

# End-of-School-Year Edition

One Teacher's Unique Perspective, *see back page ...*

ACVS  
END OF YEAR  
2021-22  
Newsletter  
May, 2022

## The Another Choice VOICE



# History due Tuesday ... bring a tissue

## No matter what: BOE decision will set legal precedent

Tears of joy, we anticipate. Redemption, maybe. Relief, for sure.

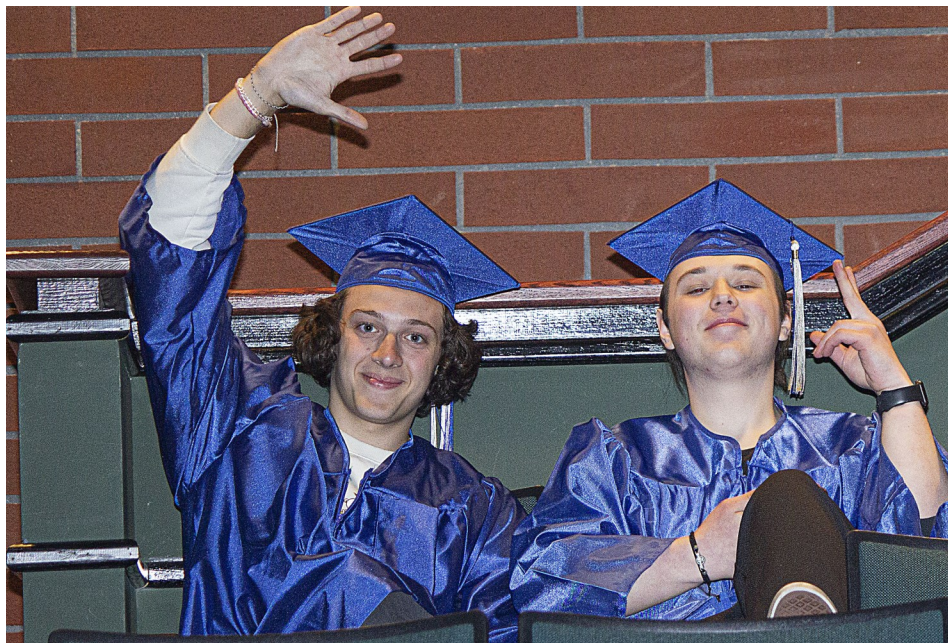
Just a few days from our new (Tuesday, May 24) hearing with a state Board of Education representative, *Another Choice* has faced another curveball — or was it a slider? — during the series of playoffs in our appeal to gain reinstatement and remain open. (Until otherwise, the current verdict says *ACVS* will close doors on June 30!)

The school is actually in a remarkable spot — that is, if our reinstatement were to come with state-imposed conditions, because *ACVS* leaders have already homed in on every previously cited deficiency and worked to remedy any likely stipulation a resurrected school could reasonably expect.

Tighter governance, complete transparency, fiscal solvency, evidence of successful student growth, proper reporting, were already being addressed or corrected even as dust was still settling from the Feb. 11 denial to renew the school.

The new curveball came when the state BOE clarified the school's proposal to present new evidence of our subsequent improvements was not authorized by Idaho code, therefore outside the scope of our appeal.

Instead, the school's appeal will concentrate on whether the Idaho Public Charter



**SENIOR COOL.** ACVS graduating seniors Cameron Betz (left) and Kanyon High huddle in the farthest corner of the NNU auditorium until go time prior to Thursday night's ceremony. The graduation drew an almost-capacity crowd.

School Commission (IPSCS), in its decision to deny renewal to *ACVS*, had other options that could have allowed conditional continuance of the school's operations.

People are watching and waiting for the determination of the school's future. History will be made, with a potential new understanding of how far the IPSCS's authority extends. *ACVS* contends the commission has the authority to renew a charter with the conditions that a board of trustees be reconstituted and a site administrator be replaced, which has been done in the case of *Another Choice*. The IPSCS maintains it is limited to recommending nonrenewal.

