



October 5, 2015

Dear Aspen Parents and Employees,

Aspen Academy's annual School Board election will be held on November 5, 2015. The Aspen community will be voting for up to 3 parent board members, 2 teacher board members, and 1 community board member.

### **Candidate Information**

#### **Who are the candidates?**

In the following pages, you will find a Candidate Information Guide showing the completed applications of each board candidate.

#### **How do I learn more about the candidates?**

If you have questions after reading the Candidate Information Guide, you may:

- 1) Contact the candidate directly via the email address that he or she has provided, and
- 2) Talk with the candidates at the Meet the Candidates table at the ACC fall events on October 24<sup>th</sup> and November 7<sup>th</sup>.

### **Voting Information**

#### **Who may vote in the election?**

There are two categories of eligible voters:

- 1) Each parent or legal guardian of an Aspen student, and
- 2) Each employee of the school.

#### **How do I vote in the election?**

Aspen's eligible voters have two choices to vote:

- 1) In person at the school between 11:30 am and 2:30 pm on Thursday, November 5<sup>th</sup>
- 2) By mailing in the absentee ballot included in this packet that follows all instructions described on that ballot.

The election can't happen without volunteers willing to staff the voting table and help count ballots. Please visit <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050f49a9aa23a31-20152> to sign up to help with the election. Thank you to the ACC for its help in arranging election volunteers!

Aspen Academy depends on the School Board to govern and help shape the future of the school. It is up to the school community to choose the board members that will help Aspen achieve and maintain its success. Please take a few minutes to participate in this important part of Aspen Academy and cast your vote!

Sincerely,  
Aspen Academy Board of Directors

Attachments: Absentee Ballot and Instructions  
Candidate Information Guide



Absentee Ballot  
Election for Board of Directors  
November 5, 2015

Please read each category carefully. A ballot with more votes than each category allows or with votes not clearly marked will be considered invalid and will not be counted.

<p>Vote for <b>up to 3 Parent</b> candidates from the following:</p> <p>_____ Noah Levie</p> <p>_____ Kelly Smith</p> <p>_____ Stephanie Smitley</p>	<p>Vote for <b>up to 2 Teacher</b> candidates from the following:</p> <p>_____ Angela Tuma</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Vote for <b>up to 1 Community Member</b> candidate from the following:</p> <p>_____ Kent Peterman</p>
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**INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING AN ABSENTEE BALLOT**

- Your ballot must be MAILED to the Aspen Office via USPS. Ballots CANNOT be accepted in person, sent in your student’s backpack or by any other means.
- Write your FIRST and LAST name as it appears on Aspen’s records clearly in the return address section of the envelope. If the name on the return address does not match Aspen’s records, the ballot will not be counted. Multiple ballots coming from one household must be sent in separate envelopes. This ballot may be photocopied.
- Upon receipt, absentee ballots will be held separately until in person voting is complete. After voting closes, we will go through absentee ballots and cross your name off the master list as having voted. Your ballot will be separated from the envelope and added to all other ballots for counting. If you would like additional anonymity, you may place your ballot in a second, blank envelope or seal it with tape.
- Absentee Ballots must be received in the Aspen Office by the time of mail delivery on or before November 5, 2015.
- Absentee Ballots need to be mailed to:

Aspen Academy  
ATTN: ELECTIONS COMMITTEE  
14825 Zinran Avenue  
Savage, MN 55378



**Board of Directors  
Candidate Information Guide  
2015**

**What is your connection to Aspen Academy?**

I am a parent of two Aspen students and current parent member of the Aspen school board.

**Why do you want to join the Board of Aspen Academy?**

I am seeking re-election to the Aspen School Board to advance key strategic initiatives that will strengthen Aspen's ability to provide our students with the best education available in the state of MN.

**What is it about a charter school that appeals to you?**

Charter Schools more readily enable innovation in education to meet the rapidly changing social and academic needs of our students. Though we operate within strict state statutes specific to charter schools, the charter model is achieving its intended outcomes.

**What do you believe is the Board's role regarding school governance?**

The role of Aspen's board is to oversee and advise on the execution of Aspen Academy's mission, vision and the following five strategic objectives:

1. Achieve academic growth for all students
2. Develop and retains a highly qualified staff and board
3. Maintain student enrollment through recruiting and retention
4. Develop and maintains strong student, parent, and community partnerships
5. Practice exemplary financial and operational management

**How would you help Aspen meet its strategic goals set forth by the mission and vision statement and annual report?**

There are two areas of focus in my current board term that I would like to continue to support, and lead where appropriate, they are:

1. Facility Expansion to strengthen academic performance and staff retention. One of our most important strategic initiatives is the expansion of our facility to providing additional space for more student programming and space for our talented staff to support and educate our students.
2. Performance Metrics and measures: The development and implementation of key performance metrics for all five strategic objectives from which the board, staff and our community can measure progress against our plan.

