

IT'S BEEN TOUGH trying to decide which of these three great cosplay artists put together the coolest makeover for the Gem State Comic Con in Boise ... Mr. Hunter as Naruto? Ms. Murphy as Loki? Or Steven V. as ... um? ... the, uh? ... the kid who's really Spiderman??

ACVS
LAST QUARTER
2021-22
Newsletter
May, 2022

The Another Choice VOICE



Another Choice... to be Continued?

Cliffhanger Of the Year

Maybe only old Laurel and Hardy fans will appreciate the question:

"Well, isn't THIS *another choice* rescue you've gotten us into, Mr. Turner?"

(Now just humor us and smile, please.)

Anyway, we here at *Another Choice School* have had so many "wow" moments lately in the springtime saga of saving our school that breaking news becomes old fast. The original knockout punch to end ACVS has been buried by the news of our buff new board of trustees, our new superintendent's arrival, the unheard-of filing of an appeal, the thrill of winning a new hearing, the agony of preparing a new defense, the energy of still collaborating for the future as if nothing's happened, and so forth. You can get dizzy trying to document the latest developments, but you know, if you do, there's a bestselling book here, right? If you don't start writing,



FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT New superintendent Jeff Turner said it's rare for a charter school to be closed, and especially rare for a school to appeal. Most schools accept the decision.

we're gonna. Charter schools don't get murdered and resurrected every day.

Keep in mind too we're still in the same old semester that was already a month old when the Idaho Public Charter School Commission said no to reauthorizing us, Laura Sandidge's popular 12-year-old dream school for at-risk students.

Every accomplishment we've mentioned here — and the behind-the-scenes busy-work it's all generated for everyone — has happened since only Feb. 11.

We're aware that if nothing changes, we officially wind down to a closure date of June 30. We face the scattering of students who benefit nicely here. We face the loss of teachers with families to feed who are forced to job hunt. If we close, we all hurt. If we get to continue but we've lost familiar staff and faculty in the fray, we'll hurt.

New superintendent Jeff Turner, since he arrived a month ago, has been crunching data and touting to the school board the student academic growth that Laura had championed for the past three years. He's proud to have seen no sag in any teachers despite the circumstances. We've seen a groundswell — that is, a rapid spontaneous growth of support — from parents and others, especially after the invigorating news that the case against *Another Choice* is being RECONSIDERED.

Turner has a quarter-century of experience with bureaucrats in California and he sees nothing insurmountable in our fight.

Is it all instinct? we asked him.

"I'm pretty good at it," he replied.



CONCURRENT SENTENCES. The future of ACVS is going in one of three directions. When a decision is reached, two of the options will go away. But for Ross, all three pushes are due right now.

State Shakeup Has Ross Doing Triple-Duty

Ever wonder what's cooking in the MBA mind of Ross Jones?

As ACVS business manager, his best work — and almost everything else — is always behind the scenes. Who doesn't appreciate his punctual payday email every month?

What he's facing right now that no one might notice is the extra work from the state's decision to close our school and the three-pronged reaction it's caused.

One, there's the official winddown to the school's operations that's by-the-book and ordered finished by June 30.

There's also our energetic push to de-

fend ourselves and present new evidence at a hearing meant to persuade the state Board of Education to approve business-as-usual for the new fall semester.

And there's a third push too to complete a virtual merge between ACVS and the Wilder School District if needed, and Wilder has been enthusiastic about it.

Where it stops, nobody knows. But when business triples and deadlines stay the same, it all funnels to manager Jones.

"Three pushes to prepare for — two won't be needed — but which two?" he asks. After we find out, expect Ross to disappear for some family time.

Goodbye from Dr. Sandidge...

We Will Always Need an *ANOTHER CHOICE*



Dr. Laura Sandidge

Charter schools, by design, challenge the outdated idea that everybody needs to be educated in exactly the same way. Students with different needs require different structures.

Successful education needs to be tailored, as many students need individual, personalized attention.

