

Volume 13 Issue 11
Nov. 2, 2009

Learn Today, To Lead Tomorrow

Liberty Common School

Common Knowledge, Common Virtues, Common Sense
1725 Sharp Point Dr., Ft. Collins, CO 80525, (970) 482-9800

A National Charter School of the Year, A Nationally Recognized Blue Ribbon School, A
Certified Core Knowledge Visitation Site School,
A John Irwin School of Excellence

What is Happening In November

- Nov. 2-Public Information
Night-6:30 p.m.
- Nov. 5-BOD Expansion Session
7:00 p.m.
- Nov. 6-Upper School Math/
Science Olympiad
- Nov. 10-Picture Retakes-10:45
- Nov. 17- 5th and 6th Concert,
6:30 p.m
- Nov. 19- BOD Mtg.-7:00 p.m.
- Nov. 25-27- Thanksgiving
Break

Liberty Common School Board of Directors 2009-2010

Terri Fisher- 223-0989
Kayleen Fraley-377-8850
Craig Horton- 207-1454
Dave Kleen- 377-9579
Dan Provaznik- 223-0188
Jeff Webb-545-9636
Bill Werst- 631-8379

Board of Directors Meeting:

Expansion Session 11/5/09
7 p.m.

General Session 11/19/09
7 p.m.

BOD AGENDA

Financial Review, Science
Specialist Report, Adopt
Amended 2009-10 Budget
Academic Support Team
Coordinator Report

School Pictures Retake
November 10th
10:45-11:30

Headmaster Writing- by Russ Spicer

A few years ago, I read an article written by Dr. Terrence O. Moore, former Principal of Ridgeview Classical School, that masterfully explains charter schools and why they are good for our educational system. This article is especially timely in light of the upcoming School Board election. You are encouraged to research all of the candidates and determine where they stand in relation to supporting charter schools. Enjoy this article, I sure did!

Charter Schools Defined

Charter schools are among the least understood public institutions around, perhaps even less understood than the bolder form of school reform known as vouchers. Often parents have called my school to ask, "How much is tuition?" One witty board member said, in light of human beings' love of a good deal, we should respond with, "For you, it costs nothing." Several of our critics in the paper have snarled that Ridgeview is "an elite private school." (Presumably being an elite school is a bad thing, though no one complains of elite sports teams or auto-glass repairmen.) And yet as a charter school, Ridgeview charges no tuition, though we fancy that the education we provide is comparable to private schools that charge many thousands of dollars per child per year. Indeed, to underline our charter-school status, we have had to display prominently on our marquee, on our website, and in all advertising the words "no tuition." Far from being private schools, charter schools are public institutions. In fact, they may be the most authentically American form of schooling.

Charter schools have been defined as "independent public schools of choice, freed from rules but accountable for results." Charter schools are independent in the sense that they do not report to school boards in matters of hiring, curriculum, administration, or governance. In fact, most charter schools have very little interaction with their districts except when certain state reports are due or standardized tests are being administered, in short, when certain state-mandated functions are being coordinated at the district level. Almost all decisions made in a charter school are "site-based" as the lingo goes now. Though mostly autonomous, charter schools are nonetheless public because their revenue comes from public taxes and they are open to the public. Indeed, it could be argued that charter schools are more open to the public than "neighborhood schools" since a student's ability to attend a charter school does not depend on his parents' residency.

Whereas regular public schools adhere to strict neighborhood boundaries, charter schools normally admit students regardless of where they live. In that sense, a child does not have to live in a "good neighborhood" to go to a "good school" (Would that the one really follow so seamlessly from the other!).

The term "choice" is one you will hear often in connection with charter schools. Indeed, it is the charter-school movement's watchword. Choice refers to the fact that charter schools give parents a choice in schools, especially in the type of school, where none existed before. Choice also means that no one is forced to attend. Parents and students have to choose a charter; no one assumes they will. The element of choice is essential to school reform since the opposite of choice is either forced uniformity or inertia. If parents imagine that the only possible kind of school is the one their student attends, then they will be unlikely to seek some form of education that is better. Were that school a great school, then such seeking would not be necessary. But if that school is only mediocre or actually very poor, the ability to find a better school is central to the child's education and well-being.

