school maintains internal controls that include: Use of generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP); Proper segregation of duties across payroll, cash handling, and purchasing functions; monthly and quarterly financial reviews; maintenance of accurate fixed asset records and asset depreciation in alignment with GASB Statement 34; federal grants managed in compliance with 2 CFR § 200.302 and EDGAR regulations (Policy 7218); regular audits conducted by an independent auditor, submitted per Idaho State Department of Education requirements (Policy 7230). These systems are further supported by policies on fraud prevention (Policy 7225), financial reporting (Policy 7230), procurement (Policy 7400P), and time and effort documentation for federally funded positions (Policy 7400F). LHSA's Board of Directors receives monthly financial statements and formally approves the annual budget following a transparent public process (Policy 7100 and 7110).

LHSA uses its budget as a strategic tool to align resources with its mission: to empower students through a mastery-based model focused on academic excellence, character, and leadership. The budgeting process includes input from school leadership and the board to ensure alignment with instructional goals and organizational sustainability (Policy 7100).

Financial planning considers multiple-year projections, anticipated revenue sources, conservative enrollment assumptions, and contingency planning for potential funding or enrollment

fluctuations. The school follows policy 7120 to make budget adjustments when needed, always with board oversight and public transparency.

The LHSA Board of Directors takes its fiduciary role seriously, as articulated in the Performance Framework's governance indicators and in board Policy 1230 (Duties of the Treasurer). The board reviews monthly budget-to-actuals, ensures timely submission of financial reports to the authorizer, and participates in annual training related to nonprofit financial oversight and ethics (Policy 1645). All funds are allocated to advance academic priorities, support staff development, and maintain safe and effective operations. Any use of grant funds is evaluated for allowability, allocability, and necessity per Policy 7320. The school follows a clear record retention schedule (Policy 7460) and makes financial records accessible for audit and review as required by law.

As a new school, LHSA has adopted policies to ensure long-term sustainability, including: monitoring cash flow monthly and maintaining a minimum reserve threshold; conducting enrollment trend analysis and staffing projections annually; evaluating facilities costs against long-term financial models; ensuring all federal and restricted funds are used by policy and reported properly (Policy 7450, 7455). Through conservative fiscal planning, the school aims to build a healthy fund balance, support future facility needs, and reduce reliance on volatile revenue sources. LHSA is committed to being a high-performing, financially sound public school for families in the Marsh Valley School District and beyond. [See Budget Narrative](#)

Part II: I. Board Capacity and Governance Structure

The LHSA Board of Directors, deeply committed to the school's mission and vision, serves as the legal and fiduciary governing body responsible for upholding and advancing the charter's purpose. See Board and Leadership Bio attachment. As a nonprofit 501(c)(3), the Board ensures compliance with all federal and state laws, including requirements related to CSP grant funding.

Its responsibilities include strategic planning, financial oversight, legal compliance, evaluation and support of school leadership, academic performance monitoring, and adoption of policies aligned with the mission. The Administrator/Director reports directly to the board and implements all of the board's policies and directives.

The founding board was initially selected by a majority vote of the incorporators, with new members recruited through community outreach and targeted networking. The current board members bring a diverse set of skills and deep local roots. Their expertise spans finance, marketing, education, real estate, office administration, and recreation. Several own local businesses, one has served on city council, and another has taught in both charter and private schools. Two members were instrumental in mobilizing the community and district interest in establishing LHSA. Collectively, the board offers strong ties to the local business community, firsthand knowledge of regional educational challenges, and the strategic thinking necessary to establish and grow a high-performing charter school in a rural setting.

While LHSA recognizes the challenges of rural recruitment, it has established a clear strategy to build a diverse and capable board. The target composition includes individuals with expertise in finance, education, law, real estate, marketing, fundraising, and nonprofit governance. All members must demonstrate a commitment to high academic standards, operational transparency, and compliance. Interested candidates receive a board packet that includes an application, a resume request, and forms to sign the Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics policies, which are kept on file. Once elected, members receive the full board handbook, which includes the bylaws and current board policies. New board members are also assigned to chair a committee aligned with their area of expertise—such as finance, education, construction, or marketing—to ensure meaningful engagement in school oversight.

Board roles include Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and general Directors, with staggered terms. To maintain continuity and avoid stagnation, board policy limits leadership roles to no more than three consecutive terms. A formal transition and succession plan is in place to support leadership continuity and institutional knowledge. The Board maintains a clear distinction between governance and operations, delegating day-to-day school management to the school leader while focusing on oversight, policy setting, and strategic planning.