ACVS Superintendent Jeff Turner says the decision will be monumental, so parents, students, teachers and other supporters now need to redirect their original groundswell of support toward a good showing at the Tuesday public hearing.

Preoccupation on improving student achievement and not enough on state accountability led to a local school board shakeup and a switch in administrators following Feb. 11. The *ACVS* appeal marks the first time an IPSCS decision has been challenged. Closing a charter school is a rarity in Idaho.

Our school's original appeal was to present new evidence to demonstrate the continued value and viability of a popular and successful virtual school whose staff and faculty never slowed down despite the negative attention.

The new school board has studied up, new funding has been accessed from untouched COVID monies, the new superintendent has been working with stakeholders to make improvements, and the school's attorney has been prepared for a new open ear.



**SIBLING SALUTE.** Two of Mrs. Crosley's choices for special recognition are Trayton Brown and big sister Teamera, among many honored during the year-end Nampa campus cookout.

## LOVE

A Poem by Gracie Ramirez

Love is a different array of all things.  
Love can be easy to get in but not out of.  
Like a fly getting caught in a web,  
It can make you feel and do weird things;  
Like you're a robot on a remote.  
But love isn't always a bad thing.  
It's bliss and a feeling that you can't get anywhere else.  
A pound in your heart that's like a drug.  
And if you get your love back,  
It's the best feeling in the world.  
Yes, love is truly a blessing.

Website: Watch Mrs. Farley's Do-Something Club "Save Our School" Video!



A Teacher’s Unique Perspective...

Idaho Has Ability to Innovate...and Needs To

Editor’s Note: When we consider matters regarding special education, shouldn’t we always defer to a teacher who’s been through it? Our highly favored Mr. Hunter here tells of a head injury that changed his life. (What he doesn’t mention as readily is that he sustained it while trying to impress a girl.)

By Nathan Hunter, M.Ed.

It was second grade when I had my Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). I was hospitalized for a week and when I went back to school something wasn’t the same. I was excelling in my reading and math, but after the TBI, I could hardly finish a small book. I fell behind in my ability to do school and I didn’t know what was going on. I was labeled “special,” and when that happened, a hopelessness set in. I wasn’t able to do school work in the form they wanted me to, so instead of finding a solution, I was labeled. This label came with a forced identity of “forgotten, useless, unworthy,” and when people force that upon you it becomes reality.

I have my Master Degree in Special Education and I did it with a 3.75 GPA, maybe not a big accomplishment to some but for me a rejection of that forced identity. It took a different school with teachers and administrators who removed the labels and provided me opportunities to exceed my own expectations. It took administrators who cared about my development as a person as much as my academics, teachers who challenged me to grow but didn’t remove the opportunities because of my apparent inability.

In the state of Idaho we have a great power to use “School Choice,” which is designed to “allow parents and families the

freedom to choose the method of education that will work best for their children. It allows for meaningful decisions regarding how and where their children will receive their education, whether in the public system or not. It is based on the idea that not all children do learn the same way and may have different needs, interests, or strengths to develop.”

Idaho has the ability to create and innovate different learning environments, which prevents forced labels. Some may see this as a detriment but I see it as a powerful tool that takes the focus from the system and puts its focus on the student. This is made evident in the case of ACVS, whose charter itself promises everything that alternative schools do best, and more. The school has a format for students that’s seen great success and importance in the Treasure Valley.

However, the Idaho Public Charter School Commission (IPCSC) has decided to not renew the ACVS charter, effectively closing the school as of June 30.

There is a hearing Tuesday, March 24, during which the state of Idaho has an opportunity to keep the School Choice secure and allow students the opportunity to take paths that work for them.

However, if nonrenewal is allowed to be the precedent then families’ ability to allow student choice is in jeopardy and the educational environments that are different or specialized risk shutdown.

