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February 5, 2018

## LANV – WL Transition Plan

**HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL – PLEASE DO NOT SHARE OR DISCUSS WITH ANYONE EXCEPT OTHER LANV BOARD MEMBERS**

Dear LANV Board Members,

On October 10, 2016 we (James and Nels) met with the Board in an in-person meeting at LANV headquarters. During that meeting, we presented in detail about our vision for the future of WL. We introduced the concept of being a WL school, and we made it clear to the Board and administration that being a WL school means something unique and different among online charter schools. We explained that being a WL school would mean a deeper partnership and integration with WL in providing the services we render to students. We explained that being a WL school aligns with the LANV charter. The Board agreed and voted unanimously to accept our invitation to become a WL school.

Since that vote, we have done our best to work closely with the Board and administration to implement The Williamsburg Curriculum and serve LANV families better every year.

Since October 2016 we have:

- Obtained accreditation for LANV
- Succeeded in growing the student body each year
- Created a suite of governance resources that, if used, can allow board members to clearly understand the line between governance and administration and perform their governance role with even more clarity and less wasted time
- Continued to improve our curriculum through semi-annual reviews between program leaders and all mentors, updated alignment to state standards, and developed many self-paced courses specifically requested by LANV administration (including receiving approval for these new courses through the Nevada Department of Education)



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- Formalized and increased the paraprofessional support we provide to mentors to prevent teacher burnout (WL has an industry-leading 95% teacher retention rate)
- Responded to concerns about our math program by replacing our math program leader, increasing the mastery required in Khan, and building out new projects that require higher level thinking skills
- Conducted a three-day faculty training retreat in 2016; repeated it in 2017 and expanded it to include an invitation to all staff at LANV—all at no cost to LANV
- Developed a weekly Inspiration Hour open to all high school students to receive high-caliber leadership training and inspiration, and invited all LANV students to participate at no cost to the school
- Created a weekly huddle to facilitate communication between Executive Directors of WL schools and WL
- Extended \$100 pricing (a 75% discount) on our Elevation program for 2017-18, to make it more accessible to LANV students

Since the school's opening, we have never increased our fees to LANV. Instead, we lowered our fee for the current school year and next year because we wanted to help LANV operate more comfortably. This reduction from 40% of funding to 37% will represent over \$140,000 in savings to LANV. At the same time, we have not reduced our services to LANV in any way; rather, we have increased them.

Of course, all of the activities mentioned above serve the purpose of helping LANV fulfill its mission to prepare students to live meaningful lives as principled leaders. There are a handful of ways we use to measure how well we are delivering on this aim:

- **Academic Performance:** At WL we believe that academic performance is a key performance metric for any EMO. It is important to us that our charter schools stay on track with, if not outperform, their online charter school counterparts on standardized tests. Where this does not occur, the WL Department of Academics, including its Director and Program Leaders, are committed to creating improvement plans to address areas of concern.
  - **LANV Middle School Students:** At WL our primary concern in this age group is to instill a love of learning and because of this, we do not place high emphasis on "teaching to the test." That said, LANV's SBAC scores for 6th-7th graders are roughly tracking with other online charter schools in the

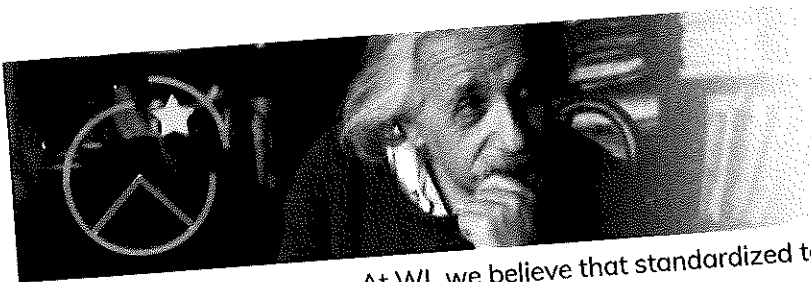


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state; we're not the highest or lowest in most areas, and have planned improvements to improve math scores. Many middle school students are already behind in math when they come to LANV. It takes time for them to catch up.

- **LANV High School Students:** The focus shifts for WL students in high school from love of learning to the scholarship phase and we place increased emphasis on connecting deeply with subject material and developing strong study habits. The average LANV student's ACT composite score in 16-17 was 21.9, compared to 18.3 for Nevada charter school average. LANV's ACT score is actually the highest charter school average in Nevada and the 6th highest high school average in the state) LANV students consistently outperform the Nevada state average score across all four subject areas of the ACT test and therefore have higher levels of college readiness than other students in the state (22% vs. 10% in NV).
  