Charters can support individual students in ways that are not often possible in a brick-and-mortar school. While lots of charter schools can do that, *ACVS* has made it an art. We know kids can be successful when we put the right supports in place for them to be successful. It helps them to see that

they can do wonderful things. If they believe they're a success, then they really are a success. If you only allow for one way of being educated, you're missing so much. At *ACVS* our kids often say, "I can show you I'm successful in a different way."

Measuring student growth really requires a growth model rather than just looking at test scores. You have to have accountability, of course, otherwise you have chaos, but only in theory can any student who's three years behind catch up in three school years, because life is going to intervene. With the right supports, success is possible.

Since our original directive, our growth was being measured against the standards established for all other students, and a charter school with a unique mission and innovations most likely is going look shaky when you're trying to fit us into the same box as others.

I trust the new administration, when given the opportunity, can see our *Another Choice School* continue and flourish as the institution that has become so popular to our parents and students and such a good challenge to our teachers. *ACVS* has been a blessing to so many; it will always hold a very dear spot in my heart.



Mrs. Christensen

What You C is What You Get

Your probably favorite teacher, Mrs. C, has probably helped with more "Zero-to-Sixties" than some

Detroit automakers. Mrs. C warns that ALL course assignments in ALL teachers' classes have now been OPENED UP with ALL ZEROS ADDED to the Gradebook (which means your overall grade could be lower now). You're now seeing the course grades you'll get if you do nothing further in your classes. So check your courses and complete any more assignments (to ELIMINATE ANY ZEROS) until you have achieved the grade you want!

Retirements To and Fro

Okay, one last time, it's Turner—Sandidge, not Tuna Sandwich, ha!

When retired administrator Laura Sandidge wore multiple hats on behalf of *ACVS*, she arguably was most brilliant when shaping and equipping teachers, old and new, to be able to respond accurately and compassionately to the complex needs of students. That's from the honor-roll overachiever who graduates early to the students with learning differences who require extra attention.

New superintendent Jeff Turner's specialty seems to be his talent to gather the best aspects of a school's combined output



Of Sandidge, Turner says she should be very proud of having run a successful online school for 12 years that impacted and benefited thousands of Idaho students.

and celebrate it to an outside audience in a perfect little package.

Stop for a second and exclude the zillion other good things either Turner or Sandidge has ever done, and think what the two might have accomplished if their careers had overlapped. Still possible?



Tom Anderton
Ret. Businessman



Claudia Frent
Business Owner



Todd Joyner
Attorney



Dr. John Kelleher
Ret. Educator



Ruth Kropp
Ret. Educator



Jonathan Wheatley
Attorney

Four More Heavy Hitters Join School Board in Fight To Reinstate ACVS, Avoid 11th-hour Drama, Save Jobs

If you've ever puzzled over parliamentary procedure, fiddled with fiscal oversight, cringed about consensus decision-making, you'll appreciate that *Another Choice* school leaders are paying their dues so you might continue in your virtual-school dreamland of logging into your Google Chrome and finding something on the other end. Having added two business people and two lawyers to replace departing trustees, the fresh board members are training for a strong presence in ways recognized by state education officials and they're focused on supporting new superintendent Turner, with a singular goal — "to save our school." Not a one of them seems to have had spare time lately. Give them a thank-you when you see them.



Laura Shoemaker
Clerk of the Board



Jeff Turner
Superintendent



Here is our tireless Ms. Walters during annual ISAT testing at the Civic Center. We have no actual data to show that student test scores go up whenever Ms. Walters is the greeter at the front desk, but Mr. Miller might put together an algorithm. At right, pictured way up in front of a roomful of testers is fearless Mrs. Farley, a favorite SPED teacher of many kids and parents.

Messages to Mrs. Dicus: Firsthand Feedback from ISAT Testers

Another Choice's nonstop utility teacher Mrs. Dicus assigned a paragraph to her writing class to describe their takeaway from this year's intense ISAT session. Here's some feedback from her email:

"ISATs for me this year was an amazing experience because I got to really feel myself grow, I was focused and used all the tools I could, and whatever score I got, I know I tried."

"I tried my best on every question and took my time on each question making sure that I understood everything before going on to the next question."

"Overall, ISATs were way more exciting than I thought."

"I got to see the growth within myself and my testing skills. My testing skills have grown and this was my chance to show that."