Please take some time and reach out your representative about this so that we can keep our choices available and eliminate forces labels. This is a cry from someone who needed another path and didn’t get it until later in life. As Robert Frost put



ACVS math mainstay Mr. Hunter, who brought son Braxton to our year-end cookout, is one of those particular teachers who can blend enough fun with authority to elicit extra enthusiasm from a student.

it in a poem, “Two roads diverged in a wood and I - I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”

Another Choice has worked hard to address the issues present in the original hearing so that their necessary education environment can remain. Help Idaho keep the great power of School Choice.

CatSpeak: Much more than meow

Editor’s Note: Our author Alondra’s burgeoning expertise in cat behavior comes from websites like jw.org, the-sprucepets.com, and tuftandpaw.com. We go for anything that’ll help us figure Fluffy out!

By Alondra Araiza

Have you ever wanted to know why cats act a certain way? Or what function their whiskers have? There are several different breeds of cats, but their parts all serve the same function and their habits can be identified.



Nala

For example, the function of a cat’s whiskers is to allow them to identify nearby objects and catch prey. Their whiskers allow them to measure the width of something before they can go through it. If their whiskers were to be cut off they would be immobile, because they guide the cat.

A cat’s whiskers are attached to tissues that have multiple nerve endings. The nerves are sensitive to even the slightest movement of air. As a result, cats can detect nearby objects without seeing them—obviously an advantage in the dark.

Wonder why cats groom themselves so much? Well, cats do this not just to keep themselves clean, but for many other reasons — to clean injuries, to hide their



FELINE FAMILY. ACVS junior Alondra A. hasn’t just bonded with brothers Emilio (right) and Matteo; she’s been busy identifying cat behavior traits to help explain Nala, her two-year-old tabby, and Koko, an eight-month-old tortoise shell.

scent from predators, and to lubricate their fur and skin. They learn this behavior at an early age. From their mother or littermates. They spend 30 to 50% of their day grooming.

There are four key indicators of a cat’s body language — their eyes, ears, body, and tail. Their body language can depend on the situation. A cat’s posture can say a lot. Arched back with a puffy tail and ears facing back typically means a cat is scared or threatened. A relaxed one with a high tail means a cat is feeling confident and comfortable. Depending on the cat’s eyes you can see when they are excited, an-

gered, and comfortable. Large dilated eyes could mean fear excitement or anger. When cats feel comfortable or they trust you, a slow blink is their way of letting you know it. When their pupils are narrow this could indicate aggression.



Koko

Their ears are quite a big factor in them letting you know how they feel. Ears that are pulled back flat (otherwise known as airplane ears) let you know that they are afraid or angry. When ears are high

and erect, it means that they are alert to their surroundings and that they are calm. And different types of vocalizations let you know how a cat is verbally feeling. A hiss is a clear sign to back off. A meow usually means excitement.

Cats’ sense of smell is fourteen times more powerful than humans’. A mother cat in the wild will try to hide her young kittens by removing the evidence of their feeding. You may observe the same instinctive behavior when a cat scratches at the floor around the food dish after eating.

Cats have various types of behaviors. Some behaviors are quirky to a particular cat and others are their primal instincts. All of these behaviors are the cats letting us know how they’re feeling. It’s their way of communicating with us.



Turner to ACVS Trustees...

'Our Evidence Will be Sitting There'

We're cleared for Tuesday

*EDITOR'S NOTE: When ACVS School Superintendent Jeff Turner addressed our board of trustees this Wednesday evening, it was a status report stirring enough to stand on its own merits, so without much editing, here's what he told the members:*

TURNER TO TRUSTEES:

So, I'll talk a little bit about the state Board of Education and our appeal. **We have a definite date now. We know it's on May 24th, which is next Tuesday at nine o'clock. We have our hearing.**

And I think we're all looking forward to that. You know, we've been working very, very hard and after the public hearing, I know the state Board of Education's next board meeting is scheduled on June 14th and 15th. However they indicated there may be a need for a special board meeting prior to June 14th to address the recommendations from the hearing officer.

I really think by the conclusion of the 24th (next Tuesday) or shortly afterwards, the public hearing officer will publish his findings and recommendations. We'll have a really good understanding of where we stand.