- **Parent & Student Satisfaction**
  - In last year's survey to LANV parents, parent ratings were significantly higher than parent ratings of other schools with the AdvancED network (a body that accredits over 30,000 learning institutions worldwide). As you can see in the report [here](#), parents appreciate that WL mentors have high expectations, give challenging work, and provide a safe learning environment. Of note is the fact that even the lowest rated items in the survey were still scored above a 4 on a scale of 1-5.
  - Similarly, in last year's survey to LANV students (see report [here](#)), overall scores were high compared to other accredited schools (4.4 vs. 3.6). We were proud to to see how highly students rated WL courses and mentors on providing them with challenging curriculum and learning experiences (4.6 on scale of 1-5). We celebrated this valuable feedback and shared it across the team.
  
- **Indicators of Student Success:**

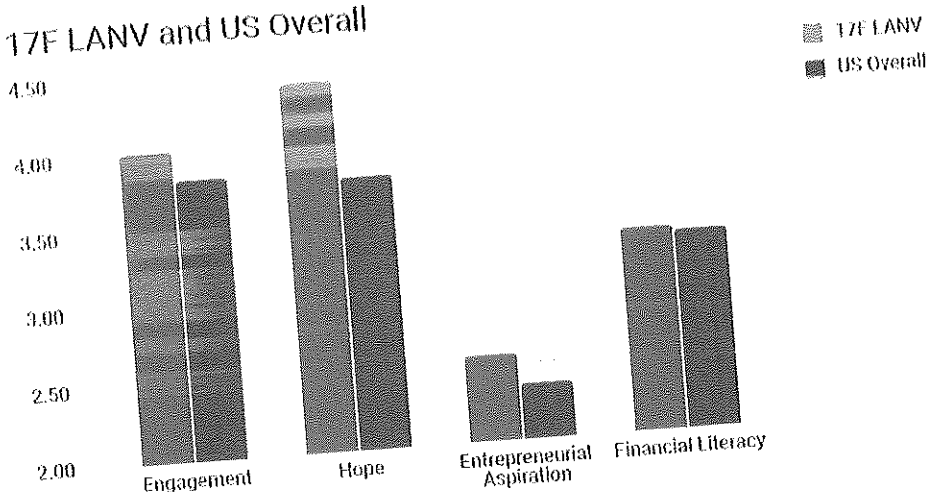


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- o At WL we believe that standardized tests, grades, and attendance or graduation rates are not necessarily the best measures of future student success. In fact, Gallup recently conducted a poll that showed 78% of respondents think that student engagement and hope are "very important" indicators of measuring how effective a public school is, compared to 14% who agreed that standardized test scores were very important. That is why we are really excited about our current and future efforts to find better ways to gauge school and student success, such as our recent participation in the Fall 2017 Gallup Student Poll. This poll measures crucial indicators of student success such as hope, engagement, entrepreneurial aspiration, and financial literacy. As you can see below, on the whole, LANV students agree that they feel highly involved and enthusiastic about school and they feel high levels of hope when compared to other students in the US.

17F LANV and US Overall



We think you'll agree that even though LANV students and parents are generally quite happy about the experience students are receiving at LANV, and success indicators point to future student success, the relationship between WL and the LANV Board and administration has become strained and difficult.



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We freely acknowledge that we are not perfect. We are committed to continually improving the quality of the academic program that we provide to students and the level of service that we provide to the administration and Board.

At WL, we partner with Board members and administrators who genuinely believe in our philosophy and want to govern their schools and implement the WL program with excellence. We do not maintain partnerships in which we experience an attitude of opposition, suspicion, and negativity from board members and administrators. It saddens us that, despite the substantial success of WL and LANV in delivering the educational program that is outlined in the LANV charter, there remains a feeling of friction between our two organizations. We believe that most friction points in our relationship share a root cause and can be traced to the fact that the LANV Executive Director and some on the LANV Board may not want LANV to be a WL school.