Ongoing professional development is a priority. All board members receive governance training through the Idaho School Boards Association (ISBA) or equivalent providers, covering charter finance, ethics, open meeting laws, public records compliance, and strategic planning. Annual assessments will determine ongoing training needs, and specialized training will be secured if required. Board development is included in the school's annual operating budget to ensure access to high-quality training. Board performance is evaluated annually using resources from the National Charter School Resource Center, supplemented by community feedback to guide improvement planning.

The board complies fully with Idaho Open Meeting and Public Records laws. Agendas are posted in advance at the local post office, school building, and on the school website. Directors receive a meeting packet before each monthly meeting to prepare for discussions and decision-making. Meeting minutes are posted publicly on the website to ensure transparency. The Board's decision-making is governed by a comprehensive set of bylaws and policies that ensure oversight in academic performance, operational effectiveness, financial health, legal compliance, and risk management. Financial statements are reviewed monthly and annually, with annual audits conducted by an independent CPA. Additional audits will be conducted as required to meet grant or contractual obligations.

While community feedback is collected annually through surveys and outreach to inform strategic priorities and reflect on board effectiveness, governance authority remains solely with the Board. This ensures full legal compliance and prevents any compromise to the Board's fiduciary responsibility. Through structured recruitment, formal onboarding, consistent training, and strong compliance practices, LHSA's Board is well-prepared to lead with integrity and effectiveness.

Part II: J. School Leadership and Management

The LHSA Board of Directors provides governance and oversight, hiring and evaluating the Director in accordance with an approved job description and evaluation plan. The Director is held accountable through annual evaluations based on Idaho's Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards and feedback from the LHSA community. Final decision-making authority for school operations, instructional implementation, and staff oversight rests with the Director, ensuring clear leadership and accountability. The Board maintains the authority to intervene if expectations are not met, guaranteeing a balanced structure of governance and management.

Kolleen DeGraff, the current Director and Bluum Leadership Fellow, brings over two decades of leadership experience as the founder and administrator of a successful K–12 private school in Utah. Under her leadership, that school grew from start-up to one of the top private institutions in the state according to Niche and ACT scores, and she established a national and international online learning program serving more than 3,000 students. She implemented mastery-based learning practices such as pre-assessments to determine each student's starting skill level, flexible learning groups based on readiness, and individualized support from aides who provided

one-on-one instruction or enrichment activities as needed. Tools such as individual goal charts and engaging educational games were used to help students track their own progress and stay motivated. Students were given multiple opportunities to demonstrate understanding, and instruction continued until they reached a minimum of 90% proficiency on assessments. These instructional strategies—focused on clarity of learning targets, student ownership, and responsive teaching—directly influence LHSA’s current approach to mastery-based learning. To deepen her understanding of Idaho charter leadership and strengthen her ability to lead a public, mastery-based school, she is actively participating in Bluum’s charter school leadership development program. Through that program and her professional experience, she has gained further expertise in mastery-based learning, instructional leadership, and school culture development specific to K–6 environments. These experiences uniquely equip her to lead LHSA with fidelity to its instructional model.

The Director’s responsibilities encompass advancing the mission and vision of LHSA by ensuring that academic, operational, and financial decisions are aligned with school goals. She leads all hiring and evaluation processes, oversees professional learning communities and staff development, manages school culture, supports staff and family engagement, and drives instructional planning and curriculum design. She is present in classrooms and responsive to staff, student, and family needs, while maintaining focus on data-driven school improvement. The Director also works closely with the Lead Teacher and support staff to ensure strategic alignment across departments, foster a collaborative culture, and support long-term sustainability of the leadership model.

Operationally, the Director ensures compliance with legal and regulatory standards, manages procurement, and oversees finances. LHSA contracts for essential services—including

accounting, legal, special education director, and transportation—with board oversight. An independent auditor is retained annually to conduct financial and compliance audits. The leadership structure includes sufficient expertise and external support to manage compliance, finance, and legal responsibilities specific to Idaho charter school operations.

