



***ETIAM NVNC -  
(EVEN NOW)***  
**Class of 2022 School Motto**

**Important Announcement from  
Headmaster Bob Schaffer**

**News About Expanding LCS**

Dear Liberty Parents, Grandparents, Alumni, Employees and Students: Liberty Common School is poised to expand its classically oriented, Core Knowledge, elementary-school offering to more students and families in our community.

I'm pleased to announce that, late Thursday, the LCS Board of Directors directed the school's administration to work with the school's Building Corporation (the entity which acquires and owns the school's properties) on the acquisition of new classroom space to accommodate expansion of our elementary school in grades kindergarten through fourth.

Communicating this information to everyone in the LCS community is something I believe warrants this extraordinary midweek message.

The BOD's decision brings welcome and liberating news for those current LCS families experiencing having siblings waiting on the school's lottery list. It makes long-term plans for a multi-use performing-arts center achievable.

The BOD's vision for expansion has no impact for current LCS students in terms of their pathway through the school ultimately across the graduation stage. No students will be made to move to a new school building.

Of course, the news will be welcome to the families of the many hundreds of children

whose names are on the school's lottery and who have maintained high hopes for attending our excellent school. Expansion fulfills one of the most fundamental objectives of the school's mission statement and our Charter agreement with the Poudre School District.

We are in the process of securing a lease on a complete school facility built specifically for a charter-school program. Located in Southwest Fort Collins at the intersection of Taft Hill and Horsetooth Roads, the building is currently occupied by two other charter schools that are moving out at the end of the current school year.

There will be lots of additional information rolling out at least weekly. I will continue to be diligent in sharing it all. In the meantime, my fellow administrators and I have completed an "FAQ" document posted below which addresses all the likely and obvious questions parents may have about this exciting news.

While some questions may need more time to be answered fully, I wanted to waste no time in getting out in front of school-wide communications on this exciting development, and to make sure our BOD's direction is described in as timely a way as possible.

Thank you to the many parents, grandparents, employees, and school founders who have devoted many months and, in some cases years, to exploring, weighing, and evaluating the school's eventual expansion. It has been a long time tracking the many variable factors that have finally lined up to make this possibility a solid opportunity to improve the school's life-changing service and professional academic reach into our Northern Colorado community.

Very truly yours,



Headmaster

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## Liberty Common School Expansion Q&A

### **Q: Why?**

**A:** Discussion surrounding LCS expansion/replication has occurred over the past several years driven by key factors:

- 1) The school has seen its lottery waiting-list numbers grow far beyond the capacity of our current facilities and enrollment caps.
- 2) The demand for classically oriented academic offerings like that furnished by LCS has become more acute in our community.
- 3) Expanding LCS offers immediate relief to the large number of siblings on the school's waiting list. LCS families in this tenuous situation are unable to enroll siblings in the school due to limited physical space, and enrollment constraints. This has resulted in languishing hardship for Liberty families. In some instances, in fact, the situation has pressed families to leave the school they love.
- 4) One elusive goal of the school's leadership is to one day build a first-rate, multi-purpose, performing-arts facility. The additional sustained revenue afforded through steady growth

in our elementary program offerings (and eventually junior-high and high-school enrollment growth) will place this project, and perhaps other attractive amenities that we have been dreaming about for years, within our reach sooner.

5) We have over 800 students on our lottery list hoping to attend Liberty. This number is a true representation of the need to expand, as this is the final number of students remaining after the school administration purged the lottery list of families not having a strong interest in Liberty. In other words, Liberty's waiting list has been "scrubbed" down to those families whose intensity of interest in attending our school is high. Without adding more elementary capacity, the school is constrained in achieving its underlying mission of serving the community by extending its public-school option deeper into the school district (Poudre School District R-1) we are obligated to serve.

6) Recently available property opportunities make expansion prudent. No previous opportunities considered have presented expansion options as attractive as those currently in hand, nor is it likely similarly attractive ones will materialize in the future.

