

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

We love this school for our children. It's been an amazing school over the past 3 years.

Sincerely,

Jesse Booth

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Every child learns differently and every parent should have the choice to put their child in a public program that will support the success of that child. The local public school in your neighborhood is no longer the answer for everyone. Almond Acres Charter Academy (AACA) was started by parents of the north county for ALL families of the north county. We must support this opportunity and allow students the opportunity to become great 21st citizens through innovative and non-restrictive learning modalities. AACA provides that option and AACA should be allowed to continue to operate in the north county. Please support this noble endeavor.

Sincerely,

Samer Mohamed

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

I am a parent and board member at ALMOND ACRES CHARTER ACADEMY. Our children have gone to school here since they were in kindergarten. We have a 7th & 3th grader. After 7 years of participating at our school, it feels like family, which is one reason why I chose this school and I chose to become a board member in June of 2019.

I believe every child learns differently and parents should have a choice as to which school their children go to regardless of socio economic status, financial status, or where you live. AACCA was started by Paso Robles residents and should be homed in Paso Robles. The majority of students come from Paso. Our school is home to so many students in the north county community. We are a school that welcomes every walk of life, every learning style and we are a school where every student is affirmed, stretched and celebrated! Our school provides small class sizes and opportunities for our teachers to teach to individual learning styles too. Because of the programs at our school, like Destination Imagination, Leadership & Theater my daughter is thriving, just not surviving, in Middle school! Her confidence has grown, she has outstanding grades, and her character is strong. I believe AACCA has had a significant impact on her and her growth in being the best version of herself. I value the option to choose what school our children go to that best fits them. I love and support all the schools in our community, as we have friends in many different places, public and private. But I am so thankful to have AACCA as a charter school option.

I think having AACCA charter in the Paso district would be a win-win for the whole community! I think we would be a great addition to Paso District as we have much to offer in partnering to grow great kids in Paso together!

Sincerely,

Abby Stoltzfus

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My name is Sabrina, I am the mom of a now 1st grader at Almond Acres Charter. Last year, Lukah was in Kinder in Mr. Smith's class. I was nervous as many moms are for their 1st baby going into school. But, Mr. Smith and Mrs. Brabenec and the entire staff made our families transition was so easy and smooth. AACA helped develop my sons individual strength and is helping us develop him into an outstanding citizen. Over the last year, our son has learned to recognize 5 core values of being a good citizen and helps our entire family focus on being trustworthy, respectful, responsible, fair and caring. We chose AACA for the small school size and the strong focus on the students. I appreciate that AACA focus on our children's personal strengths whether it be heart, mind, body or soul. And that they help us identify that so we can help our children better. Not only has AACA been good for Lukah, but it has helped me be a better mom. At one point I was having a hard time with my son, and Mr. B met with me to help guide me through tools that I can use to help him be his best self. Also, throughout the year he has help Zoom calls for the parents so that he can help guide us through the challenges that parenting brings. One thing that really stood out to me from these calls is that I am not ALONE! We all at AACA are a family and we all can help each other. I would really like to AACA move to it's own site because we need room to develop a school site that fits our Mission Statement and that our children can recognize as their own. Having our own site will really show our children that they are as important as we say they are. It will streamline the daily processes of not only pick up and drop off, but all of our daily activities and being able to set up our activities based on our needs and the needs of our students.

Sincerely,

Sabrina Hernandez

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Hi my name is Stephanie McCall and our daughter Cambria will be starting the first grade and her first year at Almond Acres. We moved to Paso Robles from Visalia Ca where my daughter attended a private school. We were very pleased with that school, but can tell already Almond acres is the place for us. To find a public charter school where we aren't paying car payment a month to attend that has the community, curriculum, care and support of a private school is unheard of. A new campus with this kind momentum behind it, will benefit the community of Paso Robles by giving more families the opportunity to be exposed to an education every child deserves.

Sincerely,

Stephanie McCall

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

I spent 20 years on the Paso Robles School District Board of Trustees and am a firm believer in public education. In my years on the board we supported home schooling programs, independent study, continued high schools because there was a need to offer opportunities to all our students and provide a place that worked for them. I supported Almond Acres from the beginning because I believe that this type of Charter School provides choices for parents and their children and provides a different type forum. Almond Acres has become an integral part of the North County school atmosphere and I support their growth opportunities in Paso Robles.

Sincerely,

Dee Lacey

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Our family has been at Almond Acres Charter Academy since our oldest son started kindergarten in 2015.

The school has progressed and fine tuned down to a stellar staff who is all on board with the school's unique teaching philosophies. The school focuses on the whole child. They spend time figuring out how each individual learns so they can show their gifts and also stretch the areas they aren't naturally inclined in.

The teaching doesn't end with the students. The staff and parents are invited every day to interact with the school, to celebrate each other, and learn to be the best parents we can be. They make sure there is a direct connection between the language used at school being implemented and continued in the home to offer consistency and clarity in expectations. I really enjoy shared start to see a glimpse into my child's day at school, but also to get a community and fellowship I haven't felt at other schools. The staff members greet you with a smile and know everyone by name, including parents/siblings. You will always feel welcome on campus.

My children, as most, have many different needs. Support services at Almond Acres has been so thorough, open, and consistent in their communication with me, my children, and making sure to find ways to provide exactly what my kids need to succeed and grow this last year. They teach the kids from the beginning self advocacy and let them voice their opinions and concerns. They play an active role in their education.

No school is perfect and certainly not a fit for everyone. Every concern I've had with the school over the years was talked out with staff members and they actually made swift active changes surrounding my concerns, and always follow up to make sure the new plan in place is working out for everyone involved. This open communication and willingness to make changes based on parental feedback is a huge factor in our school choice.

We are excited and confident entering another year of possible distance learning with AACA. We know whatever orders are in place the school will keep us informed, do what's best for the students, and be fair & flexible.

We feel the school deserves a site that functions in the unique way the school wants to teach our children. Most families who attend are from Paso Robles and would greatly benefit from the school being closer.

Sincerely,

Kari Campmas

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

I am one of the new families to Almond Acres, my son will begin kindergarten there this fall. There are two things that stand out to me about AACA that makes them different from traditional education. First, they emphasize the importance of growing great kids that eventually turn into great citizens. One of the ways they do this is to teach them how to problem solve by finding the next right thing they can do. Mr B. shared a story with me of a former student who observed her AACA classmates walking away from a fight at the high school. He knew they made that good choice because they had the philosophies of finding the next right thing engrained in them. The second thing they do that is different from traditional education is they find how each student is smart and encourages them in that direction. That is an out-of-the-box way to think about education and I know my son will benefit from his teachers working with him in that way. I think AACA will be a great addition to the education system offered in Paso Robles. They have been successful where they have been residing for the last several years at the Lilian Larson school campus, just think of what they could accomplish on a campus of their own!

Sincerely,

Joanna Burns

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Attention SLOCOE Board members,

I have lived in Paso for a mere 6 years yet have felt that I have lived here for a lifetime. My wife and three kids started off with sending our twins to the Paso Robles Co-Op preschool and absolutely loved it. We met some of the best human beings there and have cultivated friendships with many of those first families.

Our attention was drawn to Almond Acres from that point on due to the fact that many people we met had children who already attended that school.

I have never felt so welcomed as a parent/adult at a school before (and I use to go to schools to do presentations about drug awareness) and let me tell you the staff, faculty, and children all welcomed us. It was what we felt was "true Paso Fashion". Since moving here there has been this wonderful sense of community. A sense of togetherness and a kindness that we see throughout our town. Almond Acres Charter Academy is just that. They are a community within a community raising good people, innovative learners, self starters, and a future of compassionate loving humans.

For all the reasons I've mentioned I urge you to support the move to Paso Robles. A majority of These families are already living in Paso. I believe by giving families options for education is crucial to being a parent and as a district this is your moment to embrace this.

The Idea of having this school brought into town would benefit so many, and would also be an option for the Paso School district to showcase its diverse and growing status across the state.

Please consider embracing this small niche of a community into our community. Together we can raise innovative, compassionate, caring, and respectful kids.

Sincerely,

Leo Castillo

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

AACA is an excellent addition to the district for many reasons. I would have to say that most important is their approach to education. They recognize and cater to the specific needs of the children while supporting the children to strive to be their best (Personally and productively). We have been a part of the AACA family from the beginning, our children have thrived in this environment. AACA has made monumental progress as an educational provider in multiple areas in a very short time. Please welcome Almond Acres charter school into the Paso Robles Joint Unified School District. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Brandy Jaureguy

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

"I would like to have more space at school. Having a building to learn would be amazing. I would like to have a school of my own."

Charlotte Beckett, 8 years old

"I would like to get to school early because I already live in Paso Robles. I would like more room at school. I would like to just be around kids that I know."

Gea Beckett, 6 years old

" AACA would add great value to the Paso Robles Community! I believe having the school in Paso would alleviate a long drive for some families. I have seen first hand how this drive time can affect a families choice of school. Also with the new construction would come better safety for the school. I know the school's philosophy would be life changing for a family who is looking for an extraordinary school path!"

Beckett Family

Sincerely,

Gena Adams

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

AACA was created by Paso Robles parents for Paso Robles families. I want AACA to be chartered in the district where Paso Robles families work. Where friends and family are making a difference daily. AACA should feel at home when it comes home.

Sincerely,

Salvador A Cota

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Our family asks that San Luis Obispo County Board of Education please approve the petition to charter Almond Acres Charter Academy in Paso Robles. It is essential for AACA to have their own campus in order to develop and enrich the students of which most reside in the Paso Robles area. It will allow AACA to thrive and grow. In doing so, not only will you be adding a great school to this district that will service the Paso Robles community, you also have the potential to pull in additional students from other districts that wish to have this wonderful educational experience. We live in Southern Monterey County and have one son that attends AACA. He has been attending AACA since kindergarten and just completed the 5th grade. We have been making the 25 minute drive each way daily for the past six years. We believe in the AACA model so much, that even with the relocation to Paso Robles, we are willing to pass by the school that is literally across the street from our house to make the extended drive to Paso. AACA provides a very positive learning experience dedicated to teaching the whole child in a way that is unique to the different learning styles. AACA embraces and practices "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" with the intent to create great citizens while providing a well-rounded education. The leadership of the school has a dedication like no other - one that is truly outstanding. Given the unique situation we are all faced with at the moment, it seems even more important to offer a variety of learning options so the needs of the community may be met. If you are looking to service the educational needs of your community while promoting a positive environment, then approving the AACA charter is a win-win. Given our experience with AACA, we are confident that you will find the school to be an enormous asset to Paso Robles. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jamie Jo Brown

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

There are so many reasons why I suggest you allow AACA to Charter in Paso Robles. Here are a couple:

1) This is an amazing school that will benefit the North County, giving PARENTS the choice to choose between standard public school and a charter school based on the individual STUDENT NEEDS.

2) We live in Paso and having the school here in town would allow us to be much more active as parents in the school, and also allow my student to participate in extracurricular activities that we cannot do now due to location and schedules.3) The philosophy of AACA of "Growing great kids" resonated with us from the moment we heard it. It was never a choice for us on which school we should send our kids to, AACA was the only way to go. Each of my kids learn very differently and AACA addresses each of their specific learning styles. That is something they would not get in a public school setting, and could possibly fall behind because of it.

