



Dear Aspen Caregivers and Employees,

Aspen Academy's annual School Board election will be held between May 1st and May 14th. The Aspen Board has openings for 2 parent, 3 teacher and 2 community Board members. There was only 1 application received for the parent opening and only 2 received for the teacher openings. The term begins on July 1, 2026.

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 candidate?

If you have questions after reading the Candidate Information Guide, you may contact the Election Committee by emailing them at Liliya.tsibulko@aspenacademymn.org and your question will be forwarded to all candidates for response.

Voting Information

Who may vote in the election?

There are three categories of eligible voters and each individual gets only one vote:

- 1) Each parent or legal guardian of an Aspen student.
- 2) Each employee of the school.
- 3) Each Board member

How do I vote in the election?

Aspen's eligible voters are asked to do one of the following:

- Mail in the absentee ballot included in this packet and follow all instructions described on that ballot.
- Drop your ballot in person to the office during regular school hours. Students may drop ballots off in the office. Ballots must be in a sealed envelope with the return address and name of each voter on the outside of the envelope.
- Participate in any in-person opportunity that may be provided with or without notice.

How do teachers and staff vote in the election?

Teachers and staff may vote in any of the above ways, or they may drop their ballot in the ballot box without an envelope as long as their name appears on the back of the ballot in some manner.

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



Absentee Ballot - Election for Board of Directors

Voting Starts on May 1st, 2026

Ballots must be received no later than the regular mail delivery on Thursday, May 14th, 2026. Please plan accordingly to ensure your ballot is received by the deadline. 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 Parent Member candidate from the following:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Jackie Miaffo</p>	<p>Vote for up to <u>2</u> Teacher Member candidates from the following:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Kristin Carlson</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Stephanie Smitley</p>
--	---

Please note that all candidates are approved for membership only after receipt of a background check and completed conflict of interest form.

In the event of a tie between candidates an additional election will be held for just those individuals and may delay the start of their term.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING A BALLOT (NON-STAFF INSTRUCTIONS)

- For parents and legal guardians mailing in or dropping off a ballot, please write your FIRST and LAST names as they appear 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 may be mailed in the same envelope; however, both names must appear in the return address. This ballot may be photocopied.**
- Upon receipt, all ballots will be held until the voting period is complete. After voting closes, we will go through the 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.
- All Ballots must be received in the Aspen Office by the time of mail delivery on or before Thursday, May 14th, 2026.

Ballots should be mailed to: Aspen Academy
ATTN: ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
14825 Zinran Avenue, Savage, MN 55378

PARENT CANDIDATE INFORMATION GUIDE

Jackie Miaffo

What is your connection to Aspen Academy?

Aspen Academy has been an important part of my family's life for many years. All three boys have attended Aspen, beginning in kindergarten. My oldest is now 13 and my youngest is 6 and having them all grow through the school's nurturing environment has been both meaningful and impactful. Aspen has always been more than just a school to us—it's a community. The relationships my family built with the staffs, especially during challenging times, have been a true blessing and source of support.

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

I want to join the Board to give back to the school that has given my family so much. Aspen has played a key role in shaping my children's educational journey, and I'd like to contribute my time, experience, and voice to ensure it continues to thrive. I believe in the school's mission and values, and I want to help safeguard and strengthen the foundation that supports its continued success. Serving on the Board would allow me to support current families, staff, and future generations in a meaningful way.

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

Charter schools like Aspen Academy offer a unique blend of academic innovation, flexibility, and strong community values that I deeply appreciate. As a parent, I was drawn to Aspen because of its commitment to excellence, character development, and its close-knit, values-driven environment. It was always a dream of mine for my children to attend a charter school, and I was incredibly fortunate to have one as outstanding and close to home as Aspen. The school has delivered on that dream by fostering both academic growth and emotional intelligence in my children.

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

The Board's role is to ensure strong governance by setting the strategic vision, ensuring financial stability, supporting the school leadership, and ensuring accountability to its mission. The Board should also be a partner to the administration—providing oversight, guidance, and long-term planning while allowing educators the autonomy to manage day-to-day operations. As a Board member, it's essential to represent the voices of the community, make data-informed decisions, and maintain a focus on what's best for students.

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

I would support Aspen's strategic goals by bringing a parent's perspective, a commitment to community, and a collaborative mindset to the table. I believe in building strong school-family partnerships and would advocate for continued investment in character education, academic rigor, and social-emotional development. I would help uphold the mission by supporting initiatives that promote innovation, inclusion, and student achievement. Additionally, I would look for ways to strengthen Aspen's visibility and relationships in the broader community, in line with long-term sustainability and growth goals.

