

April 4th Town Hall Ascent Classical Academy Northern Colorado

We read the Mission and Vision

Beginning Announcement: We are here tonight to answer the questions submitted by parents. We have taken this first round of questions through email for this meeting and will do our best to keep this at an hour and a half to respect everyone's time. As we all know, this school is only 31 months old, and we do have some things to work on. We received plenty of questions and also some positive impact statements. We will read a few questions and then a few impact statements.

Building Questions:

What are the plans for the future expansion/upper school building? We are currently at 40,000 square feet are looking at something closer to 60,000 square feet with the new edition. The new facility will have a larger gym and a portable stage for Fine Arts. Stage 3 of the building expansion will involve the Fine Arts department having a theatre. To accomplish this we are looking to do a Capital Campaign.

What is the timeframe? As quickly as possible. We won't have the building ready next fall but we would need something by fall of 2024. This will all depend on financing and funding. If we need something temporary, we will do that, but that's not ideal. We would rather save that money and put it toward a new Upper School building.

Is there a plan to deal with hallway crowding? The size of the hallways in the current building are made for K-6th sized people. We recognize that they are crowded and have talked about different ideas on how to best work passing periods. The staff thought it was cool to see all of the Kindergarten children coming in and getting high fives from the older students but didn't realize that there may be some students that find that scary. Please reach out to the administrators if your child is having an issue.

What is being done about the lack of supervision at recess? There is a schedule for staff to be out there. There is a rotation currently. Looking at maybe assigning specific people next year. We always encourage parent volunteers to support us in this as well.

When will we have full day Kindergarten? When we have the space, we are looking at 2 sections: Two ½ day and 1 full day Kindergarten.

Will we need to start holding concerts/events off campus? That is being looked into by the Fine Arts Department

Will there be a parking solution moving forward when we add two grades of kids who are driving to school? Yes, we already have kids that drive and parking is being considered in the new build. There is a traffic system for those students that drive and there will be an Upper School carline and a Grammar School carline.

Will there be lockers in the Upper School? Yes, we are looking into lockers, but they will not lock or be viewed as student private property.

Will there be a playground added? Playground vs Play structures is what we are looking at. Play structures are costly and mainly used by K-3 students. Playgrounds have games and activities. Our philosophy of a play area is much more around the natural playgrounds vs play structures.

Attendance Policy:

Can you help clarify how excused absences vs. excused tardies/early releases accrue to the count towards the total missed days? Mr. Kramer answered this question in detail, but please refer to the attendance policy attached to the end of this document for the official policy.

Regarding excused and unexcused absences, who determines this? When and how will families be notified if an absence is unexcused? The school now determines if the absence is excused or unexcused. The Board met and gave the approval, in spirit, and they are now working on the language to transfer that power to the individual schools. Prior to that decision, it was determined by the Board. Now if you let the school know before 4 pm in Pick Up Patrol on the day of the absence, it will be excused. If the school does not know, it is unexcused.

What standards, resources, and processes are in place to more accurately call a delayed start or snow day? Mr. Kramer and Mr. Gomez make the decision. They start at 3:45a and drive the roads in all areas to see what call they are going to make. We also look at what other schools are doing to assist us in our decision making.

Do we still have the ability to get the material presented during absent days or is that solely at the discretion of the teacher? Test, quizzes, and projects can be made up. Homework will not be required and will not be marked as missed but you can request it and complete it with your child. It will not be graded if turned in.

I would like to know why school starts so early, when there are no other schools or public transportation issues dictating when school starts or ends. It has been scientifically documented that starting later in the morning is better for circadian rhythms and student success. The Hillsdale curriculum has a specific number of minutes that need to be fulfilled in their programming. Starting early gives kids the ability to get to after school programs they may be involved in during the year.

Current Schedule:

Is the weekly formal day set, or does the school have flexibility there? Formal days are a wonderful part of our program. Where other schools do dress down days, we do dress up days.

Does the school plan on returning to a start date after Labor Day and end date before Memorial Day? No, we were starting 3 weeks after any school in the area and that was making it harder to offer seats and get enrollment. The current start date is more likely how this will look for our calendars going forward. We are also making an effort to next year's calendar significantly earlier than we have in the past.

What is the rationale for tacking on a school day after Memorial weekend vs utilizing the built-in make up days provided at spring intermission and has the administration considered the present this sets for future years? We decided to add a day at the end of the year because many families already have plans for the days off during the Spring intermission. The last day of school is Wonder Days and while that is still important and fun, it is less impactful for students that need to miss that day because of planned events rather than missing a day during the school year and possibly missing a quiz, test, or other content.

Communication:

What is the rule on keeping teachers compliant with updating their websites? Teacher websites are being used inconsistently. If you are looking for what your child needs to do for their homework, that should be written in their agendas every day. Next year's new Department Heads are considering doing audits of the websites.