Sincerely,

Arianne Hall

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

AACA was my first choice for my son for a litany of reasons. Almond Acres is teaching children how to be citizens of a community, when really no schools are taking the responsibility of doing that in today's robotic world. I don't mean just doing the pledge of allegiance every day, but children are stepping up and creating clubs such as "The Caring Club" which take responsibility for their very own community and raise money for Echo Homeless Shelter items. They daily practice the Seven Habits of Highly Successful People so that they will integrate themselves into a world quite frankly filled with chaos, so that they will be armed with skills of negotiating, problem solving, synergizing (working together), and seeking first to understand. We really need these skills in today's strongly polarized society. Underlying in our small classroom charter module are STEAM instruction (we hold an annual MAKER'S FAIRE - hands on kid created science expo), participate in a national science competition (Destination Imagination), have an extraordinary sports programme which begins at first grade (my son in first grade was in track and field and running 3 1/2 miles). The fact that my son sleeps in his SCHOOL uniform two weeks before term starts each year tells me that he adores his school, his buddies, his teachers, and especially his principal, Mr. B. who directs with a kind but very purposeful manner. He knows every child by name and has the grace and patience like no other. Amy Baker, founder, is brilliant in her own right and is the silent back bonebone of AACA. I don't mind at all running up and down the hill to San Miguel from Paso, it is SO worth it, but it really makes more logistic sense on so many levels to bring our school to Paso Robles, where it belongs, where most of its children reside; not to mention Paso Robles should be so lucky to acquire such an outstanding academic addition to its town.

Sincerely,

Tami Dickerson

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

We're a Paso Robles family with a child (soon to be 2), at AACA. We passionately believe in the principals and educational approach of our school. The understanding that each child is an individual with different needs is key to why I am sending my children here. The inclusive nature of the school allows for much family involvement in our children's education and school culture. The support network and friendships created during the time we've attended AACA goes way beyond the school gates. This is a community of invested and passionate parents, students and educators. This network is key not only for our children, but for the community of Paso Robles. The school ethos, positivity, sense of duty, determination and passion is seen in local small business, cultural life, and the evolution of the city community. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Natalie Gale-Hazard

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

I have taught in both public and charter schools during my career in the public school system. I believe AACA provides a unique environment for teachers to master their craft and adapt quickly to best practices in education. The flexibility of our teaching program creates successful students and innovative educators. The small class sizes, emphasis on brain development, and teaching to the whole child, creates a unique environment for students that is not replicated anywhere in our county. I encourage you to approve our petition and celebrate diversity and choice for the students of Paso Robles.--

Sincerely,

Cory Houdyshell

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My son is in kinder and has some challenges - he has an IEP and Health plan. I love that AACA sees his whole capability. We have had nothing but a positive experience with them from the teachers up to the administration!- While distance learning does not work for our family , I was extremely impressed with how quickly the school was able to switch to an online platform. Both Kinder teachers were amazingly helpful during the transition and helped modify the curriculum to better suit my sons needs. -adrianabright.14@gmail.com

Sincerely,

Adriana Bright

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Every child learns differently and parents should have the choice as to which school they want to send their children to. AACA has been my school of choice for the past 8 years. I am a resident of Paso Robles as well, I would love to teach and attend school in the town I live in. PRJUSD could benefit from having our charter school in their district because we (teachers and staff) love to share and we can live in a world where we can learn and teach each other so much!!

I will have two of my own kids at home and across this coming school year. A second grader and an incoming kindergartner. I know that they are not only getting academics, but social emotional learning as well. My daughter, who will be a second grader, also gets support services. She has thrived in the classroom setting and even continue driving through distance-learning at the end of the last school year! It feels like every teacher, para, admin is there just for her. She has thrived in the classroom setting and even continue driving through distance-learning at the end of the last school year! It feels like every teacher, para, admin is there just for her. I am looking forward to having my youngest son be with the wonderful Mrs. Amy Brabenec!

Almond Acres is not just a school. It is a family!

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Smith

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Our family has been enrolled at AACCA since its opening in 2012. Our daughter has thrived in all grades beginning in Kindergarten and up through 7th grade. I strongly support AACCA and the school's philosophy of growing great kids, the positive school culture, the encouragement of critical thinking skills, the acknowledgment of individualized learning styles, and the promotion of student leadership in both academics and citizenship. This school has been a real blessing to our family and the entire community. Paso Robles Joint Unified School District would be privileged and proud to have AACCA in its district, giving more North County families the opportunity to experience this amazing school. How many families can say their kids love to go to school? I have a daughter that LOVES going to school every day! The school culture is positive and productive and feels very much like a family that cares about each other and helps each other. Please take this to heart and consider the best interest of the many students and families that are prospering both academically and personally at AACCA and the possibilities for future students from all over the North County to have access to this excellent choice for their children. The community of Paso Robles and the entire North County can and will benefit greatly by the presence of Almond Acres Charter Academy.--AACCA is truly Growing Great Kids!

Sincerely,

Susan Bourgault

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

I am currently the Curriculum Coordinator at Almond Acres Charter Academy.

I have been a teacher for over ten year and I have been blessed to call Almond Acres my home. Almond Acres at its heart is a place of collaboration. Our doors are open to share best practices to improve learning for all students. We don't want to compete with Paso Schools, we want to share best practices and improve education for all students. Paso Families deserve a choice and as we collaborate with the teaching community of Paso Robles then all families benefit from the choice.

Sincerely,

Carrie L Fiel

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

I believe what the school strives and does accomplish in teaching, more students should have access to this amazing school. We had a rough time in public school and without this charter school our child would not have grown and stretched himself anywhere close to what he has done at AACCA if even at all. I love the concept of the whole child, heart, mind, body & soul. Creating amazing human beings and future citizens in our community. With project based learning, and smaller class sizes each child has a chance to grow at their own pace and not be stuck at the same speed of other peers who may be struggling or may be exceeding expectations for each grade level. The child gets to learn at a pace that is good for them, and choose HOW they learn (their kites) which helps them in school and the real world. Without a doubt moving to this school has been the best decision we have made for school and if 1 or 2 more children can experience the difference because it's closer to their home then to me that is the best thing we can do for them.

Sincerely,

Whitney Hill

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

School Choice is a vital and necessary option that many parents and students need to achieve academic and social development excellence. Since its inception, Almond Acres Charter Academy has provided exceptional school choice to families of all demographics in the North County.

It is imperative that the students who need adaptive education and progressive teaching methods, continue to have access to a school like Almond Acres, which provides rigorous academics in a customized manner, matching teaching to each students learning modalities.

A majority of our families reside in Paso Robles or the immediate surrounding areas. Therefore having a school campus that is centrally located to our current and future families is imperative.

For eight years, Almond Acres has been a shining star in public education in the North County. An approval to relocate the campus to Paso Robles will insure that this is available for students and families for many decades to come.

I thank you for your consideration in supporting our school relocation.

Sincerely,

Justin Perino

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My name is Paige Smith, I am a grandparent of children who attend Almond Acres. This school has been a pivotal part of my grandchildren's education. I have a verbally special needs (speech apraxia) granddaughter attending the school whom I feel without the special attention of not only her teachers but her aids she would not be nearly as far as she is verbally! I am extremely grateful for this school.

Sincerely,

Paige Medzyk Smith

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

We have a first grader at AACCA. I am so grateful that this school is provided in my community because I am so on board with the philosophy of this school. It's even better in action than on paper.

Only in very recent history it is more common to be literate than illiterate. Humans have been able to have progress because communities have raised generations of people to have virtues, even when they couldn't read books.

What I love about AACCA is that it provides an education that develops the kids spirits, not just their minds. Every week there is a valuable principle emphasized with the "habit of the week", and the whole school is working on this habit together. It makes being a responsible, productive and virtuous person, the norm and not the oddity.

We were considering homeschooling, but thankfully we tried this first. My Mom tells me all the time that my daughter is a different child since she's been in this school. Thoughtful, more confident and joyful.

We live in San Miguel, so a move to Paso is less convenient for us. However, I am happy to drive my daughter a greater distance to a school that is so aligned with our family's values. I think a lot of people in surrounding areas of Paso Robles would be willing to drive their children to this school. I also believe that having options for the children of Paso Robles, adds to the value of what Paso Robles offers it's community members. It's a great message to people who may be looking to relocate out of areas like Silicon Valley-now that so many will be telecommuting and working from home offices.

I am a third generation Paso Robles resident, and I have witnessed first hand the many changes that this area has experienced over the years. Adding a Charter School as an option for families really shows that the city puts its children ahead of politics.

Sincerely,

Kasey Osman

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Hello! My name is Kathy Hanson. I am both a teacher and parent at Almond Acres Charter Academy. As a parent, one of the things I love most is that the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People and the 6 Pillars of Character are an integral part of AACA. This focus on being the best person you can be starts in kindergarten and is a basic foundation in every grade thereafter.

As a teacher at AACA, I am honored to work with a great group of people. We all strive to make Almond Acres a fun, engaging, safe place to learn. And, of course, I love AACA for all of the great kids I am blessed to interact with on a daily basis. There's nothing better than having a group of smiling faces greet you with a big smile each and every morning. I am privileged to be able to help guide these young citizens on their educational journey.

Moving our school from San Miguel to Paso Robles is an important next step in growing our school. We would be a great compliment to the Paso Robles Unified School District by offering an alternative program, as well as being able to partner with them in many areas to offset any financial burdens they might have.

Please help our school become an asset to the Paso Robles community by supporting our move.

Sincerely,

Kathy Hanson

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

AACA would be a great addition to the Paso Robles school district because it would bring another positive learning environment to our community.

Sincerely,

Katie Davis

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

The children of Paso Robles will benefit greatly if given the opportunity to be part of Almond Acres, where each child's strengths are emphasized in order to maximize their best learning environment. We chose to move our kids from their previous schools just after Christmas break. Our son was at Bauer Speck, and our daughter was at Flamson. Our son was falling behind in reading, and our daughter was always caught in the middle of her two friend groups who couldn't get along. I had talked to another parent from AACA about why they loved the school, so we took the tour. It felt like a much needed answer for us. The smaller classes, happy teachers, along with some good old fashioned politeness from the students made us feel at peace about it. My kids have excelled so quickly since making the switch to AACA. I feel that my son especially needed to be allowed to be a high energy boy. AACA creates an environment where education is tailored to fit my kids based on who they are and who they are meant to be. Our hearts would be crushed if this school were not available to our family. Sincerely, Ben and Natasha Kosharek

Sincerely,

Natasha Kosharek

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

“Almond Acres Charter Academy combines California teaching standards with promoting the importance of students becoming terrific citizens. Its caring and dedicated staff works diligently to celebrate each student for his/her achievements. Educators at Almond Acres Charter Academy focus on weekly habits of mind, which prepare our students for long-term success, both educationally and personally.

On a personal note, I believe the recognition the students receive for their hard work is long-lasting and extremely motivating. I love the small school environment, the positivity from everyone I meet on campus, and the bonds I see being made between students and faculty.

I have personally witnessed Mr. Bob Bourgault, the Executive Director, emotionally involve himself in tough situations on campus. He exudes so much passion for seeing his students succeed. I cannot think of a greater leader than Mr. B and my family is so thankful to have Almond Acres Charter Academy as our school of choice.

I believe moving the school to Paso Robles will increase enrollment and give families another option when deciding on their children's education. Most of AACCA's current families reside in or around Paso Robles, and having the school closer to their homes would only further satisfy the students and their families.”

Sincerely,

Veronica Surber

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

AACA has had a positive impact on our family in a variety of ways. Not only do we feel involved in our daughters' educational growth, but we are consistently learning new methods and techniques to enrich our lives in the home and community as well. From positive discipline strategies to creating a positive thinking mindset, AACA has taught our family the importance of the bond between home, school, and the community. As a family, we reflect daily on ideas like, "Put first things first, please stop stepping on my words, be the best version of yourself, think-win-win, feed it and it will flourish, be proactive, begin with the end in mind and seek first to understand...then be understood!" From the heart, mind, body, and soul philosophy to the amazing recreational and enrichment opportunities I can honestly say that AACA makes us confident as parents that we are helping to create a terrific citizen and leader. Thank you

Sincerely,

Erin Van Note

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

I think it is important for parents to have a choice in the education their children receive. This will allow Almond Acres to more easily reach the children that it is serving.

Sincerely,

Casey Appell

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Hello San Luis Obispo Board,

We believe Almond Acres is a rare opportunity for kids to have a unique educational experience that meets the needs of the individual. As parents of adult children we could have only hoped for this type of educational experience for our kids. As they grew each learned in a different way and Almond Acres lends it teaching style to build on the child's personal strengths instead of molding to one type of learning. Our son's early experience would have been totally different had we been able to approach his learning this way. This program is built for success!