**Q: Where?**

**A:** Planning is now oriented toward adding two "tracks" (or classrooms) of about 25 students per track at an existing facility LCS will likely lease at the intersection of Horsetooth & Taft Hill Roads in Southwest Fort Collins. These will be for grades kindergarten through fourth. The school will likely grow by adding two additional grades, and possibly an additional track over the next three years. This will add up to 75 students per grade when fully built out.

Though there are two schools occupying this building presently, LCS would occupy the entire facility. The physical classroom spaces there are slightly smaller than those in the current LCS facility, thus the class-size target of 25 students.

This building is already set up to house a charter school complete with well-designed pick-up and drop-off lanes, a playground, a gym, and move-in-ready classrooms. This is the facility for which the financial models were drawn and evaluated.

**Q: What Grades?**

**A:** New opportunities for families of children in grades k-4 will occur in year one – starting with the next school year in August of 2022. Again, these new seats will be for grades kindergarten through fourth. The school will likely grow by adding two additional grades, and possibly an additional track over the next three years. This will add about 75 students per grade when fully built out. Other growth and buildout scenarios are possible three years from now, but the most feasible outlook as of now suggests the new facility will be a k-6 school when fully utilized.

**Q: Why now?**

**A:** Though expansion has been discussed over the past few years, delays in elevating consideration to a serious, actionable level have occurred for good reasons. The school's habit of careful financial stewardship, and maintaining institutional quality and culture warrants thorough analyses – which is almost always a time-consuming proposition.

The LCS Board of Directors (BOD), the LCS Building Corporation (the entity which owns and acquires all LCS facilities), and the LCS administration have been working on this project tirelessly since we were made aware of the unique property-acquisition opportunity

in mid-January 2022.

The delay in making a final decision was really a function of due diligence on the part of school leadership and not wanting to rush a decision, but to ensure the school's financial stability, culture, academic offering, and mission are best enhanced.

Nearly all open discussions – having taken place over many months at Board meetings, at meetings of the Financial Advisory Committee, at Building Corporation meetings and expansion-planning meetings, at recent public-info meeting, and at Board strategic-planning meetings – have focused on serving the number of Liberty families who have siblings languishing on the waiting list while bolstering the school's financial capacity for the addition of future school amenities including a multi-purpose performing-arts center. Adding students definitely accomplishes all of this, but running multiple financial scenarios and being hyper-thoughtful about contingencies has been a prudent approach.

Despite the many months devoted to making sure we've been abundantly careful, conservative, and thorough in exercising due diligence, we did push up against some timing windows.

We are now at a decision point on the facility we are poised to acquire. Should that close on us due to inaction on our part, the cost of fully serving current Liberty families and adding more Liberty families will climb considerably and possibly prohibitively.

In addition, the need to start hiring and onboarding the kind of high-quality professional classroom instructors that Liberty Common demands for a fall 2022 opening is imminent.

**Q: Why the urgency in communicating the situation to LCS parents?**

**A:** The school believes it is important to swiftly get out in front in communicating the school's expansion opportunities especially to those who have been unable to attend ongoing open meetings where expansion scenarios have been discussed over the past several months. In reality, regular BOD meetings, public-information/town-hall meetings, and the school's relevant parent-leadership meetings such as those held by the Building Corporation, the Financial Advisory Committee, and the expansion committee are typically sparsely attended by parents. Despite these many hours of open discussion, an actual plan had not materialized. That changed two business days ago when the BOD authorized the school's administration to begin formalizing coordination around a specific expansion scenario involving a school facility at Horsetooth & Taft Hill Roads in Southwest Fort Collins and follow-through scoping on the future pathway for new students through junior-high and high school grades. Early communication to parents on this development is helpful for the whole school community. Keeping parents informed of significant school developments in a timely way continues to be part of the school's operational habits which is why a midweek communication outside of the *Liberty Common Sense* all-school weekly newsletter is advantageous.