The neighborhood system of schooling, in which there is no choice, is akin to Henry Ford's Model T: mass-produced; "you can have any color as long as it's black." Charter schools, on the other hand, introduce choice and therefore competition into this system. Whenever parents have a choice, they will be inclined to use it.

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Honor Our Service Men and Women

Every November for Veterans Day, we honor our men and women who are currently serving our country or are veterans, by a bulletin board display. Please help make the bulletin board a great place of respect and appreciation, by bringing in pictures of our soldiers. Please include the service man or woman's name, and where they are serving or served. The pictures will be returned to you the first week in December. **Please submit by Nov. 6th.**



Seussical Parent Volunteer Mtg. Nov. 3rd.

A short volunteer meeting will be held on November 3rd starting at 4:45 and will run no later than 5:30 p.m. Miss Voorhies would like to get all the crews together so as to develop a game plan for each area. Even if you can't make the whole meeting, please swing by if you can so we can touch base. Please let Miss Voorhies know if you have any questions, Erin.Voorhies@libertycommon.org.

Yearbook Purchase Date Extended

The deadline to purchase Liberty Common yearbooks has been extended through November 6th. This year's edition is new and improved. Don't miss your chance to have a lasting memory of your time at Liberty Common School for only \$18.00. Extra order forms are available in the Front Office.

Notes from the P.E. Department

Please note that the Intramural Indoor Soccer originally scheduled for Thursday, October 29th will be rescheduled for a later date. Please watch The Monday Notes and have your children listen to morning announcements for the new date.

Liberty Boys Basketball Schedule

Monday, Nov. 2 nd	Frontier at Liberty
Thursday, Nov. 5 th	Liberty at HMS * Changed to Nov. 18
Monday, Nov. 9 th	KQA at Liberty
Wednesday, Nov. 11 th	Union Colony at Liberty
Thursday, Nov. 12 th	Titans at Liberty
Monday, Nov. 16 th	Liberty at New Vision
Wednesday, Nov. 18 th	Liberty at HMS
Thursday, Nov. 19 th	Rez at Liberty
Monday Nov. 23 rd	Ridgeview at Liberty

All games begin at 4:00 p.m.

To Our Wonderful Moms in Touch

Once again, when the staff is needing a boost our Moms in Touch group is here with a wonderful lunch. On October 23rd, the staff and teachers were treated to a delicious lunch of salads, soups, sandwiches and of course yummy desserts. Thank you to this great group of women who always know how to make our day!

High School Update from Bob Schaffer, Project Manager

"Suit the action to the word, the word to the action," said Shakespeare's Hamlet. Shakespeare assigned the choicest words to heroes and villains alike.

Some associated with heroes were examined quite earnestly last Tuesday as upper-grade students convened over pizza to ponder words that to them articulate Liberty Common School's brand.

They then suggested a few words for consideration in naming the new high school. The overwhelming top choice, the second not even coming close, is (drum roll) – "Liberty."

"Though this be madness, yet there is method in't," said Hamlet. Through focus groups, questionnaires, Power Point, butcher paper, sticker dots and brainstorming, many evocative themes, values and words were proposed and refined by students over the course of the past month.

Settling on the one or two to sum the essence in a high-school name was a tall challenge to be sure. As Hamlet said, "Ay, there's the rub." Yet it turned out to be a tribute to the program we know as Liberty.

According to its students, Liberty's brand includes themes like responsibility, respect, smart, well-educated, college preparatory, competitive sports, high-achieving, disciplined, accountability, virtue, "best in the nation," excellence and many more.

These motivating values will not just become, "words, words, words," as Hamlet said. Next come the ongoing tasks of choosing high-school symbols and forming traditions to reinforce Liberty's brand. In all cases, we will suit the action to the word, the word to the action.

The next weighty topic to discuss with our student scholars is a high-school dress code. It's been said by (guess who) none other than Hamlet himself, "The apparel oft proclaims the man." Yes, Shakespeare even left us choice words about that, too.

Homework Club Seeking Help

Homework Club is needing tutoring and homework help after school, Monday-Thursday, 3:00-4:30 p.m. If you are interested, please contact Linda Thelen– Academic Support Coordinator, ext. 167, or Susan Porter, Homework Club Manager, ext. 120.

Math Counts Meets This Thursday

Just a reminder, Math Counts meets this Thursday, Nov. 5th from 3:15-4:15 in Mr. Lovely's room. See you then!