We do have a cousin and nephew who have had the privilege of going to Almond Acres and have seen their unique growth in being taught to use their personal strengths to succeed. They are motivated, excited learners because of their experience at Almond Acres.

A new site would only add to the learning experience of these kids. With Mr. Bourgault at the leadership head one can only imagine what a larger campus will add to these kids schooling.

We are 100% supportive of this move.

Sincerely,

Barbara Varian

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Hello, my name is Kai Stoltzfus and I am twelve. I have attended AACA since I was in kindergarten and I am now in seventh grade. Additionally, I have a brother who is in third grade. At Almond Acres I really appreciate how well the teachers and staff interact with the students and guests. One reason I have never left this school is because I am really close with the staff and teachers and I would feel like leaving my family. Another quality that makes AACA unique is that they don't just teach knowledge but they teach life lessons and skills. For example, all of the students are taught how to be a good citizen. We are also taught and shown how to be TeRRiFiC: Trustworthy, Respectful, Responsible, Fair and Caring. I believe that Almond Acres should have it's own school because it is different from most schools and should be given the chance to show how special and unique it is. Finally, I think it would be beneficial for AACA to Charter in Paso because Almond Acres will contribute greatly to the community and it's students. In conclusion, Almond Acres is a wonderful school that has many outstanding qualities.

Sincerely,

Kaile'a Stoltzfus

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

I love being a teacher at AACCA, as well as a parent at AACCA. As a teacher, AACCA allows and encourages me to first make connections with my students and get to know them, so I can connect with them and teach to their strengths and promote a positive disposition towards learning and school.

As a parent, I see a school full of great citizens that are open to, and embrace differences amongst all children. We are a family at AACCA, and we celebrate student and family successes and support our school and community!

Sincerely,

Joanna Lisonbee

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

We are the grandparents of a second grade student. We have been familiar with a AACA for five years. AACA has been the answer for many children we have met and watchEd grow into well rounded students over the past five years. The whole child philosophy has been especially important for our grandchild who has blossomed since attending AACA. The talented administration and teaching staff would be a strong addition to the Paso Robles district and provide more choices for the parents of ALL our children. Please consider bringing AACA into Paso Robles and increase the spectrum of education opportunities for our children.

Sincerely,

Brenda and Don Shelley

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

I am, Michele Miller, the Education Specialist at AACA. I feel very fortunate to be a part of such a wonderful team of educators who have a vision to improve the way children are being educated. Teaching habits of mind and using project based learning are just a few ways AACA is different from other schools and preparing students for the 21st century work force. There is no other school that I have worked for that is so committed to their families and students. Each student is considered for their individual needs and the staff is dedicated to using proven methods to accommodate, make modifications, and educate their students. The school continues to grow towards their vision. AACA needs to expand into a location that fits their philosophy to allow students to be fully engaged in learning and grow into the best version of themselves. I would recommend AACA for every child and be proud to have it in my neighborhood and part of my community.

Sincerely,

Michele Miller

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Ten years ago as parents of a preschooler and an infant, my husband and I began our search for the best elementary school in the county. As a product of private school education K-12 married to a man who is a product of public school education K-12, it became evident to me early in our marriage that our experiences in school were vastly different. As our family grew, we agreed that we wanted our kids to love school. We wanted them to love learning.

To this day we discuss that first meeting when we went to to learn about what is now AACA. We knew that our first two sons were very different temperaments and learners, and we hoped that we could find a school where both of them would thrive. We were the last people to leave that meeting after cornering the presenters to ask them a myriad of questions ranging from academic goals to long term vision. We left hoping that this school would come to fruition.

When we got the call that AACA was going to open its doors in three weeks, we were ecstatic and nervous all at once. Our first son was going to go to kindergarten at a new school with no one we know. Were we crazy for driving from Atascadero to San Miguel to take our son to school every day? Perhaps, but we agreed that it was with the sacrifice. Just taking the kids to school daily over our career at AACA, not including extra driving for sports, plays or other extra school events, we have driven roughly 146,000 miles!

That leap of faith has proved to be the best decision for our family. We currently have 3 children at the school. Kenichi is our oldest and he will be graduating this year. Anderson is in 6th grade and Josef is in 4th grade. They LOVE school. We are amazed because neither my husband or I loved school. Our kids cried when summer time came around when they were younger. Now they beg to spend time with their school friends during summer. They count down the days until winter break is over and they can go back to school. While they are all different learners, they have all excelled.

Beyond classroom learning, we have been impressed by the community of families AACA has created. We have a village that consists of teachers, staff and other families. Despite having no family in the area, we are not raising our kids alone.

As we look to the future, we have our fourth child entering AACA in the 21-22 school year and our oldest son will be transitioning to a different school. A move to Paso Robles would mean that our commute would be cut drastically and that our family would have more time together as we transition to being at multiple schools in the county. A move to Paso means that it would be easier for our oldest son to visit his alma mater to see his former teachers, support his siblings in their school events and continue a relationship with a school that has shaped him to be an

excellent citizen.

I have been an advocate for Almond Acres since its first day. I have seen the confidence my children have in their abilities. I have watched them take chances. I have seen them have a heart for volunteering. I listen to them speak and act with integrity. I am reminded daily why we made the right choice when we chose AACA.

Almond Acres Charter Academy has created an opportunity for all children to succeed in school while embracing who they are. They have created a culture of learning in children and families unlike anything I have seen. On behalf of the current families of Almond Acres Charter Academy and future families, I am asking the SLO County Board of Education to consider granting our petition to move to Paso Robles.

Sincerely,

Jerissa Parkhurst

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

I am one of the original teachers that started with Almond Acres during its second year in operation. It is my home, my love, my sweat and blood! I have helped develop many programs including the kindergarten program. I have been a mentor teacher to many others who have come through Almond Acres. I am a dad of students at Almond Acres. Almond Acres Charter Academy is important to me because of its wonderful and unique philosophy of teaching. Before working at Almond Acres, my teaching philosophy was undefined. I knew I had a lot to offer when I went in for the interview, and out of the 200+ applicants that year, I was told that the job was mine without hesitation because of my own philosophy and how it matched with the school was trying to do. The school is important to me because it is about family and students first. The administration, board, and support staff are all phenomenal. I have made lifelong friends with other teachers and as well as families that have gone through my class. I would love to see Almond Acres be able to implement the program that we have been so hard on these past eight years of doing in a new site in Paso Robles. We would have space in a facility that would match our philosophy! It would provide families an alternative to your traditional public education that many families are looking for. One of my favorite parts of Almond Acres is how much we want to share with the schools and districts around us because we all agree that student's education comes first. Please consider our petition to move not only for me, but for my family and all the other families that are current and future to our school. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Smith

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

I have always been a supporter of school choice. Almond Acres provides a learning methodology that allows students to easily integrate into the community as responsible citizens. This is something that is sorely needed. In addition, Almond Acres needs a permanent location in a structure that speaks to its program.

Sincerely,

Carl Raggio

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My name is Ed Surber. I have two children who attend Almond Acres Charter Academy (AACA), Charlotte (11) and Cody (7). Both of my children have attended AACA since they were in kindergarten. Also, I am a proud board member for AACA.

There are three main reasons why AACA is the educational home for my children; school choice, educational philosophy, and feeling of "family" at the school.

Like most parents, I want what's best for my children and having a choice as to where my children go to school is important to me. To me, having a choice [to do many things] is fundamental to being a human being. I grew up in Paso Robles and attended school at the PRJUSD since 4th grade and I've done well with my life, but when I grew older and had children of my own I explored other options for educating my children. Private school was too expensive for my budget. When I learned of AACA and learned more about their educational philosophy and met the teachers and administrators I was hooked. Having the choice early on is what made that possible for me and my children.

In my opinion, the educational philosophy that AACA has implemented is a breath of fresh air to our young people. Embracing the "heart, mind, body, and soul" of each child and truly focusing on each child independently is what makes AACA the right choice for my family. I love how Mr. B., the teachers, and the administrators know my kids names and their likes and dislikes. It shows me that they truly care about my kids and their educational experience. I feel wholeheartedly that AACA is "growing great kids" along with me.

Lastly, the "family" feeling that is alive at AACA is amazing! Many schools have this "family" feeling, but I do believe that our family is a bit tighter and closer than most, not because other schools don't want to instill the sense of family, but perhaps because they simply don't have the time or resources to invest the time it takes to create this sort of culture.

To be in your shoes and to weigh the decision of allowing AACA to charter in Paso Robles or not is a big one, but shouldn't be a difficult one. If you believe in allowing parents to do what's best for their children and their family and if you believe that "growing great kids" makes sense in the world we live in today, then the only action you need to take is to approve the AACA Charter Petition.

Please feel free to call me directly if I can provide any more information or answer any questions for you.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Edward A. Surber

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My name is Melissa Smith. I am a parent of an incoming kindergartener and a 2nd grader at Almond Acres, I am a 2nd grade teacher for TUSD and I am also married to one of the kindergarten teachers at Almond Acres.

As a mother to two Almond Acres students, I feel confident that they will go to school and receive a rigorous standards based education, as well as learn about themselves as a learner. My son, who is going to start kindergarten, is excited to learn, and talks about school and wonders what his kite (heart, mind, body, soul) will look like, and if it will be like his older siblings, He is excited to participate in the many activities throughout the school year, such as shared start, recreation with Mr. Summerville, his new teacher, Mrs. Brabenec (his older siblings all had her,) the art show, the possibility for trying out for the school play and Destination Imagination. I love that as a 5 year old getting ready to go into school he is already excited and looking forward to learning. This is because AACA has created a culture that families and students want to be a part of.

My daughter, who will be in 2nd grade, started kindergarten at AACA after a year of kindergarten at a different school. Because of her genetic disorder, and being nonverbal she was made to feel different than the other students, didn't connect with the staff or her peers, and developed major behavioral issues. As soon as started over in kindergarten at AACA, everything changed. From the first day she stepped on campus she was made to feel a part of the school and her peers. After two years, and two of the most amazing teachers, she has friends, is learning and reading and truly loves school. The dedication, hard work and passion from the general education teachers, special education teacher, her aide and the school as a whole has created an environment that makes her feel included, smart, important and loved. She walks down the hallway and everyone says hi, students know her as Hadley, not the girl who can't talk. The idea that everyone is smart in their own way, and that you don't have to do something one way for it to be right is a key component to AACA's philosophy, and a reason that everyone in San Luis Obispo County should be honored to have this school within the county.

As an educator, I admired AACA's educational philosophy of teaching the whole child. The staff truly believes that all students can learn and everyone is great at something. They build their curriculum and instruction around each child's learning modalities as well as providing the rigor and content required for students. One of the things that sets AACA apart from other public schools is their instruction on the different intelligences: Heart, Mind, Body and Soul. Students, parents and staff get to know the best ways they learn and process information through these 4 intelligences. Students learn to advocate for themselves by knowing how they best learn,

teachers and staff can create lessons and activities to challenge students in these areas and push them to learn and develop in other areas.

As a spouse to an AACA teacher, I can see the love, dedication, excitement and joy that teaching at AACA brings to my husband. He is continuously asking how he can do more for his students and school, how he can learn more, how he can make the lesson or activity meaningful and connect to his kindergarteners. My husband and his coworkers, truly believe the philosophy at the school, they talk about it outside of the workday, hone in their craft by challenging one another to go beyond what they thought was possible. AACA is lucky to have such devoted, forward thinking staff.

Moving the school into Paso Robles would open the opportunity for more students and families to experience the rich, well developed and all encompassing education that is Almond Acres Charter Academy. Today I ask the School Board of San Luis Obispo County to grant Almond Acres Charter Academy the charter within Paso Robles for all of the reasons I listed above as well as to encourage more families and students to believe in themselves as well as find a school that will make them feel important and like they fit.