Although small, LHSA is strategically staffed with flexibility to scale. Currently, the school employs four FTE teachers, including one Lead teacher. The Lead Teacher holds an AP3 credential, has 17 years of classroom experience with excellent academic outcomes, and has served as the de facto administrator at Lava Elementary for the past three years. Her depth of experience and proven leadership provide critical support for instructional implementation and serve as a strong internal leadership pipeline. Staff also includes a Secretary, a part-time Special Education Teacher, and several part-time support roles. See Board and Leadership Bio attachment. As enrollment increases, LHSA will expand its leadership team and reassign roles accordingly. Risks related to leadership continuity or capacity are mitigated through mentorship of internal staff, a supportive local network of educators, and the Director’s succession planning efforts, which draw from a community of qualified professionals who have expressed interest in contributing to LHSA’s success.

LHSA’s leadership model ensures both immediate effectiveness and long-term sustainability through strong, centralized decision-making and intentional leadership development. While feedback from staff, parents, and the community is valued, the Director maintains final responsibility for all instructional and operational decisions, reinforcing clear lines of authority and accountability.

Lava Hot Springs Capacity Review Narrative Response

Approved August 2025

Lava Hot Springs Academy

Academic Narrative

Thank you for the opportunity to apply for the CSP grant. We appreciate your help and support on this incredible journey! We have excellent teachers and staff who believe in our vision!

We're excited to open school next week and are confident in our academic model to bring an educational gem to our area!

We are providing 3 deliverables with our submittal:

#1 Academic Goals (1 page) and Academic Narrative (5 pages)

#2 Enrollment Projections

#3 Project Budget

Academic Goals

GRANT PROJECT GOAL #1: Increase the number of high-quality Idaho K-6th charter school seats. At full growth, LHSA has the capacity to serve 225 K-6 students. During the grant period, LHSA will add 80 seats in year one and an additional 21 seats by year two in grades K-6. Completion of this goal will be tracked through enrollment in LHSA's student information system (SIS).

GRANT PROJECT GOAL #2: Implement Schoolwide Academic Model. LHSA will implement a schoolwide, instructional program aligned with its mission to ensure academic excellence. This model will leverage differentiated instruction including personalized instruction, multi-age classrooms, and hands-on experiences via project-based learning. This goal will be measured using a school-developed rubric. The first year will set a baseline of academic performance, with the goal of increasing by at least 10% annually, reaching at least 80% proficiency by Year 5 (2028–2029). This goal directly supports LHSA's mission and vision by using evidence-based methods and technology to help students explore, shape, and contribute to an increasingly complex world.

GRANT PROJECT GOAL #3: Students in grades 4th-6th will meet or exceed the state proficiency and growth average in English Language Arts and math on state standardized assessments. LHSA will use ISAT results annually to monitor and evaluate student progress. This goal reflects LHSA's commitment to high-quality teaching and learning, with a focus on both student achievement and academic growth.

GRANT PROJECT GOAL #4: LHSA will serve students in grades K-6, mirroring (within a 5% margin) the student population of local district demographics. LHSA believes that a diverse student body enhances learning for all students and is critical to equitable educational outcomes. Demographic data will be captured through LHSA's Student Information System (SIS) and compared to the local district demographics. LHSA is committed to serving all students—regardless of race, income, or disability status—as part of its mission to prepare every student for success.

Academic Narrative

Educational Philosophy, Instructional Practices, and Curriculum At Lava Hot Springs Academy

(LHSA), we believe every child deserves an education that meets them where they are and moves them forward—confidently, purposefully, and at their own pace. Our academic model includes differentiated instruction and project-based learning (PBL), both grounded in research-based best practices to promote mastery and real-world connections. This model is supported by a dedicated team of educators, a purposefully structured daily schedule, and a school culture enriched with learning experiences both inside the classroom and in the broader community. LHSA provides a supportive, academically rigorous environment rooted in personalized learning, strong teacher-student relationships, and authentic community connections.

The foundation of LHSA's educational design is differentiated instruction and project-based learning—hands-on, student-centered approaches that deepen understanding. Through meaningful projects connected to our unique rural environment—including the Portneuf River, local wildlife, and nearby hot springs—students engage in learning that is purposeful, relevant, and rooted in their community. Combined with core instruction, this approach builds critical thinking, collaboration, and ownership.

Differentiated Instruction Differentiated instruction is a cornerstone at LHSA, allowing educators to tailor strategies to student needs. Recognizing that learners progress at different rates and bring varied strengths, interests, and prior knowledge, LHSA creates an environment where all students can access rigorous content, grow with confidence, and succeed. At the heart of our approach is intentional small group instruction, delivering focused lessons matched to current learning levels. These groups provide opportunities for targeted remediation, enrichment, and skill-building beyond what a traditional whole-class format allows. Alongside small groups, independent study promotes autonomy, while collaborative projects foster communication, critical thinking, and teamwork.