**Q: Why was there no delay in the BOD's vote to expand?**

**A:** Despite the many months devoted to making sure we've been abundantly careful, conservative, and thorough in exercising due diligence, the school found itself pushed up against some unavoidable timing windows. Recruiting, hiring, and onboarding the kind of high-quality classroom instructors required to maintain curricular consistency throughout the school needs to start now. We also have a decision point on a school facility (at Horsetooth & Taft Hill Roads) we are most hoping to acquire. Waiting even another two weeks (for the BOD's regularly scheduled meeting, for example) on this decision would put

both of those time-sensitive opportunities at a disadvantage. This explains why a majority of the BOD Members requested moving the vote up to a special meeting occurring two business days ago on the evening of Thursday, April 14, 2022.

**Q: Is this expansion decision hastened by concerns about anti-charter-school legislation?**

**A:** Somewhat. The anti-charter-school political forces in Washington, D.C., and at the Colorado State Capitol are getting stronger, not weaker. For example, the Biden administration, this week, concluded accepting public comment about its recently proposed rule which, if adopted, would put expansion funds that we are eligible to capitalize on now likely out of reach later. We want to do everything possible to ensure the school has the firmest footing possible to preserve its curricular mission, charter commitments, community obligations, school culture, character, and the stature of our outstanding professional classroom instructor corps. The upside of expansion for current Liberty families and hopeful joiners is undeniable.

In the past three years, there have been very hostile bills introduced in the State Legislature. For example, one bill was introduced that would strip mill-levy money—property tax that homeowners pay—from charter schools. Another bill was introduced that would strip the ability of charter schools to appeal to the State Board of Education when hostile school districts refuse to grant or extend charter contracts like Liberty's. If Liberty had not had this right to appeal to the state board in 1997, our school would not exist. The way to protect our school and other charter schools from these political hostilities is to bring more families into our fold and garner broader support for charter public school options, and to promote the principle of parental choice in education.

While these considerations are not the driving factors in LCS's planning, they are an important part of the charter-school landscape about which our school leaders maintain awareness.

**Q: What can parents do to help?**

**A:** There are lots of tasks and needs with which parent assistance will be helpful. A committee for expansion planning and execution is being formulated which will include subcommittees covering such objectives as materials acquisition, hiring, building aesthetics, fundraising, volunteer coordination, new-family orientation, and others. Please contact **Principal Churchill** if you'd like to volunteer: [cchurchill@libertycommon.org](mailto:cchurchill@libertycommon.org)

**Q: How solid is the expansion opportunity under consideration?**

**A:** The school is in a very strong financial position. The school administration has generated worst-case, likely-case, and best-case estimates of financial projections. Even the worst-case scenario shows the school generating surplus operating income within three years—money that can be used to expand junior-high and high-school options for students rising into those grades over the next three years, and to add a multi-purpose, performing-arts center, maybe more.

**Q: How much will expansion cost?**

**A:** Financial projections are extremely favorable and entail generating additional funds for the school, not adding ongoing expenses. LCS administrators, as well as BOD Members, and Directors of the Building Corporation (which orchestrated our school's previous expansions) have all looked at worst-case, likely-case, and best-case scenarios. In all

three projections, this project accords our students' best interest on many levels.

Our planning has secured Poudre School District's support and has also carried early favor of some significant private-grant assistance. We're optimistic about even heightened levels of private-grant support, and general fundraising assistance with the welcoming of new LCS families.

We're at an opportune point and time where the financial numbers support the BOD's decision to authorize formal administrative planning with an emphasis upon helping accomplish the school's ongoing mission to serve "a broad cross-section of the community" (among other public-school imperatives).

**Q: With the addition of a second elementary campus, will currently enrolled students in k-6 be guaranteed a spot in the junior high and high school?**

**A:** Yes. Adding an additional elementary campus will in no way jeopardize the path toward LCHS graduation for any current students. We are certain of that.

We're fully expecting and planning the pathway for new enrollees to junior-high, and high school to be paved by the time they matriculate to those levels.