Sincerely,

Melissa Smith

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

School is not one size fits all, and the neighborhood school might not always be a good fit for every child. Having alternatives in a community like Almond Acres Charter Academy (ACA), helps all children succeed, and allows educators to collaborate, innovate, and share ideas. I believe that having ACA in Paso will enrich the educational experience for everyone.

According to the National Education Association (NEA), the original purpose for creating charter schools was, "A desire to create greater flexibility for innovation within public education. It was hoped that successful innovations could be adapted to benefit public education more broadly." With this in mind, there is an opportunity for Paso schools and ACA to collaborate, and share innovative ideas for the benefit of all public school students.

Sincerely,

Rena Spooner

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

I am beyond thankful and grateful to not only teach at Almond Acres, but to have my son attend for the past 6 years!

I'm Dena Vertrees, and I have been teaching children at AACCA since 2014. When I applied for the job, I knew I loved the philosophy of the school, but I didn't realize that I had found my new home! The students, staff, and families are truly one big family!

My son also attends AACCA, and I couldn't be happier with what he has learned here! The areas that impress me the most are the leadership skills and character traits that are taught to all the students, beginning in Kindergarten. The students are taught that they are in charge of their own learning. They also learn to recognize their individual strengths, and how they can use those strengths to stretch their struggles. We are truly growing great kids at Almond Acres, and each day they are becoming GREAT citizens!

I've been in the education field for over 13 years, and I truly believe the way we teach at AACCA is improving the lives of the students and their families, and far surpasses other schools!

Sincerely,

Dena Vertrees

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

I'm Alicia DiGrazia. My son is Tristan and he will be going into 2nd grade. Almond acres has been the best school for Tristan. After trying a few other schools in the Paso Robles district, Tristan finally felt comfortable. He has is now thriving and loves going to school. He loves is teachers and the staff.

The flow of information from the school to the parents is both unique and refreshing. I feel like I get enough notice to participate in events. As a parent in the Paso school district I always felt like I was notified of events at the last minute, if at all. It was very frustrating.

The overall, kids seem to always be well behaved and respectful which warms my heart to see.

Sincerely,

Alicia DiGrazia

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My grandson has attended AACA since 2nd grade and is now entering his 8th grade year. My daughter has been a teacher there for 6 years and loves to be able to teach each child according to the child's needs and abilities. AACA's philosophy of teaching the 'whole' child through heart, mind, body, and soul teaches to the individual child's strengths and struggles by using positive and creative principles. They use project based learning and community service projects to enrich each student's lives which helps enable them to become kind and caring adults through education.

I love AACA and what it is doing to grow our future!

Sincerely,

Joyce Vertrees

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Almond Acres is a high quality school that will tremendously benefit the children of Paso Robles. In this day and age, high quality education is a necessity to succeed. Having choices for parents is also a strong advantage.

Sincerely,

Phil Corman

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

To the Board of county schools,

My name is Shiloh Hamon. I have lived in Paso Robles for 17 years, my husband was born and raised here. My father in law is on Paso Robles city council and we as a family are involved in many aspects of the North County community.

Our family chose to send our oldest son to AACA his kindergarten year, he is about to start 7th grade there! When we first went to a meeting 8 years ago we left and my husband said, "I wish there had been a school like this for me." He struggled to learn in traditional school settings and I could tell our kids would too. It turns out my kids are dyslexic. They struggle to learn in a traditional classroom. I just asked my son, who is sitting next to me, "How are you smart?" This is what he said, "I am a strong leader, imaginative, caring friend, science explorer, a good citizen, oh and I really like to act so I think that's soul smart". AACA stretches students in all areas, heart, mind, body, soul. My middle school student has amazing confidence among his peers and on stage. He also is confident to ask for help in the areas he struggles with, with no shame or pressure. I can also say this kid can write a complete 5 paragraph essay, do pre-algebra (I learned that in high school!) and actually LOVES school. For a student who would be put in "special ed" at a traditional school, I think that's pretty awesome.

I also have had the privilege to be a team manager for a program called Destination Imagination for the last 5 years. This a global competitive 'steam' program. The students have to make a skit and sets, costumes, and a science element and then they compete in different areas, all on their own, no adult help. They start at the local level, then if they qualify they move to state level and then the top three teams go to Globals, competing with 31 countries. My team of AACA students has gone to Globals twice! I believe the philosophy of the school has fostered my team's imaginative spirit in such a way that they were able to compete at a global level! Also the theater program AACA offers has given my team amazing acting instruction and the confidence to be in front of a crowd.

Both of my kids have thrived under the amazing teaching staff that AACA has grown. They are a hands on and involved staff. I feel that each teacher and staff member seems to know each student under their care. They are trained well and they are loved by the community of parents.

The only thing that is holding AACA back from its full potential is our location. Having a home and facility of our own will only serve to improve and implement the school's philosophy.

As a parent and community member I want what is best for our whole community. In the whole

North County community there are amazing public schools in each city, great homeschool charter school options, and some great private school options. AACA is the only charter school in our area to offer all day in person instruction, so that students can get a small private type education for no cost. This can only help our lower income families who desire this style of learning for their particular student.

I ask that you strongly consider our school to be a part of the county school district. Our students are thriving in our school and deserve to have their education continue in the North County.

Thank you for all you do for young people and families in our community.

Sincerely,

Shiloh Hamon

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Hi, my name is Ashley and I am a mom of 2 school age kiddos. When my daughter was entering kindergarten, I attended the kinder round up at Paso Robles High School and was able to hear from each principle of the elementary schools. I really enjoyed listening to each principle and about each school however I really wanted to find a K-8 option. When I was invited to attend AACA and tour the school, one thing that really stood out was the class size, teachers and staff. It felt like a family and community rather just a classroom. Mr. Smith and Mrs. Brabenec were so amazing and I felt good about my daughter being in an all day kinder class. I love the way they work together and each teach with compassion and empathy yet gave so much structure and attention to the kids.

One thing that stood out to me was that they are an all inclusive school, there is no special ed day classes. They find ways to teach each student in a way that student can thrive. It teaches all the children compassion, empathy and understanding towards students with special needs. When my daughter came home and talked to me about her brain and neurons in kindergarten, I knew we choose the right school. When I saw my daughter help give a older student with special needs help and become friends with her, that was just another reason confirming why this school is amazing. They teach traits, habits and how to be the best version of themselves!

This will be our 5th year attending. My daughter is now entering 4th grade and my son into 2nd grade. Each year, I find myself loving each grade, and each teacher. When the school closed due to COVID in March, the school did an amazing job with distance learning! We missed the teachers and they defiantly missed their classmates but to see how much time, effort and work the teachers put in with the school closed for 2 weeks, all I can say is WOW!!

This school deserves a new site! The site they are currently in doesn't allow much growth. They do not have a cafeteria, library, playground, teachers/staff break room. A new site will allow this school to grow, allow our community to grow. They deserve a permanent home.

Sincerely,

Ashley Dritsas

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

We are writing to show our support for the Charter Petition Approval of Almond Acres Charter Academy (ACA) by the SLO County Board of Education. However, we would also like to express why this decision is near and dear to us.

A primary reason for consideration is that this school was started by Paso Robles North County families. Aside from that detail, the fundamental reasons for our opinion are more personal. It is very evident these days that simply providing an education for children is not sufficient. Many of us parents want better – and that’s why we love ACA. This school has a wonderful family of dedicated administrators, staff & teachers that feel the same way. For us personally, we’ve seen tremendous advancement in our daughter Shelby from K-2. With weekly programs such as practicing the “Habit of the Week” and a daily “Shared Start”, we’ve seen a naturally shy girl turned into a brave little citizen. Those skills were also put to the test this last March. But because the school is so proactive (including the use of technology daily), distance learning programs could be implemented within a week of the shutdown; and it proved just how successfully equipped she was to deal with all the changes.

The mission to educating the whole child (heart, mind, body, soul) is, by far, one of the most unique & successful education approaches. It affirms their individual strengths & weakness and stretches each child to be the best version of themselves. It truly is about "Growing Great Kids", and even better - "Growing Great Parents". Yes, Mr. B has even provided meetings to help us! If practiced beyond the classroom by supportive families, these values can only make a school, business, and community stronger. That's what also makes ACA so unique, so special!

So please consider ‘doing the next right thing’ by granting ACA’s Charter approval request which will allow greater flexibility on a curriculum that best suites the needs of our children and families.

Sincerely,

Michael & Angela Partridge

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

This is a great school for our community. It is an excellent program!

Sincerely,

Allison Mankey

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

I write this letter to explain the great value I feel of having Almond Acres move to Paso Robles. My family is in process of moving from Redding, California. Redding has quite a few charter school opportunities, for families choosing that style of education for their children. My son had a wonderful experience when he attended a charter school, one which surpassed our expectations of a quality and caring school. I was worried when my family decided to move, that my son would not have the same charter school options in Paso Robles. So I was quite pleased to discover that Almond Acres existed in San Miguel, and that it could possibly move to Paso Robles. I was further pleased to learn that Almond Acres shares the same philosophy and structure of learning as my son's previous school, and it has been a joy to meet some of the school staff and fellow parents. We have been looking forward to my son possibly being able to attend Almond Acres, and are waiting in earnest to hear if the opportunity will pan out in Paso Robles. To hear that Almond Acres may not have the opportunity to move to Paso, and bring something to the town that I feel is greatly needed, is disheartening. I know I can speak for many current and potential future parents of Almond Acres, when I say how important Almond Acres is for Paso Robles, and how it can provide a unique and rich opportunity for many families in seek of this specific style of education. Having Almond Acres in Paso Robles, with a quality facility that the students deserve, would fill a huge educational void for the Paso Robles area.

Sincerely,

Emily Foster

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Hello. My name is Erin Westmoreland and I want to explain to you why our family is so passionate about the Almond Acres Charter Academy school and why it should be in Paso Robles.

We started going to this school when my oldest was in Kindergarten. We have been at the school for six years and now have two at the school.

We love AACA because as Cal Poly graduates, my husband and I see the unique benefits of "Learn By Doing" and AACA excels at project based learning! I love how their lessons all tie together to an essential question and they get many opportunities to explore the answer to that question. It is not only teaching them the things they need to learn, but it is doing it in a fun and memorable way. Whatever we decided to do with our kids, we wanted to make sure that they would always have a love for learning. So far I have a child going into 6th grade and another one going into 4th and there hasn't been a day that they haven't wanted to go to school. How awesome is that! It is all because of the school being able to create a learning atmosphere that doesn't make learning feel like a chore.

I think it is important to make AACA's home in Paso Robles because the majority of our students live here. We believe in this school's philosophy so much that we drive our kids to a whole other town to be a part of this wonderful program. It would be great to not have to drive so far daily and also really open up the door for more students to participate in this unique learning environment. Not only would it be closer to most of us, but we just can't exist on our current campus any more. There are many factors that make our current location unsustainable for our school, but even more than that, a new location can give things to our children that they have been going without for years! Things such as a playground structure, a library, a gym, and cafeteria are things that you take for granted if you have access to them. For us, we get very limited access to these resources AND WE STILL CHOOSE TO SEND OUR CHILDREN TO THIS WONDERFUL PROGRAM. Imagine how much better the school can be with these things within their reach all the time!

The Paso Robles community would really benefit from having this school local as another way to reach our kids. This school really focuses on teaching the whole child and they really teach to each kids' strengths. When that can't be accommodated in the Paso Robles school district, AACA would be there to give parents another choice for their struggling student who just needs to learn in a new way. Sometimes Paso just can't make those changes like the small school community of AACA can. Don't let this gem of a school disappear because the Paso Robles School District couldn't say yes because of the financial trouble they are in. We came to AACA

looking for something Paso couldn't offer our family and we deserve the chance to make it the best we can. My kids deserve that!