Ongoing formative assessment ensures instruction evolves with each student's growth, needs, and readiness. Choice is embedded throughout, giving students a voice in how they approach work and show mastery. By combining small groups, collaboration, and independent learning, LHSA creates a dynamic, inclusive environment where every student is supported and challenged.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) LHSA embraces PBL to connect classroom instruction with real-world problems and community life. Students engage in interdisciplinary projects that promote collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. For example, local agriculture and natural resources provide authentic contexts for students to explore science, social studies, and technology standards. PBL enhances core curriculum instruction, deepening content understanding through application. Small class sizes and multi-age groupings allow enrichment and intervention through targeted instruction. Multi-age classrooms allow flexible grouping, differentiation, and peer mentoring, while supporting community. Teachers use [Barak Rosenshine](#)'s "I Do, We Do, You Do" model to build strong foundations before students apply learning in inquiry-based projects. PBL units allow students to investigate real-world problems, collaborate with peers, and present findings using authentic formats. This instructional sequence bridges the gap between content acquisition and deep, transferable understanding.

Learning Schedule - Core Instruction and PBL Daily small-group instruction in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics ensures targeted support. Diagnostic assessments inform flexible grouping to reteach, extend, and give immediate feedback. Classrooms are designed for whole-group, small-group, and independent or hands-on work, with outdoor learning spaces like a greenhouse and science stations integrating academics with the environment. LHSA's culture emphasizes respect, responsibility, curiosity, and citizenship. Relationships begin with family meetings before school starts, and daily morning meetings support social-emotional learning (SEL). Clear expectations and restorative practices foster empathy and accountability. Standards-based grading focuses on mastery, not point accumulation. See the example below of our schedule for 3rd & 4th graders.

	Monday/Wednesday		Tuesday		Thursday
7:40-7:55	Rise and Shine	7:40-7:55	Rise and Shine	7:40-7:55	Rise and Shine
7:55-8:00	Bathroom and Drink Break	7:55-8:00	Bathroom and Drink Break	7:55-8:00	Bathroom and Drink Break
8:00-8:25	Pledge, Morning Work, Attendance	8:00-8:25	Pledge, Morning Work, Attendance	8:00-8:25	Pledge, Morning Work, Attendance
8:30-9:00	ELA	8:30-10:00	ELA	8:30-10:00	ELA
9:00-9:30	Spanish	10:00-10:15	Recess	10:00-10:15	Recess
9:30-10:00	ELA	10:15-11:50	Math	10:15-11:50	Math
10:00-10:15	Recess	11:55-12:15	Lunch	11:55-12:15	Lunch
10:15-11:50	Math	12:15-12:40	AR	12:30-1:00	P.E.
11:55-12:15	Lunch	1:00-1:45	Music	1:00-1:15	AR
12:15-12:40	AR	1:45-2:30	Writing Instruction/Cursive	1:15-1:40	Amira/TTM
12:40-1:15	Amira/TTM	2:30-2:45	Recess	2:00-2:30	P.E.
1:15-1:40	Writing Instruction/Cursive	2:45-3:45	PBL	2:30-2:45	Recess
1:40-2:30	Science/History	3:45-4:00	Gather, Clean, Dismiss	2:45-3:45	PBL
2:30-2:45	Recess			3:45-4:00	Gather, Clean, Dismiss
2:45-3:45	PBL				
3:45-4:00	Gather, Clean, Dismiss				

Enrichment and Technology Enrichment programs—such as Rise and Shine Club for SEL, Spanish and music instruction, community traditions, and seasonal activities—are tied to academic goals and often serve as PBL entry points. Civic and cultural events reinforce responsibility and engagement. Students use Chromebooks, tablets, and Smart Boards, with Infinite Campus and MClass tracking progress. Families are trained to use Infinite Campus, and grant funds will create a computer lab.