Can there be a way to increase communication to parents on what goes on in the classroom? Are there any future plans for parents to have a greater/specific understanding of what kids are learning in classrooms and "how" they are learning it so we can mirror that and expand on teaching at home? We have been thinking about holding Parent classes like Constitution 101 or Singapore Math. Please give us some ideas on the Ascent Accountability Counsel page on our website so we can gauge interest.

I would like to discuss the timing of our Parent/Teacher conferences, since when is 10 minutes with my child's teacher twice a year enough time? These are set up as touch points. If the kids are doing well, that is enough time. If they are struggling, schedule a time with your child's teacher at any point during the year and do not wait for conferences.

I would like to see the drama surrounding the article that was distributed by a music teacher at Ascent be addressed publicly to prevent speculation. We did have an incident where a handout was given out that broke our policies and that was dealt with immediately and the parents of the children that received the handout were communicated with on the same day as the incident. This article broke our policy that we do not teach human sexuality within our schools, but rather leave that up to the parents.

Will we have Spanish language taught at our school? We want to offer other foreign languages. Spanish will be the first one we add. Other schools that are like ours usually start offering it around 4 or 5 years from when they started. We are making progress on this, and our desire is strong to make this happen, but we are not quite there yet.

To help with the preparation for standardized exams, would you please consider Sadlier's Vocabulary Workshop as a text to prepare students in 10th or 11th grade? We don't teach to the test. In our agreement with Hillsdale we have a core set of classes that we have to do and each one has a specific set of time that it will need to be covered. We are always open to resources for students, but it would not be something that we would teach in our classes.

Will our school have AP or concurrent college enrollment opportunities? Will we allow more than 1 elective a semester? We don't anticipate AP courses. This allows college boards to have a say in what we teach and that doesn't always align with our values. With our Hillsdale curriculum that we have to cover we can not allow more than 1 elective per year.

Faculty and Staff:

Do we plan on addressing the letting go of teachers, specifically elaborate on the process by which those decisions are made? Why is there such a high turnover rate? Talking about HR related topics needs to be done carefully. I understand your desire to want to know. There is a lengthy process on how to hire or let go of staff. There is a very intentional process. There could be issues with them not being a good fit. They could have moved on to a new opportunity that they found. Not every position posted is because of turnover, some is because of the growth of the school.

Is there a plan to accommodate children with special needs such as Speech Therapy? Yes, we did hire a Speech Therapist at the beginning of this year and she backed out right before the school year started. We did have someone coming up to help out but we have now rehired the Speech Therapy position.

Will there be Choir next year? Yes

In an effort to keep afterschool care affordable, could it be considered to hire our own afterschool staff instead of out-sourcing? We have to use a 3rd party for after school care options because it would be a for profit business if we did it ourselves. It is not out of the question, but it would create additional considerations that we would need to take into account. At this time, we do not plan to get involved in the after school program.

Knowing that charter school teachers do not require teaching certification (and teacher training specifically), how are teachers supported and developed, particularly with regard to classroom/behavior management? We don't need certified teachers but they do need to be highly qualified and trained. We have a new Dean of Faculty that will be in charge of this development and an ongoing support for teachers.

I would like to see the Board meeting time up for discussion? There has been talks of making it a different time. I am not sure what the board is going to decide on this, but there has been talks about a potential survey to families regarding a best time.

Does the money raised at the ACANC In Vino Charitas go directly to OUR school? In Vino is for us and used for us. We do have fundraising priorities. That is one of the responsibilities of the Ascent Accountability Counsel is to give input on what those fundraising priorities should be. There is only one that is mandated to us and that is for some of the money to go towards supporting families that may not be able to afford uniforms, school lunches, etc. Bu, yes, all money raised at ACANC goes directly to our school and goes towards supporting the priorities set by myself, with advise from our team and the AAC.

I would like to discuss more fundraising options besides an expensive gala once a year. There are talks of doing a Fall event. We also are in talks about a Capital Campaign.

Will it be possible to participate in a regular school lunch program? Legal counsel has urged us not to get into the regular school lunch because there are strings that come with any state funded program. If you need any assistance with school lunches, please reach out and talk to us.

Are there any new or enhanced safety measures that Ascent is taking to protect kids from outside threats? What percentage of the staff is armed? Will the school be willing to consider metal detectors at the main entrance? We do have armed staff but I won't share the percentage. Last week marked the 3rd outside agency that came in to go over our policies and procedures for a threat. We are enhancing the building to make it safer. The Larimer County Sheriff Office can be at our building in 2 minutes and our security is here in seconds. As we all saw last Friday, we are committed to the safety of our students. I don't know about metal detectors.

Positive impact statements

My kids are thinking for themselves instead of memorizing items just to test on and forget.