Sincerely,

Erin Westmoreland

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

I am an educator (retired, though always a teacher at heart!), and grandparent to two precious treasures at AACA. As well, I am certified with my Golden Retriever as a Pet Therapy Team (10 years) with Alliance of Therapy Dogs (ATD). I volunteer throughout the community, and test/certify ATD pet therapy teams on the central coast.

Both of my grandchildren have attended AACA since kindergarten, Kaile'a will be entering 7th grade in the 2020/21 school year, Jack is beginning 3rd grade. I can say wholeheartedly that AACA has provided an incredible learning environment for my grandtreasures ~ not only academically, but in character as well, creating well-educated, responsible, respectful, caring citizens in our community.

Kai and Jack are both thriving at AACA where each one is taught and nurtured according to his/her unique learning style. There is a sense of family and community between staff and families, all working together to provide the very best for students. Whether in the classroom, recreation, team sports, the arts (plays, artwork, maker's fair), or in reaching out to our community and giving back, Almond Acres has the unique ability to create a positive teaching and learning environment for all.

For the past 7 years I have had the privilege of volunteering at AACA in the classroom. For 2 years, I had the joy of being on support staff as a Pet Therapy Team. Two days a week, Chester and I would visit each classroom, teaching on The Habit of Mind (positive character qualities, ie: trustworthiness, kindness, self-control, respect). This provided a unique learning opportunity for students, and JOY in learning. Students would listen attentively to "Chester", journal, and apply the Chester stories "tails" to their lives. From many students I would hear, "Chester days are my favorite days of the week!" As well, I would continually hear from parents how a student would connect Chester's story to his/her own life, and make application. This took hands-on learning to a whole new level for students! In addition, each year in 1st grade, I would coordinate with teachers to create a Chester Book. Students would write a story about an imagined adventure with Chester, have his/her own photo with Chester, and become published authors, each one receiving his/her own book filled with Chester Adventures.

I share this pet therapy example to show how innovative the AACA administration and staff are in their approach to teaching/learning. Upon seeing the positive effect Chester had on campus, the administration and I worked together to pioneer a program that would not only teach positive character qualities and be fun for students, but would enhance language arts skills as well. The heart of the school is to teach the whole child, Heart, Body, Mind, Soul; desiring to create respectful and trustworthy citizens who love learning and have a respect for one another. I see

the school constantly growing and creating in their approach to teaching. Covid 19 is a prime example ~ admin/ teachers did not miss a beat in stepping up to the plate in staying connected to students and creating new strategies in teaching. They hit it out of the ballpark!

I cannot begin to express how thankful I am for AACCA, the administration, the teachers, and the families. My grandchildren are thriving in this school. They are known and loved, they are growing and learning not only academically but in character. Both are vital.

AACCA provides a unique learning environment in our community, providing what is needed for our young citizens. It is my privilege and joy to continue to volunteer and be apart of educating your hearts and minds through AACCA.

Thank you for your consideration. Having AACCA in our Paso Robles community is vital to our youth.

Sincerely,

Diane Rima

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

We are writing to you in advance of the San Luis Obispo County of Education (SLOCOE) meeting on August 6, 2020 because we would like to share with you why we believe it's critical that Almond Acres Charter Academy (AACA) be chartered in Paso Robles.

We believe that it's important to have choices in where and how your child is educated. Not every student thrives in typical classrooms. We have one child promoting from Lewis Middle School to Paso Robles High School this fall and one child at Almond Acres Charter Academy (AACA). Our youngest son has attended AACA for almost three years. This is because our children each have separate, unique educational needs.

Our youngest son at AACA needs an emphasis on social/emotional learning. AACA strongly emphasizes this learning from the top down. To share a personal example, when our son was struggling to control his emotions and impulses, we met with the administration to create a plan for his success. Right away we learned was that he could take a break by flashing ANY staff member the "fist of five". What does that mean? He can quickly and unobtrusively flash his emotional level on a scale of 1-5 over his heart and that will communicate to EVERY staff member that he needs a break because they are all trained in "fist of five" from the Principal to the Bus Driver! Our son has learned so much about his personal learning style and what makes him a unique learner and he can communicate that to EVERYONE at AACA because every year every student creates their kite; a visual representation of their individual strengths and weaknesses in heart, mind, body, and soul.

In short, AACA actively engages each child in their own learning process. AACA imbues a love of learning in their students. They are not just being taught how to succeed in the classroom but how to succeed in life and as members of their community.

It is important to us that we have choices in the district in which we, and the majority of the families at AACA, reside. AACA was started by Paso Robles residents and should be housed in Paso Robles.

Sincerely,

Sean and Liz Tashma

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Good day! My name is Chuck Sawyer and I have been, and still am, a resident of Paso Robles for the last 32 years. My children attended public schools here and have since moved on in their lives. The education they received was good at the time they attended public schools, but I wish there had been an option that the Almond Acres Charter Academy provides today. I have known Bob Bourgault for most of the time I have lived in the area. His teaching program is excellent and Bob and his staff care deeply for the students they teach. As a member of the Paso Robles Optimist Club, I had the pleasure of installing a Junior Optimist Club within the schools activities that helped promote leadership and a sense of community involvement. From what I have seen, the students at AACA enjoy their time at school and have excelled with their grades and learning capabilities. The program they use incorporates learning based on personal strengths which they do not get in the public schools at this time. Because the school is smaller, and the class size is manageable, the teachers are able to assist students more readily and care to see their students become all they can be. I think the new location will be a major benefit to the community of Paso Robles by reducing the commute time to San Miguel and allow for more access to a greater number of students who seek a different type of learning. The shorter distance will also allow our Optimist Club members to spend more time working with the students on a regular basis. Bob Bourgault cares deeply for his students, the education they receive, and the families who benefit from this teaching philosophy. He has created an alternative school that benefits the community in more ways than were thought possible. I sincerely hope you consider and approve their request to move to this location in Paso Robles. Myself and the Optimist Club look forward to assisting in any way we can. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Charles S. Sawyer

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My name is Noemi Bayer. I have one son and he has been attending AACA since Kinder and is now entering 6th grade. We love Almond acres for so many reasons. The supportive school community that is offered here is so great. Each person is a part of our big extended family. My son knows that he has trusted adults he can go and talk to if he is struggling or in need of advice. The characteristics of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness and caring are fostered into students and those are things I can crossover into home life as well. We use them daily! I am grateful for Almond's Acres approach in recognizing that each child is unique and may have a differently learning style. I think this has helped my son be successful as there are certainly subjects he tends to struggle with that he has been given individual tools to overcome those struggles.

I would love for Almond Acres to have it's own site so that our students can become students who can reach their full potential. Right now we are running out of space and sharing space with another school,who has there own successes/goals to meet, can be a bit challenging.

Particularly, having our own athletic spaces will be beneficial to our growing athletic programs which I know if a highlight for my own son. Having a space to call our own that we can really put our own stamp on and that matches our school philosophy is something I look forward to.

Sincerely,

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

As a long time member of the Optimist Club of Paso Robles, I have witnessed what a wonderful job AACA does in educating our youth. I believe they teach a program that is more suited to each individual child and brings them to their full potential of learning and becoming an extra ordinary person. This school needs to be more centrally located to save travel time for the students, teachers and parents.

Sincerely,

Linda G Stermer

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Hi I am Krystle Von Dollen mother of a first grader that is starting with AACCA this year. Where we live our school is very small meaning grade levels are combined k&1; 1&2, 3&4... my son has ADHA and having the teachers attention split between different class lessons was very difficult on him.

We decided to enroll him in AACCA because of the low class size and that there are no combined classes. We are looking forward to see our son blossom in a supportive school environment.

The new site will be important to me once my son is in high school and my daughter is still in elementary, so I can get to both schools timely.

Sincerely,

Krystle Von Dollen

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Hello there my name is Kerby and my eldest will be in first grade this year. He had the pleasure of starting Kindergarten in Mr. Smiths class and excelled very quickly. We have never been an early to rise kind of family but within a week he was waking up in his own thrilled for the day to come. Being fairly new to the area when I asked around about schools there was an overwhelming response for AACCA. I truly wanted an environment that would work with and around his energetic nature and constant curiosities. I was not let down in any way by the educators at AACCA. The current campus lacks any room for growth or proper heating and cooling. Regardless of the unimpressive campus we still chose AACCA for its academic rewards and personal care. Only draw back was the miles and wear and tear on my car. We would be thrilled to have the new school here in Paso. I have 2 younger children who are bursting to join their brother at AACCA!! Please allow this charter to move to their very deserved new facility!!

Sincerely,

Kerby

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Hello! We are Laura and Christopher Laura Giese, our two children attend AACA. We have been part of the AACA community for the past 5 years. AACA has been an incredible place for our two kids to experience their elementary school years. We choose this school for our family for the values it represents and we so clearly saw in the children who attended the school. They not only provide an excellent education, but help us raise kind, responsible and civic minded kids. There is also an understanding that each child learns in unique ways and the teachers, staff and administration adapt to these learning styles. I'm still amazing at how well my children's teachers 'get' my kids and reach them in creative ways. This school would be an incredible addition to the Paso Robles community and school district. We live and work in Paso Robles and want to see our school represented here as well.

Sincerely,

Laura Giese

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Hello everyone, my name is Jennie Marley. My husband and I moved to Paso Robles February of 2016. It was a sudden move, so finding a school for our kids was just simply putting them in the closet one to our home. We thought we would finish out the year and go from there. Our older two boys thrived at Bauer speck. I was so happy to have a magnet school of the arts since that was what I grew up with. While they were thriving, we quickly realized this school was not working for our youngest daughter (1st grade at the time).

All the other schools were at capacity we were told. We trudged through the rest of the year, hoping the next year would be different.

Well, the next year It was not. It actually got much worse. The social setting for her was awkward and uncomfortable. She had no nook to fit in, and was constantly told she would be fine because she's just 'so go with the flow'. We even had one teacher suggest she not have a parent teacher conference because she was just fine. She was not just fine. She didn't have the right fit of faculty or students around her and there were so many kids in her class she was simply left behind. Doing fine as they constantly told us.

Now, as a parent, hearing your child Is doing just fine in school can be great. I don't know about you, but I would rather hear my child

Is thriving in a school setting. Academically, socially, emotionally, ALL OF IT.

We quickly searched for a change of school and that is when we stumbled upon Almond Acres. Our biggest drawback was the distance to San Miguel but we went to a meet the teachers picnic to check it out and we IMMEDIATELY knew this was where she belonged. Regardless of the drive, we were ready to take her as far as Slo at this point.

We were welcomed with open arms that evening, showed around, met everyone. It instantly felt like home. When we came home that evening Zohe was beaming. It truly brought tears to her father and my eyes to see her so excited. We enrolled her that next day.

AACA has an amazing staff. So do many other schools, but this staff was built for EVERY type of child. It's not a one teacher fits all mold. You could describe it as a perfect cocktail of the heart, the mind, the body and the soul, and every teacher, staff member, the lunch lady, the BUS driver, has a hand in crafting it's perfect result. You simply cannot get this ratio of students to faculty in a traditional public school.

I am writing this today as a parent who had no clue what was in store for school when we moved here. We were lost in choosing from over 5 different schools elementary schools. Had this charter been in our district we could have saved zohe the almost 2 years of emotional distress. She could have been THRIVING in a time where so much was changing for her, instead of just being fine.

I should also add, we've enrolled her older brothers (6th/7th) this year because when distance learning happened they were immediately lost in the dust at their schools. I didn't even hear a peep from anyone at Flamson. Radden had and amazing teacher for 5th thank goodness. Katy

Cox

Let me tell you AACA was ON IT! The most amazing experience a family could have with online school and if you saw our parent survey taken after the end of the year you cannot deny this. Paso Robles is growing by the day, people from down south and people from Up north who are used to fighting through a lottery system to get there child into a school like AACA. You have a chance to bring this to Paso Robles. You have a chance to help so many more children who are like Zohe and so many of her other classmates. This is your opportunity to make Paso's district stronger than ever. I implore you to allow this move. You will be doing a great injustice to your town you love so much if not. We are Paso strong after all. Make our youth strong in their hearts, their minds, their bodies and their souls. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Marley

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

We chose AACA two years ago for our granddaughter because of the focus and format of their educational program. Teaching the 'whole' student is something that seems to have been left out of schools for a very long time now. Not only are our AACA kids terrific students, they are terrific people. They provide a learning atmosphere that our child has blossomed in. The attention they pay to the individual learning styles of each child gives every child the opportunity to do their absolute best.