Curriculum Program and Research Support Curricular materials at LHSA are selected for quality, alignment to Idaho Content Standards, and compatibility with the school’s instructional philosophy. In ELA, students use [Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts \(CKLA\)](#), combining systematic phonics instruction with content-rich thematic units. CKLA builds decoding and fluency skills while expanding vocabulary and background knowledge across science, history, and literature. Its coherent themes provide a natural foundation for integrated project-based units. For example, after reading *Charlotte’s Web*, students may write persuasive pieces on animal welfare, create informational posters about farm life, or build dioramas of key science-extending literacy into critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. Mathematics instruction uses [Eureka Math](#), a rigorous curriculum that promotes conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and real-world application. While Eureka follows a structured sequence, LHSA adapts pacing through small-group instruction, formative assessments, and targeted support. Data guides instruction so students can revisit concepts or accelerate as needed, maintaining fidelity to Eureka’s vertical alignment while supporting LHSA’s academic model. Mathematical concepts

extend into authentic applications—such as designing a garden or calculating resources for a community dinner—connecting math to meaningful contexts. Science instruction follows [Mystery Science](#), an inquiry-based curriculum built around hands-on investigation and real-world phenomena. Each unit begins with an engaging question and unfolds through a series of explorations, discussions, and experiments. Students generate research questions, design simple experiments, and document findings—practices that build scientific thinking and align closely with LHSA’s emphasis on curiosity and inquiry. As students engage in PBL, Mystery Science serves as both a resource and a launching point for deeper investigation. Social studies instruction is delivered through the free [Hillsdale 1776 Curriculum](#), a classical, content-rich program grounded in primary sources, historical narratives, and enduring civic principles. Units include guiding questions—such as “What makes a good citizen?”—that prompt critical thinking about history and civic responsibility. In many cases, these inquiries evolve into full PBL units, where students research historical or local challenges and propose solutions through written, visual, or oral presentations.

Across all content areas, LHSA’s standards-based grading system provides a consistent and transparent way to measure student progress. Rather than averaging scores, students are assessed on their demonstrated proficiency of individual standards. Teachers use both curriculum-based assessments and supplemental formative checks to determine levels of mastery. Student performance data is collected from multiple sources, including state standardized assessments such as the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) and Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT), benchmark assessments like NWEA MAP and STAR, attendance and engagement metrics, as well as student portfolios. This comprehensive approach ensures instructional decisions are data-driven, responsive, and tailored to each student’s unique learning path. This system supports differentiated pacing, emphasizes growth, and keeps families informed through clear reporting practices.

All components of LHSA’s instructional program are grounded in widely accepted, research-based educational practices. Scholars such as [E.D. Hirsch](#) and [Daniel Willingham](#) emphasize the importance of background knowledge in comprehension and long-term academic success. Barak Rosenshine’s

principles of explicit instruction support our structured lesson design, while [Bloom's research](#) on mastery learning confirms the importance of allowing students to progress based on understanding, not time. [Tomlinson](#)'s work on differentiation validates the use of small-group instruction, especially in flexible environments like LHSA. Project-based learning is supported by the work of [Linda Darling-Hammond](#), who found that PBL increases engagement, promotes collaboration, and improves long-term retention. LHSA's approach is particularly suited to its small, rural context. Research shows that rural schools thrive when instruction is relevant, relationship-driven, and connected to place. Small class sizes and strong community ties enable the school to implement flexible instructional practices that may not be feasible in larger systems. LHSA leverages this autonomy to create a cohesive academic model that fosters high achievement, civic engagement, and a deep sense of belonging by engaging students in project-based learning that sparks inquiry and curiosity.

Professional Development - High Quality Instruction LHSA prioritizes ongoing professional development aligned with our instructional priorities: project-based learning, differentiation, and data-driven instruction. Monthly PLCs allow staff to collaborate, review student data, and plan lessons. Teachers receive coaching and engage in reflective practices to ensure continuous improvement. The professional development plan focuses on three areas: instructional model, curriculum mastery, and school-wide alignment. To build expertise in our mixed-grade, small-group, project-based model, staff participated in training at Alturas, a charter school in Idaho Falls with similar practices, and with a veteran educator skilled in differentiation.

Teachers have engaged in curriculum-specific training from Amplify, Eureka Math, and Hillsdale 1776. A licensed behavior therapist provided workshops on SEL strategies, Zones of Regulation, and positive interventions to support our special education population and behavior policies. Additional training includes Google Education tools, Amira, Infinite Campus, and effective project-based learning. The special education director trains staff to meet the needs of struggling learners, while a Title I instructor delivers Tier 1 differentiation strategies in math and reading.

LHSA's small size and rural setting create strong relationships and flexible instruction. By blending proven curriculum with responsive differentiated instruction and student-centered PBL, LHSA fosters mastery, inquiry, and connection—helping all students thrive.