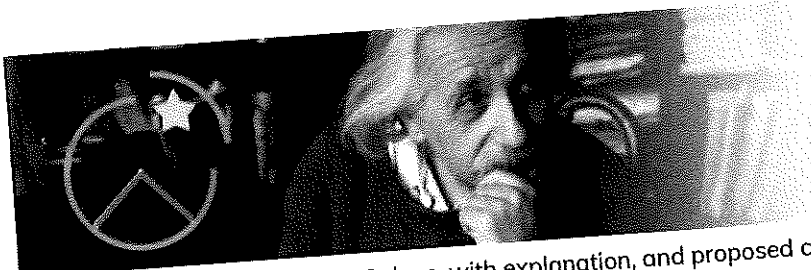
We believe that it is time to fundamentally reposition the relationship between LANV and WL. The question is whether LANV wants to remain a WL school, or whether it wants to step out on its own and become something else. We hope the Board will choose to harmonize itself with WL.

This first section of this brief begins with a caution about ways this conversation and decision-making process could adversely impact student learning and the reputation of both organizations. It then proposes some ground rules that we believe are in the best interest of all parties. The second section introduces an option by which our organizations achieve alignment and continue working together, including the terms that must be satisfied for a continued relationship. The third section introduces the option of parting ways, and includes a list of challenges the LANV Board and administration will face if they choose this option. Finally, we conclude by asking the Board to select the first option and partner with WL more deeply.

The current Educational Services Agreement between LANV and WL states:

If either party is dissatisfied with the performance of the other, the dissatisfied party may notify the other party in writing by mail or email, stating the specific reasons for the dissatisfaction, and the provisions of this agreement, if any, that the dissatisfied party feels the other party is not meeting.

The party receiving the notice of dissatisfaction shall respond in writing via mail or email,



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within 30 days, with explanation, and proposed corrective actions.

You may consider this brief as our notice of dissatisfaction.

## Let's Proceed With Caution

First, let's acknowledge how sensitive this conversation is, and how potentially disruptive to student learning. Regardless of which transition plan the LANV Board selects, both of our organizations share the following motives:

- We do not want to disrupt student learning
- We do not want to tarnish the experience current and past LANV students have had in the program
- We do not want to inflame concerns or drama with the public or the state
- We do not want to damage the reputation of charter schools generally
- We do not want to taint—in any of our minds—the phenomenal and exemplary accomplishments we have shared over the past four years
- We do not want to cause unnecessary damage to personal relationships
- We do not want to make long-term decisions in a reactive way
- We do not want to unnecessarily burden our respective teams and communities with issues over which they have no control

Therefore, we propose we both adopt the following ground rules:

- We avoid discussing this conflict with parents and students as long as possible in the hopes that we can resolve it without placing it in the public eye. We strongly suggest we all keep this confidential within the highest levels of our respective organizations until we have a compelling need to open it up to the public
- We preserve a professional relationships throughout the process of finding resolution. We do all in our power to prevent any disruption to student learning or parental trust in either of our organizations
- NRS 241.010 Requires that all public bodies 1) take their actions openly, and 2) conduct their deliberations openly. WL requests the opportunity to be present in any meeting where a majority of LANV Board members are present and the WL-LANV relationship is discussed



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- When a transition plan is selected with finality, we work together to present it to parents and students in a positive way

As a final suggestion, we propose that we all work hard in this conversation to **keep our focus on what is in the best interest of current and future students.**

### Option One – A Fresh Start With Aligned Teams

When LANV and WL began this experiment together, neither of our organizations had a clearly defined sense of self. It was our first time creating an EMO and your first time creating a charter school.

Over the past six years, WL has shaped and sharpened its vision, training, resources, practices, and methods. The corporate accreditation process we successfully completed last year gave us the final iteration we needed to have clarity around who we are, what we do, and how we do it.

During this same time, LANV has shaped and sharpened its own sense of self. The challenge we face now is that we feel more competition than partnership. We're confident it's true for both organizations that the status quo is no longer an option and we need to reposition our relationship.

WL will commit to a continued partnership with LANV if the following criteria are satisfied by the end of March, 2018:

1. With input from WL, create and execute a clear succession plan to recompose Board membership as necessary to create a Board that is deeply aligned with WL's vision, mission, philosophy, and methods and is capable of a high trust relationship
2. With input from WL, hire a new Executive Director who is strongly committed to the WL model for the 2018-19 school year
3. Change the name of LANV to Williamsburg Academy of Nevada (we are also changing the name of Leadership Academy of Utah to Williamsburg Academy of Utah). Many other EMOs follow this naming convention to avoid confusion in branding and we need to make the change for the same reasons. American Preparatory Schools operates American Preparatory Academy in Las Vegas, and Connections Academy is operated by Connections Education. This change will create



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a cleaner, simpler brand for the school and remove confusion about the school's connection to Williamsburg Learning.