**Q: Can I move my current LCS student(s) to the new facility?**

**A:** Yes. Existing LCS families will have "first dibs" on seats at a new location.

**Q: How will the school find excellent staff?**

**A:** The administration has spent quite a bit of time this year going to more educator job fairs than in previous years. We've done this for multiple reasons beyond a potential-expansion process. Job postings for k-4 elementary teachers are currently online. Applications are already being thoroughly reviewed. Additional communications advertising of these postings is being made. The process of hiring quality instructors will look much the same as it currently does when a vacancy occurs. We are confident in our ability to hire excellent professional educators who are eager to provide our students with a first-rate Liberty Common education. If you know of any potential candidates who might make excellent LCS elementary instructors, please alert them to the school's expanded and ongoing talent search.

**Q: Will some of our current staff go to the new elementary school?**

**A:** Probably. As with all job openings at LCS, any existing LCS employee may apply for them. Whether any teachers pursue these new posts starts with their own professional interests. From there, the administration will evaluate, as it always does, the best strategies to strengthen the school's instructional proficiency and foster the school's learning culture. Without a doubt, expansion represents excellent opportunities for current professional classroom educators and support-staff members, some of whom are eager for a new and different challenge, to pursue professional growth. Proven leadership will be critical to positively impacting the launch of a new campus, maintaining culture, and ensuring fidelity to LCS's mission, vision, and charter obligations to serving families of the Poudre School District.

**Q: What about future years?**

**A:** All of the financial estimates have been done starting with two tracks of k-4 in the first

year, 25 students per classroom per grade-level, then adding a grade each year.

There are two options that are being considered as we launch, one option would grow the new campus to a three-track k-6 elementary school. Another option to be evaluated is whether a two-track k-8 school makes more sense. Both options will feed into an expanded junior-high and high school.

There are many exciting options and opportunities for growth for our k-12 program over the next several years to ensure up to six tracks of LCS students, k-12, receive a first-rate LCS education.

Many decisions cannot be made until the new elementary school is launched, enrollment demand is confirmed and realized over the next few years. It's an exciting time in our school history!

**Q: More elementary students should drive more demand for the high school (7-12). What are the likely scenarios to deal with that?**

**A:** Current facilities can accommodate the demand generated by adding two additional tracks of elementary students matriculating into grades 7-12. Should a third track of elementary students be added, there are some different options being considered to ensure a path to graduation for those students as well.

For example, the LCS Building Corp owns property adjacent to the high school. Some scenarios being considered entail using that land for new construction, or constructing a new building on that property to make room for expansion to the existing high-school building.

Yet another scenario contemplates acquiring office buildings adjacent to the existing elementary-school facility (immediately Southeast along Sharp Point Drive). The LCS Building Corp is scoping the suitability of acquiring these properties for junior-high expansion, or other purposes.

The financial predictions of expanding the elementary school suggest surplus income generated from the project can quickly be used to help fund necessary future expansions for both junior-high and high-school offerings as appropriate.

**Q: Will there be transportation?**

**A:** Transportation scenarios between the campuses are being looked at by the administration now, including adding morning and afternoon buses from Liberty Common High School to each of the elementary campuses.

**Q: Is there a chance siblings may have to be separated between elementary campuses?**

**A:** Definitely not for current students. Although we anticipate this would be a rare occurrence in the case of a sibling currently on the waiting list, it may be a dilemma a family or two might face a few years from now. This would still be a better situation than the current likelihood of a sibling not being drawn off the lottery at all. We are hopeful all of the current siblings on our waiting list will always be enrolled in the same building as their siblings. It's highly likely this will occur, but we just can't guarantee it right now.

Again, expansion, in and of itself, will not create the unfortunate situation described here.

Otherwise, running annual lotteries will be normal and unchanged, and siblings receive priority enrollment. In kindergarten, we have yet to have a year when an enrolling kindergarten sibling did not have a seat. This will continue to be the case for families when enrolling kindergarten siblings at either elementary-school campus.

Our current kindergarten siblings account for over 70% of our annual kindergarten enrollment. Without expansion, we are trending toward a tragic scenario of not being able to guarantee each kindergarten-aged sibling a seat at Liberty Common School. This is another key case for expansion.

## **Liberty Common High School**

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## **Liberty Common Elementary School**

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