You know, we did not meet the standard for operational measure three, which is **governance**. And I have a new board sitting in front of me, and I've said this many times. This new board is governing.

**This new board has crammed a year's worth of professional development capacity-building into about eight weeks. You've been committed. You've devoted a lot of time.**

You've attended a number of special workshops, you went to the law series with us and learned about educational law. You've been working very, very hard in this area and you've been governing.

**Board Oversight.** Part of tonight's agenda, superintendent's evaluation ... that's part of providing oversight, making sure that I'm meeting the bar, that I'm, how do I say this? that I'm keeping the promise of our organization in terms of serving students.

And, like I stated at our last special board meeting, I think we were there, I don't know, five, six hours learning about the process, adopting a process, working with the state board's association. So we're not winging it, we're working with the experts in the field to build capacity.

**Reporting.** We've talked about **reporting** reorganization prior to you and I taking the reins and they (ACVS) had already taken some steps in this area where they've increased positions. Our financial manager was part-time now is fulltime. They added a board clerk position. They've reevaluated their job descriptions, and we've provided significantly more time for state reporting. We have a designated person for state reporting, but we've also built this system of redundancy. So it's no longer on that individual's shoulders alone, meaning she does the



**REST ASSURED.** Another Choice Superintendent Turner keeps referring to the too-familiar slide of deficiencies identified by the IPCSC and our follow-up remedies during a pep talk to our school board regarding next Tuesday's milestone meeting.

Idaho State Board of Education Appeal	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Did not meet standard on Operational Measure 3a: Governance
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Did not meet standard on Operational Measure 3b: Board Oversight
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Did not meet standard on Operational Measure 3c: Reporting
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Did not meet standard on Operational Measure 3d: Public Transparency
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Financial data indicates financial instability and distress
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Low academic performance over the course of the current Performance Cert term

work, she crunches the numbers, she creates the reports, but there are many different people that review those reports including myself. Procedures and processes that didn't exist in the past are in place. Not only have we reevaluated our system and the human resources that were tied to state reporting, because it's important, we created ... a system of checks and balances that's resulted in no errors in the reports of our ICC reporter.

Finally, we've done a lot of work within the walls of our organization to address this, but we've also worked with the state department of education, whom we report to, and we've taken advantage of the expertise in that office. They've been generous with their time and they've worked elbow to elbow with our staff to build capacity, to make sure we're getting it right.

**Public transparency.** On the webpage, your governing board tabs are there, your profiles, your roles and responsibilities are there. You will find your code of ethics. You all have signed conflict of interest statements. Our board agendas have been completely redesigned ... they're posted with all the supplemental materials that are allowable and are linked to the board agenda, anyone and everyone who wants access has it. We have our board meetings in person and via Zoom. People have access to the information and we worked very, very hard to make it accessible.

You know, our team has worked hard on the **"financial data indicating fiscal instability and distress"** finding. Ross is going to talk more about that. I can tell you that we've done well in this

box in the last 10 days.

*NOTE: ACVS Business Manager ROSS JONES followed, updating the board on the school's timely acquisition of ongoing federally funded COVID relief dollars, which during the past few weeks, have effectively restored the school's general fund and removed any hint of financial instability and distress.*

**Now we're fighting for our life. And part of winning is showing up and showing your heart and your commitment**

time. We've spent a lot of time within that data, and I chopped that data to highlight student growth. That doesn't mean I ignored the fact that we need to improve in other areas, but I also wanted to recognize where we are having wins, where we're experiencing success. And as I demonstrated today, we've already started on the next plan. We've been investing a lot of time. We have draft goals. We've done our needs assessment. We'll continue to collect data and then we're going to start adding strategies to our goals. We'll bring you a draft plan. **I don't want to be disrespectful to the past, but it's likely to be one of the most comprehensive plans that you may have interacted with in a number of years.**

**(THE TUESDAY HEARING)** So, circling back, the reauthorization hearing is on (Tuesday) the 24th at 9 a.m. The public hearing officer will be there. I will be there. Legal counsel will be there. Our trustees will be there. Students will be there. Teachers will be there. Parents will be there. I think that's

really, really important. Now we're fighting for our life. And part of winning is showing up and showing your heart and your commitment to addressing the things we need to address.