In addition, the support and resources they provide to the parents is unmatched in my opinion. Last year, we expressed concern about our daughter having difficulty with reading - - something very new for her. Within 36 hours the team at the school contacted me and said 'hey, we think we found something that will work' . . . and it did! The minute I voiced concern, they were on it!

I believe that by having the school located in Paso Robles, many more children in the county will have the ability to attend AACA. It will be a much more convenient location for parents. I am very excited to see where this move will take our school!

Sincerely,

Julia Soto

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My children have attended AACA for all school-hood. I have two currently attending, going into 5th and into 3rd, and my other two are aiming to follow suit. I was told that Almond Acres doesn't merely teach the "class", but they single in on each and every student. I was told about the high standards and morals that this Charter holds to and instills in these vulnerable minds. I was ecstatic! I can teach my children the way I want to at home and have it reinforced as they head to school each day. What a relief as a mother!

I love that my daughter, who drags her feet upon waking up in the morning ALWAYS comes home having had a wonderful experience at school. I love that my son, who has had a little difficulty making friends, can always find something to do and he always has a wonderful teacher who can keep an eye on him while I cannot-someone who can understand him.

Although I live a few minutes from their current location, and it will be a big change for us to commute to Paso Robles, I will gladly make that change because I know my children will be in good hands daily. Also, I know that this move will help Almonds Acres Charter Academy grow and allow more students and their families will have this wonderful opportunity.

Sincerely,

Ivy Carpenter

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

AACA is the first school I've seen that proactively teaches to the learning style of the child. My family and our children enjoyed 3 amazing years with AACA.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Ulibarri

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

AACA gives my children a way to learn that is outside of normal teachings. By teaching the kids through heart, mind, body, and soul, they are able to grasp teachings through how they learn best and not to how the general population are expected to learn. This has helped both kids enjoy learning and has positioned my teenage son to be a successful and valuable citizen within high school at Mission College Prep.

Sincerely,

Tim Bojorquez

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

I have been a parent at AACA since 2012. Both of my children have been cared for and nurtured across these years. Each of my children have their own unique needs and strengths. The staff has always worked to meet their needs in diverse ways and I have always felt connected to what work is being done to foster my children. They are developing as learners and leaders who care for the world around them.

Two years ago I chose to join the administrative staff and am proud of the work AACA is doing to support students in all areas through our Multi-tiered Systems of Support. Our structure allows us to respond quickly to the needs of our students and adapt our programming when necessary. Through the upheaval of COVID-19, AACA was able to offer a program that supported both our students and staff while maintaining our philosophy. I am very proud to share across the county the work that AACA is doing to serve students.

Sincerely,

Eileen Higgins

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

We will be a great school addition to our community in Paso Robles. Also AACFA teaches values to students that will help the community. Being in Paso will give others the opportunity to join AACFA and learn about Heart, Mind, Body, & Soul.--stephaniechoa11found@gmail.com

Sincerely,

Stephanie Ochoa

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

AACA is important to me because it's my second family here in San Miguel. I love growing great kids and teaching them the fundamentals for high school. Please support AACA and all the wonderful families that attend and cherish it.

Sincerely,

Francisco Campoverde

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Hello, My name is Dolly Severy. My husband Anthony and I have two children that attend Almond Acres Charter Academy. Our son, Ethan, has been attending since his Kindergarten year in 2014. Our daughter Lillian started attending her Kindergarten year in 2018. We chose AACCA as our school of choice because we felt that the school philosophy fit with our own family values. Part of the reason we have stayed with AACCA is not only the amazing Teachers, Staff and Administrators but, the sense of family. Both my children have thrived not only academically but, as well rounded respectful children. I believe a lot of this is due to AACCA's Growing Great Kids philosophy. This very welcoming school deserves its own campus to call home. A campus that would reflect the model of valuable teaching for our children. Where the students can not only stretch their bodies but, their minds, hearts and souls. We ourselves live in San Miguel and without a doubt continue to attend Almond Acres Charter Academy once the campus is relocated to Paso Robles. The Paso Robles campus would be a wonderful addition to Paso Robles and its surrounding communities. Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,

Dolly Severy

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

We have a child that learns differently than our other. AACA is a project based learning school and trailers to ALL types of learning. This school helped our son actually like to learn! And our daughter is doing amazing too!

Sincerely,

Jessica Holden

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Hello my name is Eve Larson speaking on behalf of my husband and children as well as my self. We have been at aaca for over 5 years. We chose aaca after touring the school ... We received such a warm welcome and felt comfortable and informed right away. Both of our children have thrived there over the years. Academically, they are both excelling, and are great readers who feel challenged and read well above grade expectations. Emotionally, they feel safe and trust the staff, as they have come along side them when in need offering personalized support. The schools philosophy line up with our morals at home. This provides consistent behaviour expectations. Also, our children are naturally shy, yet when at school they stretch themselves to overcome this with confidence and comfort. They have been seen on stage in front of the whole school speaking at shared start, performing in the talent show, and going on stage during a bird assembly. We are proud that our youngest has had leadership roles such as class representative. Having a new site is important to us as we just moved from san miguel to paso robles and the new school would be amazing to learn in. The teachers are exceptional and our kids love going to school and miss them when not in school. Please consider aaca a wonderful addition to paso robles. Thanks so much, sincerely the Larsons

Sincerely,

Eve Larson

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My name is Mallory Scribner. I am a mother of 4 children, two of whom are students at AACA. My husband and I moved our family to Paso Robles in the beginning of the school year of 2018/2019. My eldest child was in kindergatren and our 2nd born who was 4 at the time had been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder about a year before. When we were planning our move I began researching schools in the Paso Robles area and was dissapointed with the feedback I was seeing from parents online about performance and outcomes at PRJUSD schools. Some were better than others however, the school in our neighborhood wasn't producing great student outcomes according to state testing scores etc. In addition to that I had heard from several mothers of special needs children in the district whos' needs were not being adequately met.

My husband and I also have a strong focus on many values that aren't typically reinforced at traditional public schools and were seeking something different. I found AACA by doing a search for Charter schools in the area and was pleasantly surprised to find their values, educational goals, and focuses closely aligned with ours. We took a tour and were so impressed by the students and staff we knew we had found a home for our children there.

My eldest child is thriving academically and also in character as AACA has such a strong focus on character building in young people. My youner child with special needs has mild delays with no intellectual impairment and is actually quite bright. His teacher challenges him to do HIS level and work at HIS pace, even going as far as giving him (a kindergartner) extra research projects for fun. He has his social needs met and gets the suport and attention he needs to succeed from the Support Services staff. We've been beyond pleased with how he's done. He had such a great Kindergarten year my husband and I were honestly shocked at how well he was able to manage his behaviors to function wonderfully in a nuerotypical classroom. I belive this is a result of amazing teachers and staff who are taking the time and giving him the attention he needed. Moving the school site would mean we wouldn't have to spend our already tight monthly budget on bus fees or gas money. San Miguel is quite far from the majority of the families of AACA and it is a struggle for almost everyone. Moving the school inside the city limits would be an enourmous burden removed from the shoulders of the families and staff.

I know this school is giving my children the academic challenges they need and desire while at the same time encouraging behaviors and values that they will carry on into adulthood, making them better students, friends, employees, entrepreneurs, spouses, parents and more. AACA is growing great kids and I fully support their mission!

Sincerely,

Mallory Scribner

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My name is Kayla the mother of Ava Mattos! My daughter will be starting kindergarten this year and it's very important to my husband and I that we have an alternative choice for school for our children. The dynamics and way they go about things to teach our children is amazing, also uniforms are a plus for us! We really need this new site so we can expand our school and keep this school open for my daughter, son and anyone else who wants an alternative to learning other than our public schools offer. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Kayla Mattos

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

We recently moved to North County. I have been diligently researching the schools in the area. Almond Acres mission for their students matches with what I feel my children need from their educational institution.

Sincerely,

Ava Beck

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My name is Jennifer Gutierrez and my sons have been attending Aaca since 2015 and 2019. We chose to attend Aaca because our neighborhood school was not a good fit for my older son. He has specific needs and challenges that Aaca philosophy strengthens and builds his confidence and creates a positive learning environment for him. The staff are amazing. The teachers and support services are easily accessible. They are willing to communicate with me or my sons for any issues big or small. This makes a huge difference on how my kids feel about school. This inclusion makes them feel like an important part of our community. The new school site is important to us because it would be easier to access. My kids love their teachers, school and the philosophy. We would love for our school to become a San Luis Obispo county charter. Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Gutierrez

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Thank you for taking the time to discuss the re-location of AACCA into the Paso Robles community. This school is near and dear to our hearts. This will be our daughters 3rd year at the school (going into 2nd grade) and we have 2 younger daughters that are eagerly awaiting their turn to start attending. Our middle daughter will be starting Kindergarten this year. I see our daughter thriving at school under the care and attention she receives from her teacher while pushing her every day to stretch herself under the guidance of Almond Acres' core values. We have been following AACCA's journey since their very first year (8 years ago) and have attended many events there and supported them before we had children old enough to enroll. We have chosen to put our daughters in Almond Acres because this school best follows the structure that we teach our children at home, emphasizing our strengths in the different areas of heart, mind, body and soul. Every child learns differently, we can see this among our 3 children. AACCA does an excellent job of recognizing these differences in each child and helping them grow in their strengths while also stretching the areas in which they struggle. Another area that the school emphasizes is terrific citizenship and each child is held to this high standard of citizenship. This citizenship standard encompasses the following traits: Trustworthy, Responsible, Respectful, Fair, and Caring. As a parent it can be hard to let go and release your child into the school system. Knowing that we were able to make the choice to send our daughters to Almond Acres has been a huge blessing to our family by knowing that their school standards of citizenship were going to be the same ones that we hold dear at home. Every parent should have this choice. For us, the decision to attend AACCA also meant committing to a 45 minute one-way drive each day until the school could find an adequate location closer to Paso Robles. Allowing AACCA to move into the Paso Robles school district would be ideal for many other families, not just our own. The majority of families attending AACCA reside in the Paso Robles area. In fact, AACCA was started by Paso Robles residents. One of the ways we see Paso Robles benefiting from AACCA's location being in the Paso Robles community is by keeping business within the city limits including gas, restaurants, post office, groceries, and general shopping. Allowing AACCA into the PRJUSD school district will continue to entice families to move to the area and will open up opportunities for growth. We believe this will be a great union between schools and will only continue to strengthen the children in our community by opening up their options and allowing them opportunity for growing towards a greater future. After all, the children are where our future lies and their education should continue to be a top priority and we should provide every option to allow each child to succeed in a way best suited to their learning style.

Sincerely,

Shannon Bourgault

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My name is Melinda Ribnek and my children have been attending Almond Acres for two and a half years. This year we will have five children in the school!

Having seven children total constantly makes me very aware just how different and unique each child is, having their own abilities and their own needs. One child I would like to briefly tell you about is my fourth grader, Raphael. Raphael struggled for years in a traditional school. He is highly intelligent but experienced strong social anxieties that really inhibited school. For example he refused to eat at school, even at lunch, and would have minor anxiety attacks (such as involuntarily sweating) during group activities. We had an IEP done but none of the programs really fit his needs, quite simply because he didn't need to be in a specialized classroom but he did need less invasive, but necessary, adaptations to help him thrive. AACA provides such individualized attention and approaches but also keeping the children together in a classroom, where the children all learn what it is like to be different and work with those different than you. Their ability to meet his individual needs and in a diverse classroom really helped him. I can tell you Raphael feels secure, gets individualized attention when he needs, and at the same truly feels part of his school family. He learns how his strengths and weaknesses and concretely works on improving areas such as his social skills. The entire staff helps and supports him, even in simple ways like ensuring he looks in their eyes to say good morning. AACA has been absolutely life changing for Raphael. He enjoys school and has grown so much.