**What professional, leadership, or other board experience can you bring to the Board?**

I bring 20+ years of corporate experience spanning sales, marketing, finance, legal, strategic planning and execution, staff hiring and development. I also bring two years of insight and experience from my current term as an Aspen school board member – I am currently the elected

School Board Chair and member of the Strategic Planning and Marketing Committees, and formerly Board Treasurer and chair of finance and facility committee.

**What do you see as the most significant issue(s) facing charter schools today?**

State education funding levels remains tight and requires creativity and discipline in our financial affairs. Aspen excels at budget and balance sheet management and maintains a strong fund balance (reserve) to ensure ability to meet our needs.

Maintaining alignment with our resident district(s) in preparing students for high school – as that relates to academic rigor, performance and grading systems. Aspen has developed close ties with local high school leadership to foster this understanding and preparation to ensure successful transitions.

**PARENT CANDIDATE: KELLY SMITH**  
**Email address: Kelly.smithfamily@gmail.com**

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**What is your connection to Aspen Academy?**

My oldest daughter started Kindergarten September 2008, the year Aspen Academy opened its doors. Her younger sister joined her three years later.

**Why do you want to join the Board of Aspen Academy?**

This is a very exciting time to be at Aspen Academy. I would love to participate in efforts to grow the school in numbers and size, as well as expand the amount of learning opportunities and programs offering.

**What is it about a charter school that appeals to you?**

What appeals to me about charter schools is that they are essentially self-governed by a small body of administration, parents, teachers, and community members who have that school's success and growth at the heart of what they do.

**What do you believe is the Board's role regarding school governance?**

I believe the role of the Board is to develop policies and approve administrative decisions that align with the mission, vision, and strategic plan of Aspen Academy.

**How would you help Aspen meet its strategic goals set forth by the mission and vision statement and annual report?**

I have been very impressed with the Board's development of strategic goals for Aspen Academy. If on the Board, I feel I can help Aspen meet these goals by focusing on and approving those policies, practices, and programs that align with and help to reach these strategic goals.

**What professional, leadership, or other board experience can you bring to the Board?**

I taught at Richfield Intermediate School for 6 years before I decided to stay home with my girls. I recently earned my Masters Degree in Educational Technology, which has helped me to be abreast on many current educational issues. I have held leadership roles in both the MOPS and AWANA programs at Grace Church.

**What do you see as the most significant issue(s) facing charter schools today?**

I feel one of the most significant issues facing charter schools today is underfunding. Charter schools need to be more diligent with their finances than their resident district schools. Instead of benefitting from a levy to fund costs, charter schools must get creative at times in order to pay teacher salaries, cover operating costs, while offering learning opportunities and programming in order to compete with neighboring schools.

**What is your connection to Aspen Academy?**

I am a founding Board Member of Aspen Academy. I have been with Aspen since its application was submitted to the MDE in 2007. It has been a very rewarding 8 years to see the school grow from a K-3 to K- 8<sup>th</sup> grade. I am still awestruck sometimes when I see the kids in the school wearing their uniforms, working in the classrooms and eating lunch in the commons, that a group of parents was able to set the wheels in motion to start a charter school. I currently have 2 boys at Aspen, a 7<sup>th</sup> grader and a 2<sup>nd</sup> grader. I also have a 3 year-old who can't wait to be in Kindergarten. I enjoy helping out in the classrooms on an almost weekly basis. I am also an active member of the Aspen Community Council (ACC), coordinating teacher conference meals and Teacher Appreciation activities.

**Why do you want to join the Board of Aspen Academy?**

I have been a board member for 8 years now. I would like to continue my role as an Aspen Board member because I believe Aspen is a great school and I'd like to see it continue down that path. It has been very rewarding to see Aspen move into a brand new building. I'm equally excited to see what the future holds as Aspen is starting the bonding process and looking to add more space in order to expand programming for its' students. As the longest sitting founding board member, I am able to provide a lot of history as new board members and a new director have come on board. I would also like to ensure that Aspen continues to produce high test scores, make sound financial decisions and continues to be recognized as an outstanding school in the community and the state.

**What is it about a charter school that appeals to you?**

Charter schools are appealing to me because they have a specific mission and vision and goals for their students. The school is responsible for meeting those goals and can use innovative and creative means to reach them. They are not bound by a typical school district's curriculum. Aspen uses the Core Knowledge curriculum which builds on what's been learned previously allowing students to understand more fully new information because they have a strong knowledge base. Aspen uses Data Driven Instruction, leadership coaching for teachers, Latin, and Singapore Math to provide a rigorous curriculum and facilitate meeting the needs of all students. These are the things that set a charter school apart from local districts and even Aspen apart from other charters.