"The testing environment was absolutely amazing. There were waters and mints for us. There was also pencil and paper so if we needed to write things down we had the supplies to do so."

"When doing ISATs, it can be something overwhelming or something somebody dreads. When preparing for ISATs on the other hand, it actually makes it a lot easier."

"It was very quiet while taking the test and that was nice, and it had a very welcoming feeling."

"The staff there was very friendly and helpful when they told us everything we needed to know about the ISAT."

"When you sit in that room for 2 hours it seems like you have been there for over 4 hours. It's so quiet you lose track of time."

New Superintendent Won't Toot His Own Horn ...

... While He's Tooting Everybody Else's

Jeff Turner's path to Another Choice this year is so filled with timeliness and so-called serendipity that it might just help reaffirm our mutual trust in both divine providence and the good-old-boy system. Everybody who's been wondering if he's for real is coming to the same conclusion. Decide for yourself:

You know that feeling where you're so good at something that you're your own go-to person? We've heard of that too.

New ACVS superintendent Jeff Turner admits that maneuvering through Idaho and California school systems for the last 27 years provides some expertise. He emphasizes how-



Superintendent Jeff Turner

ever that whatever ideas he gets when fighting for schools like ACVS, he uses on behalf of students and teachers.

"It's the students and school community who give me the strength to do the work that I hope will save the school."

When ACVS was clamoring for robust candidates for a new powered-up version of its school board, the recently retired Turner was among the persons recruited to be a trustee. When the school received an expiration date of June 30, leaders had started pushing for a reversal.

After a call from trustee Kelleher, a long time friend and mentor, and "persistent calls from trustee Ruth" Kropp, Turner applied to be trustee. He's already on the board at one of his previous California schools.

In retirement for not even a year, Jeff saw the urgency in the school's timeline and real-

ized, "No superintendent is going to apply for a job that lasts three months. And it's March now ... most superintendents already have jobs for next year." He promptly asked his name be pulled from the trustee list and he reapplied to be superintendent.

Following the closed-door session to hire Turner, trustees emerged referring to him as a "godsend."

That could be truer than you believe. This is the new guy's 28th year in public education. He's done virtual. He's done brick-and-mortar. He's done COVID. He's known student bodies of up to 10,000 students. He's respectful and prepared and self-effacing and, weirdly, whenever he gets done speaking, you walk away feeling like you just learned something.

HOMEWORK

A Poem by Morgan Cassity

For why do we waste such time on paper?
We come home as of such to regenerate
Not as if to stress over
Why do we waste such precious time?
For we will never be free
These papers that control us are immortal
Changing on you one after another
How do we manage such hard work?
As for this is our time to play
As for this is our time now
For that shall not be taken away
We shall stand up, for that shall be banished
Unlock the chains that shall let us be free
For we shall be able to rest
For we shall be able to reconnect with loved ones
Why waste such memories when we can be living them now?
For homework shall be stopped
And as for our freedom we shall overcome this.

Teacher-to-Teacher Salute: Mrs. Vincent

By Whitney Oliver

Over the years that Denise Vincent has worked at ACVS she has been a force for solid change and growth in our school.

While being a phenomenal teaching coach she has also developed a reading program for the secondary students that has strongly developed our middle and high school students' skills.

The MS and HS reading classes use the same tools and general curriculum to develop students' reading fluency and comprehension skills.

As many of you reading this know, *Read*



Mrs. Oliver



Mrs. Vincent

Naturally (the main program we use), has helped many students read more confidently, without stuttering, and with greater accuracy.

We have seen most of our students advance their reading abilities one or two grade levels this year. When this happens it allows students to do better overall in school.

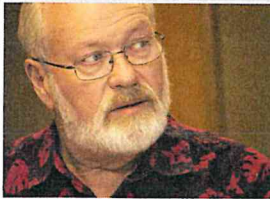
Every subject includes reading so the better comprehension skills students have the greater understanding they will have in all other subjects.

Under Mrs. Vincent's leadership, our school's ELA ISAT scores have risen and our students are showing significant growth. We are grateful to have her at ACVS.