I want to briefly say that while Raphael has been the child needing the most specialized treatment, my other three children at the school Edward, Alexander, and Gabriel have all shown remarkable improvement since being at AACA. In particular they've become leaders in ways they weren't able to find traditionally. Edward is on the leadership team as he is the oldest. But each of them are constantly discussing their kite colors and very specific areas they can shine and accomplish things. The habits of mind have born great fruit for them and the more they've accomplished using these skills, the more confidence I've seen in them. When distance learning began, all of the children were able to do their work with little or no oversight from me. The older ones helped the younger ones, and I consistently heard them echoing Mr. B's advice and habits. It really made me smile every time and I'm just so proud of both the school and them. I can assure you, I do not say this vaguely or superficially, I've seen each one of my four children noticeably grow in concrete ways socially, emotionally and intellectually due to the individualized and holistic approach to learning AACA offers. And I'm so grateful.

Thank you for your time.

Melinda Ribnek

Sincerely,

Melinda Ribnek

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Hi, my name is Lesley Thompquist and this will be my third year teaching at AACA. I am a teacher at Almond Acres because I love the positive attitude, depth of understanding, and dedication to improving demonstrated by our community of students, staff, family, and teachers. At the core of AACA is trying to help each and every student make constant progress and be their best selves. We strive to teach by example and keep learning so we can make constant progress and be our best selves.

The focus on SEL (Social/Emotional Learning) and SPBL (Service and Project Based Learning) are two of the unique advantages at AACA. Our approach to SEL is of benefit to our students and community, and especially positive for students who find classroom behavior expectations challenging. Our SPBL units provide opportunity for depth of understanding and demonstrate the value of what we are learning. Our SEL and SPBL also connect our students to our wider community, locally and globally. AACA students have raised money, donated supplies, and volunteered at many local and some global organizations including charity:water, international schools, ECHO, and local retirement homes.

Everyone is looking forward to having a real campus. Having a site that is ours would be wonderful because it would make us feel more secure and we could put down solid roots. Having our own facilities would simplify a lot. Being in Paso Robles would also shorten the transit for most of our students and staff.

Sincerely,

Lesley Thompquist

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Hi, my name is Summer Colegrove, I will be entering 8th grade this school year. For the past 8 years that I have attended Almond Acres Charter Academy, I know that there is not another school like ours, we are unique and should have the opportunity to expand and reach our full potential.

Throughout my years at Almond Acres I have taken advantage of many opportunities, including sports, theater, leadership, art, music and architecture. I believe Almond Acres excels when it comes to providing unique opportunities for each and every student. I also believe that there is a way Almond Acres can grow to become something even more extraordinary.

Almond Acres is currently located in San Miguel, about fifteen minutes from downtown Paso Robles. Our current school is situated behind a public school so in order to reach our campus we must walk the halls of another school. We also must share most of the amenities on campus. When I think about all the things we have accomplished with the little run down space that we have I am proud, but imagine what we could be with a facility of our own, designed for us, something that is unique, just like Almond Acres Charter Academy.

Why paso? Although throughout the years AACA has served many families from San Miguel most of the students are from Paso Robles. Most families including mine have to commute to San Miguel for school but back to Paso Robles for all the activities we do after school like PRYAF, swim team, soccer and youth group. The families of Paso Robles deserve the opportunity to have the choice to send their kids to a free charter school, where not only will they learn but they will grow in the town they live in. Almond Acres will only add to the great town that Paso Robles already is, it will add a safe, welcoming environment, and a school that grows great kids.

I hope that the people of San Luis Obispo county have the opportunity to see Almond Acres relocated, grow, and reach its full potential. Go Kites!

Sincerely,

Summer

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My name is Erin Colegrove and I am a current parent, current staff member and former founding board member. Close to 10 years ago I vividly remember leaving a class at Kennedy Club Fitness in Paso Robles with a friend and in the parking lot she asked where my then almost 4 year old was going to go to kindergarten. I told her "I have no idea, I don't love my options here". Turns out she was in the process of writing a charter petition with a great group of parents and educators and fast forward a few months and I joined the board of the Paso Robles Charter School Project. Why? I attended a small private K-8 school growing up and there were certain elements of my education I desperately wanted for my own children, but private school tuition was not an option for my husband and I. I wanted my children to be known by name and valued by each member of the school staff, I wanted them to feel safe, important and unique. I wanted them to wear uniforms so they didn't have to worry about having the latest and greatest fashion trends and could express themselves in other ways, and I wanted them at a K-8 where they would be able to navigate the preteen and early teen years in a smaller environment where they were already comfortable and known. As a founding board member I was able to be a part of the conversion and ensure we were creating something unique that addressed those issues that were important to me.

It was hard work, it was frustrating, we got shut down, we kept meeting, kept revising, tears were shed but we kept going. San Miguel was not where we planned to land. I had never even been to San Miguel until the day we caravaned over to drop off the BIG binders so they could review the charter. When we walked the vacant part of campus I was pretty horrified. It was just a bunch of dirt and some old portables with rusty ramps, I wondered if we could really pull this off? Who is going to want to come here? Was that really only 7 miles on the freeway, it felt further? Fast forward to July and we had all hands on deck as we transformed our only option into a school. Dads, grandparents, friends on tractors moving dirt building walls to create offices, people scouring Craigslist for furniture...it was an amazing team effort to open those doors in August but when almost 200 kids in uniforms showed up I had tears in my eyes, we did it...but it wasn't pretty, we had done our best to polish up the space but the dust was bad, the fields were half dead, it was HOT with little shade and we had no playground. The amazing thing was that no one seemed to care much, the teachers were amazing, the kids were happy and the parents were thrilled with this new "choice" in north county for education.

Almond Acres has never been much to look at from the outside. From day 1 it has been about what goes on inside those buildings that makes us exceptional. We have never been able to attract families with pretty landscaping, nice playgrounds or fresh paint. We have grown our school because we have an amazing staff of teachers, administrators and support staff that cares for each child and each other. We have never had our own home, or even a staff room,

we have made due with what we have. We do it for the kids and for each other. I am so proud to be a part of the most dedicated and resilient team and hope that we can soon have a space to call home.

My two children have thrived at AACA. My oldest has taken advantage of every opportunity AACA has presented and she has been the lead in the school play, participated in volleyball, basketball, cross country and track and field, joined leadership and spoken in front the school more times than I can count. I know if it was a larger school she would not have these opportunities simply because there are so many more students to compete with for a space on the team, the stage or in the program. She knows every student and staff member at the school by name and I am so grateful for her years at AACA and know she will leave and enter high school with confidence and knowing who she is as a learner and person.

Thank you for taking the time to read my not so brief "Why Paso". I hope that you will see the potential Almond Acres has to continue growing great kids if we just had a space to call home. A space that truly represents us, a space close to home for our families.

Sincerely,

Erin Colegrove

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

We originally chose AACA because, well, why not? We had nothing to lose. If we didn't like the school, we would go to Templeton Elementary. But what AACA provided to our children made the decision to stay SO much easier. A smaller classroom setting, teachers that believe in teaching to the WHOLE student, an atmosphere of acceptance...only three of the many things that make AACA valuable. When your son or daughter isn't creating "true problems" but has trouble sitting still, or being quiet, or "conforming" to the classic classroom setting, you cannot afford to send them to a classroom where the teacher is trying to figure out how to handle 35 students. (Nothing against those teachers--most elementary teachers are wonderful, but the system has made it so their hands are tied.) AACA recognizes these students and helps the teachers realize the pulse of the learning experience must change. These students are letting the teacher know--get these kids out of their seats..change up your teaching style...do something DIFFERENT. AACA provides that environment. Hind site is 20/20? Well, I would have made the same decision for my son and daughter. AACA has allowed them to grow, be the best version of themselves, and has not only taught them conventional education, but to be trustworthy, respectful, responsible, fair, and caring...true citizens of the world.

Sincerely,

Colleen Bojorquez

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

I am a parent of students within the Paso Robles School District (PRHS) as well as a First-Grade teacher at Almond Acres Charter Academy. I am writing to urge you accept AACCA's petition to be chartered in the Paso Robles Joint Unified School District. Almond Acres Charter School provides academic rigor in innovative learning environments while understanding that every child is unique. As a parent and educator, I understand and recognized that one size does not fit all. Almond Acres would give families within the PRJUSD an alternative educational setting for their students.

I will be honest, when I first heard about AACCA I wasn't too sure about it. Then, I walked onto campus. I talked with staff and students. I saw what was happening in the classrooms. Despite the portables and the shared campus, I knew it was the place where I wanted to teach. I was right; I have loved every minute. I strongly believe my time at AACCA has made me a better educator and person. With Service Project Based Learning and a framework designed to educate the whole child AACCA offers students a different way to interact with content and standards. AACCA is not meant to compete with existing local schools (my own children went to their neighborhood schools in Paso), it is meant to be an alternative option to traditional schools within the district.

When a child is struggling in the traditional setting, they should have another option. Families who believe there is a way to educate focusing on the whole child- heart, mind, body, and soul- should have a different option. Families that feel their children should participate in community service projects as part of their education should have a different option. Bringing Almond Acres Charter Academy into the Paso Robles Joint Unified School District will benefit all. It will provide a different option than what is being offered. It will allow for innovated learning and teaching practices to be tried and modeled. It will keep students in the district, and it will make the district better suited to service its diverse population. It's a win-win.

In these times of uncertainty, I understand that it is daunting to make challenging decisions. However, I believe with all my heart that the addition of AACCA to the PRJUSD is beneficial to the district and to the community of Paso Robles.

I thank you for your time and consideration of this petition.

Sincerely,

Wendy Woodard

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Hello! I am Nathaniel Slawson. I currently have two children attending AACA with our oldest child going on to her 6th year there. My wife and I chose AACA because of their educational model being geared to educate the whole child. They do not simply offload information but teach self awareness and character development along with the skills necessary to be successful in our society.

This is tremendously important to us. We want our children to understand that everyone is equal but not everyone is the same. They have strengths that are different from others and AACA supports their learning that this is OK. Our children are benefiting from this rich comprehension and appreciation of reality. They also love their teachers and support staff who are always ready with a full heart and a smile on their face to provide the best educational experience possible. Our children are learning that they are so much more than test scores. Where traditional education may lose some individuals, AACA has succeeded in addressing the specific needs of every child so that they are successful in their journey and that they do not 'fall through the cracks' so to speak.

While the current site is sufficient to meet the basic needs of the school's vision, it limits its ability to continue to grow. A new site would not only better support our vision for the children but it would make our school identity and culture more salient in the community. The new location is also better situated in proximity to the location of most families' homes.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel Slawson

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My name is Thorjia Vaughn. My daughter, Linnea will be entering 5th grade this year at Almond Acres Charter Academy. It will be her first year there. My husband and I were excited to find Almond Acres! We toured the campus and met with the principal there, last February. We were impressed with the "whole child" philosophy and by the small class sizes. We believe that our daughter, who happens to have autism, will thrive in this school environment! Linnea is looking forward to attending school at Almond Acres Charter Academy.

The plan to move to a permanent campus in Paso Robles is important to us because the current school resides in a temporary site on the edge of highway 101. We are concerned about the air quality and noise produced by the highway's proximity to the current campus.

Also, we believe that community is an essential part of the philosophy at Almond Acres and by moving the campus to a more centralized location will better support this value.