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This exercise of choice is often criticized by public-school apologists. "Why are you taking your kids out of the public schools and leaving all those other poor kids to an inferior education?" Such selfish parents, wanting to pull their kids from a sinking ship without regard for the other kids whose parents might not have figured out the ship is sinking! Actually, exercising self-interest in this case might be the most public-spirited thing a parent can do. Competition forces public schools to improve a lot more than either criticism or pleading ever will. In economic terms, when "voice" proves unavailing, individuals must have the capacity of "exit." Ford may not be the leading automobile manufacturer anymore, but at least all its cars aren't black.

Charter schools are also more accountable for their results than are regular public schools. Charter schools are accountable principally in two ways. First, they are required to take the same standardized tests that all other public schools must take. Insofar as publication of the results of these tests has become extremely visible throughout the nation, charter schools become known by their performance from the first year of operation, often a very difficult year given all the hurdles involved in setting up a new school. I am well aware of the typical public-school accusation that charter schools take all the "most motivated" children from the neighborhood schools. The implication is that a charter school's high performance can be attributed solely to the school's clientele, so to speak. If that were the case, then why have so many charter schools using ultra-progressive curricula ended up having the worst test results in their districts despite their students' being in no way disadvantaged? Moreover, why would the most motivated students be moving to a charter school unless they are seeking to be more challenged, to get a better education, to keep from being "bored," as my students put it?

Second, the element of choice also makes charter schools accountable. If parents do not like the education their children are getting, they are free to take their children out of the school. In fact, they are free to leave for any reason, whether reasonable or not. A school of choice with a declining enrollment has no option but to change or, eventually, to go under. Without choice, neighborhood schools are accountable to no such pressures. They stay in business forever, whether they are successfully teaching students or not.

Opponents of charter schools must oppose them on one of these principles: their independence, their public funding and openness to the public, their reliance upon choice, or their accountability. Realize that these are extremely compelling, indeed extremely American, principles to oppose. If we study the arguments of these opponents, we shall find that their criticism boils down to their fear of competition and to charter schools' receiving public funding based on the number of students they have. In short, these critics are monopolists. They want regular public schools protected from competition at all costs. I suppose there is an argument for monopoly, but we must wonder whether critics of monopoly would practice what they preach in other matters in which we take choice for granted. Do the critics of charter schools wish to be forced to buy Fords simply because Ford has fallen on hard times and could use the business or be required to buy HP computers though they might prefer Apple or Dell? If they go to church, do they wish to pay tithes to the church located closest to their house, though it is Catholic and they are Protestants? What if they do not go to church? If they live in Fort Collins, Colorado would they agree in all cases to send their children to C.S.U. and not to U.N.C. or to Colorado College or to The Citadel or to M.I.T.? Would these public-school apologists as parents agree to have their children go only to the closest pediatrician or dentist? Might they agree to being Denver Broncos fans even if they grew up in Pittsburgh or Dallas?

Choice is as American as apple pie in most everything except for schools. Indeed, Americans who do not like apple pie can always eat cherry or rhubarb without being thought un-American. Parents who send their children to charter schools, on the other hand, are often looked upon as some kind of traitors. Americans have accomplished wonders to make themselves the freest people who have ever lived, but in this one domain, the one that philosophers such as Plato considered the most important, they are substantially unfree, both in their practice and their thinking. Consequently, charter schools constitute a "rebirth of freedom" in an important human endeavor, the formation of children's minds and souls, that has remained unfree for far too long.

Terrence O. Moore is an Assistant Professor of History at Hillsdale College.

Odyssey of the Mind Reminders

Registration Deadline:

When: Wednesday, November 4

- Every effort will be made to honor your first problem choice.
- If requested, I will do my best to put you together with your friends!
- Teams will be formed on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Remember, all costs are paid by Liberty!

Extra Registration forms are available in the Front Office

Kick-Off Meeting:

When/Where: Wednesday, November 11 at 3:30 p.m.

Reminder: If your child ordered a lunch on day of a classroom function, such as Roman Day, Egyptian Day or a field trip, all lunches will be cancelled and credited to your student's account. If you have any questions, please contact Mrs. Whitmore at 482-9800 ext. 164. Please check lunch balances on Power-School. Thank you.