In a passionate message to the school board, Turner touted the significant academic growth among ACVS students following a three-year push by departing administrator Laura Sandidge. Turns out Turner's presentation at a Wednesday meeting was a dress rehearsal for a monumental new state hearing announced the next day.

What the IPCSC Saw ...



Jeff Turner announced on April 21 the state Board of Education voted to appoint a hearing officer, Kent Nelson, senior status with the Idaho

State Bar, to hear ACVS' appeal and recommend whether the Board of Education should affirm or reverse the commission's decision for nonrenewal of the ACVS charter:

"This is a **huge win!!** It provides ACVS a viable pathway to potentially overturn the decision to not authorize our charter. We still have a long way to go ... today's decision provides hope."

We'd love to leave the real negativity to the regular news media, but **what lessons** should we learn from the state commission's report card issued during its decision to close the school?

Superintendent Turner cautions, "When you're in a tough situation, sometimes people want to make it personal. I would encourage everyone to **focus on the facts.**"

One fact is that vocabulary words such as governance and transparency and oversight get magnified meanings when applied to the use of **other people's money**, as in state school funding.

To observe the humility of school board members — seasoned pros — training and delicately adhering to *Robert's Rules of Order* now is to appreciate the **soberness of the business side** of a charter school whose mission may be pure as fresh Idaho snow but still in need of keeping its walk shoveled.

Laura Sandidge spent at least five years as ACVS's only administrator, saving budget money for **cutting-edge schooling** upon which the charter focused. An additional administrator minding the bureaucracy might have been prudent, and a school board dependent on the words of the administrator

A School Misunderstood?

THE CHARTER COMMISSION'S CONCERNS:

Governance, Board oversight, Reporting, Public transparency, Financial uncertainty, Low academic performance

ANOTHER CHOICE SCHOOL'S RESPONSE:

Appeal to the State Board of Education

STATE BOARD'S DECISION:

Appoint pre-hearing and hearing officer to make recommendations to State BOE



might have been aware of

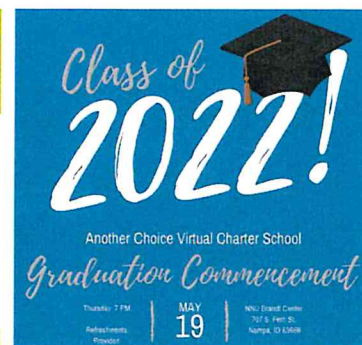
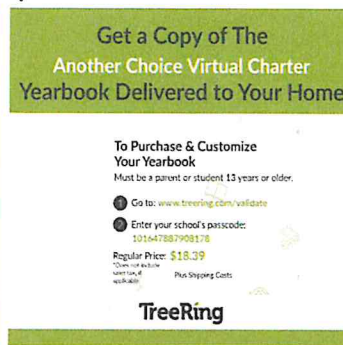
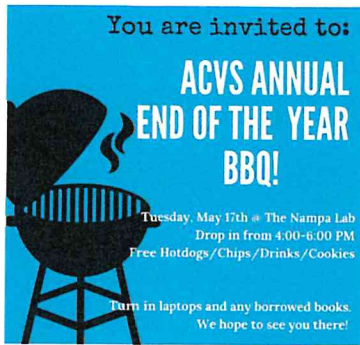
avoiding any possible rubber-stamping.

Financial uncertainty is simply a call for explanation, an ominous sounding term far removed from actual financial irregularity. ACVS business manager Ross Jones put this issue to rest during the first IPCSC meeting and in meetings since, citing **strong fiscal status** for the school, especially following the confusion caused by COVID.

Superintendent Turner said he's met with Jenn Thompson, the IPCSC director who led the charge to deauthorize *Another Choice*, and concluded she's "professional and, in my opinion, **she did her job.** She's been helpful. She's been respectful. I'll never say a bad word about her."

Meanwhile, Turner has developed and presented a stirring interpretation of the academic growth seen in ACVS students since Laura Sandidge first issued the directive three years ago that we boost performance. He's a **promoter and an optimist**, and he's perfectly positioned for the school's next big event — our presentation of new evidence.