So one of the things that we have learned is we are not able to present new evidence that the public can see, so the body of work that I just ran through ... that's not going to be presented. I'm not going to have the opportunity to present it like I presented to you, but I also want you to know that people are aware of our work.

We've been presenting it here. We have members of the commission who zoom in for every board meeting. We've been working with the individuals at the state department in a number of different arenas. **So there's not anyone out there who's been paying attention to our situation who hasn't seen our effort, our recommitment, our work ethic and our heart.**

The pathway to keep the school is in our argument —which the department hearing officer considers has enough merit to allow our case to move forward — **that the (IPCSC) commission has the authority to reauthorize (a charter) with the conditions to reconstitute our Board and to have that reconstituted Board select the new administrator. That's our argument and that's what our case is built around. That's what the hearing officer said (is) our pathway. That's what he said is within the law, within our right to argue, and that's the door we're going to walk through to potentially save our school.**

The evidence will be sitting there, even though we are not allowed to present new evidence. Your new administrator is part of the new evidence and I'll be sitting there. This reconstituted board is part of the new evidence and you will be sitting there.

Our students, parents, teachers, and community will be there in support of our cause.

I shared with the Board of Trustees the video that our students (Mrs. Farley's Do-Something Club) produced. One of the things that I promised was to be the voice of students. And so, those students reached out to me and said, "Mr. Turner, can we create this video?" I said, "Of course you can." And they did an awesome job. You saw it. They did a wonderful job tackling the importance of this school to them, and they did it in a way that any human being on the face of the earth, if they didn't have a tear running down their cheek, I just can't speak for them.

So, it was powerful. I've shared it with anyone who is interested in our cause, and really received a lot of encouragement. People are rooting for us. They're cheering for us. They want us to prevail. And so, we're going to hope for the best on the 24th. Hopefully, the focus will be on kids that day. And maybe some of us old warriors can set down our egos a little bit and be reminded of the heart of the business and why we've committed our lives to this profession.

Continued next page





THE WORLD'S A STAGE. ACVS December graduate Mauvy Aberasturi gives an early-morning smile from her seat as our indefatigable Mrs. Wilkins shuffles seniors for best eye contact on the NNU auditorium stage Thursday in rehearsal for the evening's graduation ceremony. A packed, noisy crowd helped the graduates toss their tassels.

Superintendent Bolsters School Board ...  
*'Time to Set Down Our Egos, Focus on Students'*

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It's about kids, right? We all believe that all kids can be successful. So we better darn believe that all schools can be successful. It doesn't mean that we shouldn't be held accountable, but we need to be true to the mission and figure it out.

And we've demonstrated a strong commitment to figure it out. Here's my argument to my board of trustees, and I know you believe in it, and I know you have heard it. I want to thank you for your commitment to it because it began with you and your willingness to be part of the Board and to give us direction to appeal the decision.

**The evidence will be sitting there, you know, even though we are not allowed to present any new evidence.**

I'm thankful for that and we'll see how it works out.

Business manager Jones continued with his financial update to the School Board, explaining the school benefited lately from COVID-related federal funds designed to provide relief to schools, to help with staff retention and development, and for expenditures incurred to retain, strengthen and mitigate school stability and negative effects of the pandemic.



GRIP AND GREET. Another Choice eighth-grader Haven L. shares a moment with warm-hearted Mrs. Crosley during our school's year-end honors ceremony outside the Nampa Campus.

One of the effective things we did was to develop our virtual lab that was available to students to provide access to teachers during the quarantines, Jones said.

He reported we requested nearly \$800,000 in relief funds and received \$600,000 right away, saving some of those relief dollars for next year.

*Remember ...  
being young, and happy, and carefree, and cute!*



*Don't forget. Order a 2022 ACVS Yearbook.*  
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