We are NOT asking for rubber-stamp Board membership and administration. We are asking for highly-aligned Board membership and administration so we can work together for the next chapter of the school's existence in a synergistic way that provides all of us deep enjoyment in our partnership. We believe these changes are the only way forward if LANV wants to maintain its designation as a WL school.

It is not uncommon for a charter school to experience a very painful transition as the founding Board members hand the reins to new Board members. All of us have taken risks, put in countless hours, and worked very hard to create something amazing for Nevada students, and all of us would be sad to see that work crumble. You have it within your discretion as Board members to place the school on new footings and position it for great success as a WL school. We request that you do so.

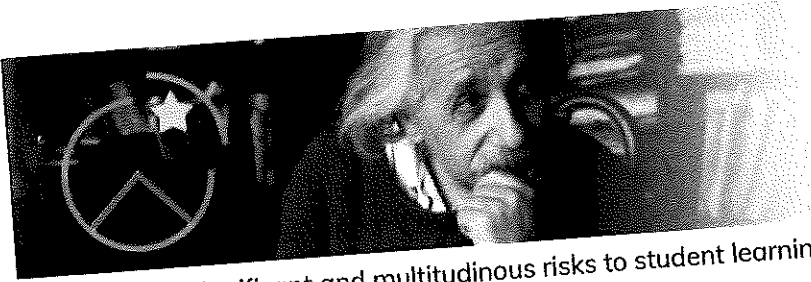
### Option Two – Part Ways

If the LANV Board decides to part ways with WL, we will all want to proceed very carefully and thoughtfully. This plan has the potential to completely unravel the student experience and parental trust in both organizations in Nevada. We will want to work together to create the least disruptive strategy that leads to the following outcomes:

- LANV becomes a successful, autonomous school that is wholly unconnected to Williamsburg Learning
- Williamsburg founds a new Nevada charter school, Williamsburg Academy of Nevada. In the meantime, Williamsburg forms a partnership with another school or district in Nevada similar to the relationship we have with 30 other schools and districts throughout the West by which Williamsburg courses are made available to students enrolled in other schools
- LANV and WL work together to honor the preferences of current LANV students and parents regarding which program is right for their family

At WL, we acknowledge that parting ways and achieving these outcomes will be frustrating for WL. We believe that it will also be an immensely challenging, all-consuming affair for LANV Board members and administration. Most importantly, we believe parting ways poses





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significant and multitudinous risks to student learning. Here is a cursory list of significant challenges we believe will directly or indirectly harm student learning and demand tremendous amounts of time and energy from LANV Board members and the administration if the LANV Board chooses to part ways with WL:

- We anticipate that LANV board members will receive many email, phone calls, and public comments in board meetings from LANV parents and students who love Williamsburg and cannot understand why the LANV board would propose such a tremendous disruption to a model that is serving their families so well. It is likely LANV board members will also receive communication requests from frustrated mentors, Elevation Trail Guides, and from other members of the WL community, potentially including board members and administrators at LAU who have a vested interest in protecting the WL name and reputation, and parents and students at LAU and WA who will be sad to see the student community divided
- A significant portion of LANV students are committed to the Williamsburg program and we believe would follow WL, potentially leaving too little enrollment at LANV for the school to remain viable
- Of those students who are not necessarily committed to Williamsburg, it's likely that at least some would not re-enroll with LANV because they would be confused by the transition. Many parents would question whether quality education could continue in a program through such a massive disruption. Historically, when a charter school undergoes a massive change in its academic program, morale suffers, talented teachers leave, families with high performing students switch schools, and mediocrity sets in long-term. Once this happens at a charter school, it is very difficult and unlikely that excellence will ever be restored at that school
- The impending decrease in overall enrollment will adversely impact LANV's budget and will likely require the school to let go of some of the administrative team
- To make all of the transition challenges worthwhile, LANV would need to create a new model that could execute the promises made in the school's charter better than WL currently executes them. These promises include:
  - Inspire youth to become principled leaders
  - Provide a Liberal Arts education
  - Instruct through enthusiastic mentors