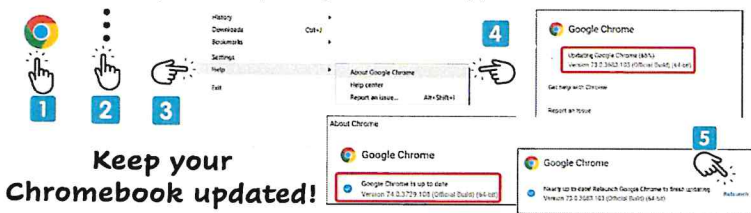




Laptop slow? System sluggish? Sound not working?

Program not loading? Certain websites freezing? Login issues? Random weirdness?

Don't forget Mr. Williams' **95 Percent Solution**, that is, our IT department solves **95 percent** of all the laptop problem calls it gets by **updating your Google Chrome**. That's like getting paid a penny for every real computer repair, but only making a nickel for every potential dollar! Here's how to stay updated:



Keep your Chromebook updated!

Sid Williams, ACVS IT



My Name is Echo, and This is *Operation Best Friends*

FIVE SENSES FICTION

by Victoria Raulerson, ACVS Senior

Editor's Note: Ask ACVS senior Victoria Raulerson to write a fun story and then wait fifteen minutes. Then, notice her use of dialogue and details to engage the reader (that's you.) Wow, an ELA teacher's dream:

My name is Echo and I'm on a secret spy mission. My friends Zack, Eli, and Ava are helping me on this mission. We're calling it operation best friends. The goal is to befriend the new kid at our school in time for Zack's birthday three days away. His name is Jack and he seems a little shy. We never see him talking to anyone and he always sits by himself during recess. We don't want to scare him off at first so we have to find a way to slowly and carefully introduce ourselves.

"Alright Ava, did you bring it?" I whisper, trying not to get the attention of our teacher.

"Right here," she whispers back while pulling out a bright green Hot Wheel from her backpack.

"Perfect, let's get it to Eli," I say while writing out a note telling Eli to signal Zack into position. Everything is going according to plan. Once we get the Hot Wheel to Eli, Zack is going to ask to go to the bathroom. When Zack gets up the teacher will be distracted and Eli is going to move over to the empty desk by Jack and give him the Hot Wheel. Hopefully, this strikes up a conversation between the two, and boom, we have a new friend.

"Echo, could you please come to solve this for me," says the teacher.

She must have noticed I wasn't paying attention. I have no clue how to solve this, but I don't have a choice. I guess I'll just have to go up there and hope Ava can do my part. The old whiteboard is covered in stains from red and blue markers. There are a few magnets sprawled randomly across the board. The wall above it is covered in posters about times tables and posters telling you how to divide or multiply single-digit numbers. The projector hanging from the ceiling covers half of them.

Walking to the board I see that this equation is different than the ones we were doing last week. The division we were doing last week was with only 2 digit numbers but this one has a 3 digit number. The classroom feels impossibly big as I walk closer and closer to what feels like my doom. 400 divided by 200. I take a wild guess. 4 divided by 2 is 2 so I decide 400 divided by 200 has to be 2.

My teacher tells me a few encouraging words and then the bell rings. I got it right. But it looks like the plan was never put into action. We're going to have to try something new.

We all walk to lunch together and begin plotting. What's the next move? The last plan seemed perfect but somehow it failed. Zack brings up giving him one of the candies we hid in our desks from the Valentines Day party. Ava has the idea to give him one of the books we like. Jay brings up making him a mud pie. We can't seem to decide our next move.

"Um, excuse me. I think you dropped this," a small voice says behind

us. Our author, Tori R., shows what she knows — namely, how to make a friend at the Nampa Lab— this time with an obliging Evert Eells who ordinarily did homework all by himself.

us. We all turn at the same moment, not expecting to see Jack behind us.

He's holding the bright green Hot Wheel. Ava checks her pockets and realizes it fell out. We stand there a little dumbfounded for a second. Zack starts to talk to Jack after another second. Zack gives a thank you then starts asking him about the type of Hot Wheels he likes.

And just like that, we're spending all of recess talking to Jack. By the end of the day, he's got the invitation to Zack's birthday party. I guess it was easier than we thought.