We're just so pleased with the curriculum, focus and care the Ascent faculty has for my kids. My kindergartner is reading! My 5th grader always has something to discuss that she's learning in class. And my 8th grader is learning how to organize and prioritize her studies with outside activities independently.

We love Ascent. We are so thankful for the staff and fully support the mission and vision of Ascent. All the teachers we have had have been perfect for our child. He is thriving.

So thankful for the commitment to teaching what is good and true and beautiful. Our family has been so grateful to the school for the diligent leadership and commitment to traditional excellence that we have seen since day 1!

We are so thankful for a lighter homework load so our kids can access after school activities like Theater and sports!

We've had GREAT teachers! The kids are doing really well.

We have had some amazing teachers during our time at Ascent and we are grateful for the impacts they have had on our sons. Praying for more excellent teachers and for the good ones to stick around!

Ascent has been a wonderful school for our family. It is rare, especially in today's world, to find an education system that aligns so wholly with how you want your children to be raised. We are extremely grateful to have the opportunity to attend Ascent Classical Academy.

My children have learned so much at Ascent, Mrs Gasper has been an amazing influence on my daughter and we are so grateful for her.

We have 3 boys at Ascent and have been so happy with the experience over the last 3 years. Of particular note, our 1st grader has shown remarkable growth in reading and spelling just from September until now - Mrs. Lodato is amazing. I am constantly impressed with the teachers, structure, and curriculum at Ascent.

Both my children come home excited about what they're learning. They ask me to expand more on historical events, create "projects" based on literature and history, and ask for classic books. They read those stories repeatedly, always searching for "the moral". I often find myself learning right along with them! Their academic and character growth at Ascent has astonished me.

We love everything about our experience at Ascent from staff, communication, safety, professionalism, kindness, education quality, values and more. No complaints! We are raving fans!

We have LOVED the literature texts our girls have studied through. They have enjoyed some greats and have grown in wisdom and prudence!

My kids absolutely love what they are learning. They are truly excited everyday to tell me what they've learned. The content is fabulous and far exceeds the standards of district schools. My Upper School students couldn't believe that not every school uses source texts in history class. Not only are they receiving an excellent education, but developing a love of learning and an appreciation

for what is good and true and beautiful. The teachers are wonderful. They really know and care about my kids. They all have my gratitude and respect.

Ascent has been a blessing for our family. The content is rich, instructors are kind and caring, and the values/virtues align with our family values. We are incredibly grateful for the work happening here!

Our family is blessed to be part of the ACANC community.

We have been grateful for a school that takes safety seriously, and has gone to the work to obtain regulatory approval for trained staff to carry arms.

Both of our kids enjoy going to school, and they are excited for the learning. We feel incredibly safe sending them to Ascent. We also love that our school is parent driven and the focus is on learning not pushing an agenda.

Both of our upper school students have greatly appreciated the teaching technique of Mr. Deetlefs (preprinted notes and fewer rabbit-trails) and Mrs. Hall (also no rabbit-trails).

My kids love going to school every day! That's the best gift for a mom!

Reporting Absences

Absences must be reported via PickUp Patrol by 4 PM on the day of the absence in order to be excused. Absences reported by phone or email will not be accepted. The report in PickUp Patrol must provide a short description of the reason for the absence. Insufficient description of the reason may result in an unexcused absence.

Pre-planned absences must be recorded in PickUp Patrol at least one week prior to the date of the absence.

Doctors' notes will be required for medical absences that are four or more consecutive days in length.

Make-Up Work

Students have one day per day missed to complete make-up work, up to five school days. The Dean of Academics will make final decisions regarding extensions for extenuating circumstances.

Students will receive credit for tests, quizzes, papers, and major projects that they miss during excused absences if those assessments are completed within the designated time frame. Students are encouraged to complete missed homework and classwork to master material, but these assignments will be exempted and not collected. If a pre-planned absence is scheduled over the due date of a major project or paper, students must turn in their work prior to the pre-planned absence. Students should not expect credit for turning in work past the above time restrictions.

Advance Work

Occasionally, parents or students request make-up work in advance of a pre-planned absence. While the school appreciates the forethought and desire to take care of responsibilities prior to absences, parents should understand that such requests present an additional burden to teachers. The best way for a student to maintain pace with their class is to be present in class. ACANC permits students to take home learning materials in advance of an pre-planned absence and encourages families to follow along with learning as posted on the teacher's website; however, teachers will not prepare packets of material or administer assessments in advance of an pre-planned absence. Tutoring will not be provided to address missed learning as the result of a pre-planned absence.

Attendance Success Plans

ACANC may put together attendance success plans for students who are classed as chronically absent or habitually truant pursuant to state law. An attendance success plan will document the student's absences to date, note the reason(s) for student absences, and establish attendance goals for the remainder of the school year. The success plan will also review school attendance policies and procedures, and note the potential consequences of continued absence, up to and including suspension, loss of credit, and retention.