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- Create an engaging and stimulating online learning environment, including live, synchronous classes
- Provide a system for parent trainings, parent, teacher conferences, and parent surveys
- Build a culture and community
- Successfully market LANV to the public
- LANV's charter commits the school to an educational vision and model that is unique. This is why the original Committee to Form asked Williamsburg to help create a charter school based on our model in Nevada. Few curriculum resources exist that can support this model in a public school. Those that do exist are not often designed specifically for this model, and therefore require much adaptation and integration. Our experience is that many/most of the curriculum resources for a model as unique as LANV's will need to be built from scratch. To create the curriculum that we have now, WL has spent several years, with dozens of subject matter experts working tens of thousands of hours collectively, at a cost of millions of dollars. Patching something together by Fall, 2018 would be a major undertaking that could send the Board and administration into crisis mode. The Board could partner with another EMO to solve some of these problems, but the Board would then be in a relationship similar to the one it is in with WL, except that no other EMO will have an academic program as narrowly tailored to the LANV charter as WL's.
- Newly created courses must be built, vetted and mapped to Nevada education standards. Then they must be submitted for approval by the Department of Education before they can be offered at any public school. This will be an additional difficulty for the LANV Board and administration. It is likely that given all of the other challenges of building a program from scratch, LANV would be forced to choose from the current approved list of online curriculum providers, and would make LANV's curriculum no different than that found in other online charters and school districts
- Attracting, filtering, and hiring engaging teachers who can teach within the educational model set forth in LANV's charter will be an immensely challenging task. WL travels far and wide every year to find talented teachers who are a good philosophical fit, and then we have to persuade them to teach online and work for WL schools. We also spend hundreds of hours per year training and developing them into excellent mentors, using our proprietary professional development program. It's one of the bigger challenges we face at WL and we think will represent an even



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- bigger challenge for LANV while its going through a transition like this. We do not believe any WL mentors are likely to quit WL and teach at LANV if we part ways
- We have not seen a professional development model in the market (other than our own) that is designed to help teachers execute on the instructional methods core to LANV's charter, including critical thinking and project-based learning in an online Liberal Arts framework
  - The State of Nevada would likely take a big interest in such a massive transition and may complicate things for both of our organizations
  - LANV will lose access to all marketing and branding resources created for WL schools
  - LANV will lose accreditation status when LANV loses its designation as a WL school. This will adversely impact students. LANV will need to create a new academic program from scratch before it will be ready to pursue accreditation on its own. We believe this will take at least 1-2 years
  - LANV will need to find, filter, and adopt many new technology tools to support its new model

Our intent in creating this cursory list is simply to bring clarity to the LANV Board regarding the services currently provided by WL that the Board and administration would have to recreate if we part ways. We believe parting ways would be a colossal mistake for LANV.

### We Hope the LANV Board Chooses to Remain a WL School

We believe LANV will remain a high-quality online charter school if the LANV Board decides to select the first option presented in this brief. We believe WL is not in breach of any contractual responsibilities, and is instead providing a high quality academic program, professional development, and marketing resources as agreed. We believe there are some on the LANV Board who do NOT want to part ways with WL and that these same members will love the experience of working with WL in a deeply integrated way. We believe there are others on the LANV Board who can see the wisdom of committing to deeper integration with WL even if this path does not suit their personal taste. We hope that those who envision a LANV separate from WL, and with whom a relationship of trust with WL is no longer possible, will choose to do what is best for students and create new leadership opportunities for an administrator and Board members who are deeply committed to and invested in the future of WL schools.



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Here's the question we are asking ourselves:

In three years, will Nevada students be better served if LANV and WL break up in 2018, or if LANV and WL decide to integrate and align on a deeper level in the WL framework?

We strongly believe Nevada students will be better off if we align. We hope you will ask this same question.

We therefore encourage the LANV Board Chair to:

1. Notify the Executive Director that the Board plans to hire a new Executive Director for the 2018–19 year. This notice need not be given in a public meeting. The current Executive Director can finish out the current contract and you can begin interviewing new candidates in a timely way
2. Create and begin to execute a clear and timely succession plan for the Board. If Board members who do not want LANV to be a WL school voluntarily resign on the schedule provided in the succession plan, the only public action needed is to adopt new board members per the plan
3. Secure a vote in the next public Board meeting to change the name from Leadership Academy of Nevada to Williamsburg Academy of Nevada

We believe these actions are the least disruptive route to accomplishing the right outcome for students. We believe there are many ways this transition could blow up on both of our organizations; however, if we are delicate and thoughtful, it can transpire peacefully and with little public drama.

Regardless of which option you choose, we hope you will work closely with us to execute the plan with a strategy that creates as little disruption to student learning as possible.

Best regards,

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