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

Professionally, I serve as a people manager, leading a team of 10 individual contributors. My management style is rooted in clear communication, transparency, and fairness. I strive to make thoughtful, balanced decisions that align with our company's goals while supporting the growth and well-being of each team member. These are the same values I would bring to my role on the Board. Outside of work, I am also the team manager for my son's soccer team, where I coordinate logistics, encourage teamwork, and help young athletes grow both on and off the field. I am also an entrepreneur, which has

taught me how to make quick and informed decisions, solve problems creatively, and value the importance of strong soft skills, especially when working with diverse groups of people. Additionally, I bring a global perspective. I was born and raised in Cameroon, have lived on three continents, and speak four languages. These experiences have made me open-minded, culturally aware, and deeply respectful of diverse viewpoints—qualities that are essential in a school community as dynamic as Aspen's.

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

One of the most pressing challenges charter schools' faces is balancing autonomy with accountability. Ensuring high academic standards, equitable access, and financial sustainability while navigating changing policy landscapes is not easy. Charter schools also face competition for funding and the need to continuously demonstrate their value to families and communities. Additionally, maintaining strong teacher retention and a consistent school culture amid broader educational and societal pressures is a growing concern. It's essential to stay proactive, strategic, and community-focused to address these challenges successfully.

TEACHER CANDIDATE INFORMATION GUIDE

Kristin Carlson

What is your connection to Aspen Academy? I am a 5th grade teacher at Aspen Academy

Why do you want to join the Board of Aspen Academy? I would like to be a part of making sure this school stays at the top of its game. In order to do this Aspen needs to keep striving to retain excellent staff.

What is it about a charter school that appeals to you? I like that parents and students have a choice to have an education in a smaller setting with teachers, staff members, and parents that care. I love that we are pushing a rigorous curriculum to push our scholars to be high achievers.

What do you believe is the Board's role regarding school governance? I believe it is the role of the school board to ensure the school stays prosperous, safe, and abiding by the governing documents. It is important that the board stays as a governor not an actor. We can give suggestions it is up to the school administration team to carry out the plan.

How would you help Aspen meet its strategic goals set forth by the mission and vision statement and annual report? In order to help Aspen meet its strategic goals, I think it is important to stay focused on our mission and vision and be willing to work with different types of people. We need to have many different points of views to be sure we are helping all of our community. We need to encourage people to show up to our meetings, school, and events to create a community.

What professional, leadership, or other board experience can you bring to the Board? I bring leadership from leading a classroom of students for the last 10 years. I have a lot of experience working with different types of people to reach a common goal. I am a member of my HOA board and High School Hockey Booster Club member.

What do you see as the most significant issue(s) facing charter schools today? The most important issue facing charter schools today is finding the money to retain high quality teachers and working to create a community of scholars from all around the area. We need to bring people together to create an environment that is safe, fun, diverse, and engaging for all types of learners.

Stephanie Smitley

What is your connection to Aspen Academy? I am currently a teacher at Aspen, a board member and most importantly, a parent of an Aspen 8th grader. My two older children also attended Aspen K-8.

Why do you want to join the Board of Aspen Academy? I would like to continue my tenure as a teacher board member to ensure Aspen continues to be recognized as an outstanding school in the community and state, make sound financial decisions in order to sustain operations well into the future and support school administration, staff and students in the mission and vision of Aspen.

What is it about a charter school that appeals to you? Charter schools appeal to me both from a parental standpoint and as a teacher. Having a choice of where my children go to school is most appealing as a parent. My children have thrived at Aspen and have very much enjoyed their interactions with teachers and fellow students in a small school setting. As a teacher, charter schools offer a place where educators can make educational decisions that meet the individual needs of their students through innovative instructional strategies. There is also a strong sense of community and support between staff, parents and students.

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 new vision statements. The Board reviews and shapes Aspen's policies as needed in partnership with school administration. 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? I fully support Aspen's mission and vision statements when making decisions that benefit the school as a whole. Aspen is currently working from a new strategic plan and is in a charter renewal year where we were renewed for a full 5 years by Friends of Education, a testament to the great work being done at Aspen by the staff, administration and board. I support Aspen in meeting these goals by becoming educated on current topics for board discussion to make informed decisions, 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? After being on the board for many years, I bring background knowledge of Aspen's early years and the present. I bring the experience of going through the building and expansion process and keeping the school financially sound. I have been the chair of the Program Services and Governance committees that meet several times a year and attend Finance and Marketing committee meetings regularly. I communicate regularly with board members, the administrative team and Friends of Education and prepare monthly board meeting agendas and minutes as the board Secretary.

What do you see as the most significant issue(s) facing charter schools today? The two biggest issues facing charter schools today are funding and enrollment, which go hand-in-hand. Funding has always been a challenge because charter schools are not like public schools and cannot pass referendums to increase funding from taxpayers to pay for higher teacher salaries, updating infrastructure or adding new space. Charter schools must sustain themselves within their means with only funding from state and federal sources. They must be creative and careful in their spending. Keeping enrollment up is vital to Aspen's financial stability and future since enrollment drives the budget. With the school-age population declining for the next few years, there will be added competition from local districts to keep students.