**What do you believe is the Board's role regarding school governance?**

The Board's role is to stay focused on making policy related decisions based on the school's mission and vision statements. The Board reviews and shapes Aspen's policies as needed. The Board's role is more oversight, not to get involved in the school's day to day operations, but to make decisions that benefit the school as a whole and benefit the school for the long-term.

**How would you help Aspen meet its strategic goals set forth by the mission and vision statement and annual report?**

Last year, Aspen adopted a new Strategic Plan with 5 goals. These 5 goals guide the board in making policy decisions as well as goals set forth by Friends of Education that are part of Aspen's Charter renewal. I have supported Aspen in meeting all of these goals, and will continue to support Aspen, by supporting the Director, becoming educated on current topics up for board discussion, performing my monthly board duties, holding committee meetings and communicating with stakeholders and the community.

**What professional, leadership, or other board experience can you bring to the Board?**

I have 8 years of experience and history working on the Aspen Board. I have been the Board Secretary for the last 7 years. I spend around 20 hours a month on the work of the board which includes preparing the monthly agenda and minutes, preparing for Program Service committee meetings, communicating with fellow board members and the administration about committee meetings, and communicating with Friends of Education on a monthly basis. I am currently Chair of the Program Services Committee which meets 5 or 6 times a year covering policies regarding students and curriculum. I am a member of the Licensure Committee, have met weekly with administration during the TEAM planning phase and am very active with the ACC. I also have a current Minnesota Teaching license for K-6 Elementary Education and taught Kindergarten and First grades for 8 years in California prior to moving to Minnesota.

**What do you see as the most significant issue(s) facing charter schools today?**

Funding, as always, is a significant issue facing charter schools today. Charter schools are tuition-free public schools, but are unable to ask the community for levies, so they must rely on state and federal funding. The state's funding has become more stable in the last year or two, but charters are still dependent on that money for paying teacher salaries, leasing facilities, curriculum costs, etc. and it is very important that funding continue at an acceptable level. This is one reason Aspen is beginning the bonding process to own its own building. Aspen would be able to save the property tax, almost \$200,000 a year and put that back into teacher salaries, extra staff or other programs.

**TEACHER CANDIDATE NAME: ANGELA TUMA**  
**Email Address: angela.tuma@aspenacademymn.org**

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**What is your connection to Aspen Academy?**

I am a founding Middle School teacher.

**Why do you want to join the Board of Aspen Academy?**

I feel that teachers need to be well represented. Right now, there is a need to build a stronger middle school program, and I would like to be a part of that discussion and growth.

**What is it about a charter school that appeals to you?**

Aspen has a community/small town feel that allows a deeper connection with students and their families.

**What do you believe is the Board's role regarding school governance?**

The Board is a policy board so it is their role to make sure the school is following the policies set in place and reviewing them yearly to stay in compliance.

**How would you help Aspen meet its strategic goals set forth by the mission and vision statement and annual report?**

I bring teacher knowledge that enhances the expectations of the strategic goals of the school. This allows for an inside perspective by gathering data and using ten years of educator experience when determining the next steps towards achieving the strategic goals.

**What professional, leadership, or other board experience can you bring to the Board?**

I have experience in developing and leading student-centered peer leader groups. Also, I have experience being a member of a district literacy group. Here at Aspen, I am on several committees that vary in topic.

**What do you see as the most significant issue(s) facing charter schools today?**

A significant issue facing charter schools today is funding. A charter school's funding is different from a larger, regular public school's funding. Because a charter school cannot go out into the community and ask for referendums, the budget is strategically balanced thus limiting programs and teachers/staff that one might find in a different school.

**COMMUNITY MEMBER CANDIDATE: KENT PETERMAN**

**Email address:** kent.peterman@yahoo.com

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**What is your connection to Aspen Academy?**

My son Elliott completed 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Aspen Academy this year, 2015.

**Why do you want to join the Board of Aspen Academy?**

I want to support a school that helped our son achieve and grow.

**What is it about a charter school that appeals to you?**

Students first. It's about the kids getting the foundation they need for their future.

**What do you believe is the Board's role regarding school governance?**

Paramount. The Board is the check, or balance, that keeps the staff focused on the improvement of academic delivery to the students.

**How would you help Aspen meet its strategic goals set forth by the mission and vision statement and annual report?**

Ensure that the school continues the pursuit of academic excellence first and foremost.

**What professional, leadership, or other board experience can you bring to the Board?**

Strong background in financial analysis and to a lesser degree personnel management.

**What do you see as the most significant issue(s) facing charter schools today?**

The general public's lack of understanding of the charter schools role in Minnesota's educational options.