

Accelerated ELC Director Incubation Program

The AZACS School Director Incubation Program is designed to identify, develop, and support high-potential leaders who demonstrate the skills, commitment, and vision necessary to lead charter schools within our network. The program will consist of rigorous preparation, structured leadership training, and hands-on experience in school management, culminating in immersion as a Director in Residence under the mentorship of an experienced AZACS School Director.

Program Goals:

- **Build Leadership Capacity:** Develop emerging leaders with the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience to lead a charter school effectively.
- **Leadership Ambassador Training:** Prepare potential Campus Directors to become ambassadors of the AZACS mission at the highest level. Learn about the AZACS brand and why it stands out from other charters in the nation.
- **Provide Practical Experience:** Offer meaningful, hands-on leadership experience in a school-based management role, followed by direct mentorship under an experienced principal.
- **Ensure Long-Term Network Success:** Strengthen the charter school network by fostering a pipeline of high-performing leaders capable of driving achievement for students with autism and other learning differences and supporting organizational growth.

Program Structure:

Phase 1: School-Based Management Role & Leadership Training Series

The program's first phase is focused on immersive, hands-on experience in a school-based management role, coupled with targeted training in core leadership competencies. If a fellow is already staffed in a school-based management role (ABA Manager, Instruction and Alignment Coach, Assistant Director, they would continue in that role while going through the Leadership Training Series.

1.1 Role and Responsibilities: The participant will serve in a leadership role within one of the charter schools in the network. This role could include Assistant Director, ABA Manager, or a similar position, depending on the candidate's experience (Special Education vs. ABA). Key responsibilities will include:

- Leading key school functions such as instruction, teacher development, and operations.
- Collaborating with the school leadership team to meet and exceed academic achievement and growth metrics for engagement, iReady, and PEAK, as well as increased student, family, and staff satisfaction
- Engaging with staff, students, and families to foster a positive and productive school environment

- Contributing to the development of school-specific initiatives aligned with AZACS strategic goals
- Engaging in problem-solving initiatives, such as improving staff attendance and retention

1.2 Leadership Training Series: In parallel with the school-based role, participants will attend a series of leadership training sessions and receive hands-on experiences focusing on essential aspects of school leadership in a Director Role:

- **Mission Alignment to AZACS and Serving as an Ambassador:** AZACS has a unique founding story and has been a trailblazer as the first autism-focused charter in the state. Campus directors will learn how AZACS has become an award-winning network and explore how to continue the legacy of excellence and innovation for years to come.
- **Instructional Leadership:** Best practices in curriculum design, data-driven instruction, differentiation, and supporting teacher development through the Tiered Coaching Rubric and Teacher Evaluation Tool
- **ABA in Schools:** Best practices in ABA implementation within the classroom setting for instruction (i.e. direct instruction, discrete trial teaching, and natural environment teaching)
- **School Culture and Climate:** Creating a positive school environment, managing behavior, and fostering a culture of high expectations for students and staff
- **Operations and Management:** Developing skills in enrollment procedures, managing pertinent school budget line items, scheduling, collaborating with human resources, special education compliance, and other school-based compliance requirements
- **Community Engagement and Communication:** Building relationships with families, staff, and the broader community

Proposed Scope:

- Leadership Alignment to AZACS Foundational Mission and Vision
- Enrollment
- Staffing, Recruitment and Retention
- Pertinent School-Based Budget Line Items
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Special Education Compliance
- ABA in Schools
- Assessment and Data
- Family Engagement
- Staff Evaluation
- Safety Management

Phase 2: Director in Residence

The program's second phase focuses on an immersive mentorship and hands-on experience as a Director in Residence (DiR). This phase provides the opportunity to lead a school with the full support and guidance of an experienced Charter Network Director.

2.1 Director in Residence Role: The participant will serve as the Director in Residence under the direct mentorship of a seasoned Charter School Director. The DiR will take on a range of director-level responsibilities, including:

- Overseeing all aspects of school operations and leadership
- Leading the school leadership team in the development and execution of strategic initiatives
- Managing school-wide academic and cultural priorities with a focus on improving student outcomes
- Engaging with families and the broader community to ensure alignment with the school's mission and vision
- Receiving real-time feedback from the supervising director to refine leadership skills and decision-making

2.2 Mentorship and Coaching: The DiR will receive regular one-on-one mentorship and coaching from their supervising Director throughout this phase. This will include:

- **Weekly Check-Ins:** Structured meetings to reflect on key leadership challenges, progress, and goals
- **360-Degree Feedback:** Periodic feedback from staff, students, and families on leadership effectiveness, decision-making, and communication
- **Leadership Reflection:** Opportunities for reflective practice and development of an individualized leadership growth plan based on the AZACS Leader Evaluation Tool
- **Strategic Support:** Guidance on navigating complex school leadership issues, including school operations, crisis management, and community engagement

2.3 Evaluation and Transition: After Phase 2, the DiR will undergo a formal evaluation process based on performance indicators established at the beginning of the program. This will include:

- Execution of Role in Alignment to AZACS Mission/Vision and Founding Principles
- Review the school's academic performance, culture, and operational metrics.
- Feedback from the supervising principal, school staff, and the DiR's peers.
- A final assessment of the participant's readiness to transition into a full Director role within the network.

Based on the evaluation, the participant may be offered a permanent director position within the network, assuming the individual has met the required competencies and demonstrated the potential for long-term success as a school leader.

Program Support:

- **Peer Cohort:** Participants may be grouped with other leadership candidates in the program, providing a supportive cohort for networking, collaboration, and peer learning.
- **Network-Wide Collaboration:** Participants will have the opportunity to engage with other network leaders through cross-school learning groups, forums, and leadership retreats.

- **Evaluation and Feedback:** Throughout the program, participants will receive continuous feedback from mentors, their teams, and network leadership, ensuring continuous growth and accountability.

Program Timeline:

Phase	Duration	Key Activities
Phase 1	5 months (Feb-June)	School-based management role; Leadership Training Series
Phase 2	Minimum of 4 months (July-Oct)	Director in Residence under a current school leader, ongoing mentorship, and hands-on leadership experience
Program Completion	End of Phase 2	Evaluation, potential offer for a permanent director position

Key Success Metrics:

- Demonstrated growth in leadership effectiveness, as measured by feedback from school staff, students, and families
- Ability to execute the campus leadership role following the AZACS mission and brand
- Achievement of school-specific performance goals (academic achievement, student engagement, staff retention, etc.)
- Successful completion of leadership training modules with 90% or better average score
- Effective evaluation from the supervising director at the end of Phase 2 based on the Leadership Evaluation Tool