Sincerely,

Thorjia Vaughn

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

I have been teaching at Almond Acres Charter Academy for six years and I could not be happier. I love our focus on educating the Whole Child and encouraging the growth of Heart, Mind, Body, and Soul. As a physical educator my hope was to find a position where my job was valued as an integral piece of the education process. I found it in spades here at AACA. From daily recreation focused on the attainment of content standards to a robust athletic program for all grades K-8, Almond Acres knows full well the importance of physical fitness in the growth of our youth. Although I have been sought out for positions closer to home, I have never given them a second thought as I truly believe that what we are doing at AACA is vital for our community. On a more personal note, as a father, I also look forward to the day when my daughter will head off to work with me as a kindergartener. She is only two but already knows many of the habits that we practice at AACA. It is for her and all the other future "Kites" that I strongly encourage you to vote yes on behalf of Almond Acres Charter Academy and their petition to move to Paso Robles.

Sincerely,

Seam Sommerville

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My name is Andrea Compston my daughter Abbica will be attending Almond Acres Charter Academy for the first time this upcoming year. Our daughter is heading into the second grade and had frequently complained of being bored at school and uninterested in what was being taught. My husband and I knew that we would need to do more for our daughter if we wanted her to be successful in school. We moved from the San Miguel School District to the Paso Robles School District earlier this year and my husband and I began looking into other school options that could offer our child a more tailored school experience.

In our search for a new school in Paso Robles we really only had two options: public school that our daughter found underwhelming, or private schools that were too expensive. Several of my co-workers recommended Almond Acres and told me that they really focused on the individual learning needs of each child and tried to identify their child's learning shortfalls in order to better teach them.

Charter schools like Almond Acres fill the gap between public schools that are unable to focus on the needs of children individually and private schools that are unaffordable. Almond Acres is a place for kids who do not learn in the traditional way and need more hands-on instruction. It is crucial for Almond Acres to have their own site in Paso Robles so they can offer their much needed learning style and philosophy to the children who greatly need it.

Sincerely,

Andrea Compston

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My name is Amanda Poore and I have two children (soon to be 2nd and 3rd graders) attending Almond Acres Charter Academy. We started both of our children in kindergarten at AACCA and have been very pleased with their education, social-emotional growth and their overall enjoyment of school.

When it was time for our children to begin elementary education we were planning on sending them to our zoned school in Atascadero. I attended both the welcome meeting at our zoned school and also at AACCA. After attending both meetings, touring the schools, and meeting and hearing the kindergarten teachers present their information I no longer felt our zoned school would provide a comparable experience to AACCA. The philosophy of acknowledging and teaching the whole child: heart, mind, body and soul resonated with our family values. To feel confident that the education of our children would not only be about their academic education but also about developing their character was exactly what we were looking for. In addition, the invitation for parent and family participation and working as a community together was evident from the first meeting with the staff and faculty at AACCA. Parents are immediately welcomed and encouraged to participate in many aspects of the school and our child's education.

After having our children attend Almond Acres for the last 3 years we have developed a supportive community within the school. I volunteer in the classes and have had excellent relationships with all of their teachers. I have been able to address any concerns directly with teachers and staff due to their open communication. My daughter has a severe peanut allergy and I have always felt that she has been provided proper support both for the physical and mental challenges she faces. In kindergarten she started out eating at the same table because she is not reactive if peanuts are in the environment. At some point there was a situation that she no longer felt that it was safe to sit at the table with her classmates. In this situation I felt confident that her teacher and the lunch staff would be respectful and listen to my daughter's concerns. I advised my daughter, a kindergartener, to speak with Ms. Yolonda the next day. The next day she proposed to Ms. Yolonda that she would like to sit at a separate table and she was heard and respected without me having to address the situation. This seemingly simple show of respect eased my daughter's anxiety during lunchtime and showed her that she can work through challenging situations on her own.

I have also seen my children be challenged and supported academically. Each of them is either at or above grade level in all subjects. In the subjects that they are above grade level I have witnessed adaptations being implemented in the classroom to make sure they are being challenged. Smaller groups have been formed for reading and language development. In these groups the kids have been challenged with group discussion and evaluation of setting, character

development, underlying themes, etc. Also, working in the classroom, I have been able to watch the teachers build confidence and work individually with students when they are struggling with a concept.

I am thankful that I had the opportunity to consider something besides our zoned school. Although I feel there are plenty of wonderful schools available in all districts I think that having options is important. Almond Acres Charter Academy has been a great fit for our family. I feel that moving AACA to Paso Robles is an important move for our county and community. Moving to a more accessible location will give more families a choice in their children's education and also provide more diversity for our school. Not only will it open opportunities for future families but also many of our current families already live in Paso Robles.

Almond Acres Charter Academy has provided our children with a great educational base in which they continue to build. It has encouraged not only my children but also myself to build relationships in our community. AACA is focused on helping children and parents build their character and communication with each other. Along with building character and communication Almond Acres encourages our children to use their strengths, interest and passions to better not only themselves but to reach out beyond themselves to help encourage and support others. Almond Acres Charter Academy is an important entity in the community of Paso Robles and San Luis Obispo County as it provides a quality option in education.

Sincerely,

Amanda Poore

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My name is Divy Emmons and I will be attending Almond Acres Charter Academy (ACA) for 8th grade this coming school year. I transferred to ACA four years ago from a private school and I have absolutely no regrets.

I have learned so many valuable lessons that you just can not learn at other Middle Schools. When entering sixth grade, you start learning about the 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens. This book discussed common experiences of teenagers including ones concerning relationships, family, self worth, friends, careers and so much more. Sure, every middle school talks about these things but not every middle school applies the 7 habits to these things. From the first day you are at ACA you learn about the 7 habits and never stop learning about them until you graduate. These habits have helped me through many hard times in middle school and I probably wouldn't have gotten through these times as well as I did if it weren't for the habits. Also, next year our middle school will have four different teachers which will help students get comfortable with this multiple teacher system which is used in highschool. Another thing I love about ACA middle school, is that there are classes like accelerated math (math for more advanced students), drama, art, tech electives and project based learning. Project based learning is exactly what it sounds like. For each unit, the class works on a specific topic and by the end of the unit, we will have created a project that correlates to the topic. Sometimes the project is a whole class project and sometimes it is just in small groups or by yourself. Either way, it allows students to understand more deeply what we are learning.. Last but not least, the teachers at ACA middle school are outstanding. They all have the students' best interest at heart and get to know each and every student as much as they can. They have unique ways of teaching that challenge us and make us better people. They also all help students with struggles and make sure that they fully understand everything that they are teaching. My hope is that after reading this you will understand how ACA has impacted my education. Each person in my class has grown tremendously in academics and in their heart, mind, body, and soul. Almond Acres teaches in a way no other Middle School can teach. Please consider allowing my school to charter in Paso to give other kids this same opportunity.

I intend on going to Paso Robles High School where my dad is a teacher. It is a school with great opportunities and great teachers and something for everyone.

Sincerely,

Divy

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Board Members, I would like to share with you a few of my thoughts about the importance of Almond Acres Charter Academy with you.

1. The leadership there makes a difference in the students lives. When our family was going thru a difficult time 6 years ago, the principal, Bob Borgault, and the teaching staff was sensitive to our situation and gave our grandson a safe place to express his feelings over the death of his younger brother.

2. The teaching staff is caring, competent and considerate, especially to those students who may not fit into the "normal" category.

3. The ability for AACA's smaller school board to adapt to changing situations is a strong point. They don't have to be concerned about how their decisions affect a larger population including high school students.

4. I have been to their current campus many times and although the portable classrooms are well decorated and well loved, they are not a long-term solution for young people. Kids need light and space, something the portables don't offer.

5. The approach of AACA toward teaching the whole student and focusing on the way that each child learns has been invaluable for my grandchildren. Their system of teaching concepts that include all academic disciplines teaches the students the connectivity of learning and knowledge that will serve them well in the real world of adulthood.

In conclusion, AACA offers a unique approach to learning in a setting that isn't dependent on income or ability to pay (as private schools have) that is one of a kind. It would be a shame to lose this fine institution.

Sincerely,

Marjorie Hamon
Grandparent of Two Almond Acres Students

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My name is Chris Bausch. While I am serving my eighth and final year as a Paso Robles Joint Unified School Board Trustee, I am writing today as a private citizen and, perhaps even more importantly, as a next-door neighbor to heartily endorse Almond Acres Charter Academy's quest to become chartered in and move to Paso Robles.

As an American, I believe in the right of all families to determine for themselves the best way to educate their children. In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, it is more crucial than ever to allow as many options as possible for true self determination to occur. By its recent denial of Almond Acres' petition based on discrepancies in the petition but mostly on an unsubstantiated estimate that a "new" charter school would cause irreparable financial harm to Paso Robles Joint Unified School District, the PRJUSD Board has acted against the very citizens it has taken an oath to serve. I believe that all the discrepancies noted by PRJUSD staff in their report dated April 23, 2020 have now been mitigated. It is time for the SLO County Office of Education to take another look.

The PRJUSD Board of Trustees recently voted to reopen schools this fall with Distance Learning as it's only option. As a result, many families are opting to forego Distance Learning and are instead choosing alternative educational strategies that better suit their needs. For example, families are opting for Home Schooling, Educational Pods, private, parochial and yes, charter schools, etc. If the PRJUSD Board's belief is truly that every student will have success, if their vision is actually that every student will be prepared for success in college, career, and community, if their mission is honestly to deliver an exemplary education in a safe environment which empowers students with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in an ever-changing world and if their core values are genuinely Leadership, Integrity, Innovation, Continuous Improvement and No Excuses then there should be no reason for the PRJUSD Board or the SLO County Office of Education to continue to deny Almond Acres Charter Academy's petition to move to Paso Robles. The Board should embrace Almond Acres Charter Academy as an exceptional partner that meets and perhaps even for some families, exceeds PRJUSD's beliefs, vision, mission and core values; not for all but certainly for some.

As a neighbor, I feel the location at 1145 Niblick Road was an excellent choice made by the board of Almond Acres Charter Academy. As a small site, just over three acres, its only drawback is that it won't provide much room for growth. I don't see how it could possibly exceed the 500 ADA estimated in their current petition to occur over the next three years. Since 1989, my wife Julie and I have enjoyed an excellent relationship with the Redeemer Baptist Church that used to inhabit the property that literally abuts our backyard. While I am always pleased to see churches, I believe a school to be an even higher and better use of this particular site.

I look forward to Almond Acres Charter Academy's progress and urge the approval of their petition to become chartered and located in Paso Robles.

Sincerely,

Chris Bausch

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

We partnered with AACCA on many youth theater productions and it was a wonderful experience! We loved having their staff and students at our facility. They were all so polite and nice. I hope that we can be closer to them in the near future!

Sincerely,

Mindy Dierks

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My name is Barbara Partridge. I have two granddaughters (2nd and 5th grade students) who attend Almond Acres. I have been a proponent of Almond Acres since its inception a few years ago. I am even more convinced now than ever that Almond Acres should be an option for more children. The reason is that Almond Acres curriculum, fully incorporates the basics of education and centers on character development. Character development is not foundational for other schools, but in my view it is a necessary building block for building good citizens and future leaders. The children are taught that the whole person is comprised of equal parts of heart, mind, body and soul. Core school subjects are important as well, but building and nurturing the whole person is critical to becoming a well-rounded, successful adult. Both of my granddaughters have incorporated these lessons in their lives and in my view they are young responsible citizens on their way to adulthood. In fact, one of my granddaughters, who was then in 3rd grade, made me a little shopping bag with her original quote, "It only takes an ounce of courage to try." The Almond Acres institutional encouragement of "whole-person" development sets their educational experience apart from their contemporaries in other schools and will be crucial to their success in adulthood.

Moreover, parents, too, are crucial to the success of the school. The parents lead fundraising activities which provide much-needed funding for critical programs and field trips. I have attended many of these fundraising events and have been most impressed with the commitment of parents to the school and its success.

Teachers attend, as well, so that everyone who is involved with the culture of the school participates in ensuring its success.

Sincerely,

Barbara L Partridge

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My name is Amy Baker. I grew up in Paso Robles and attended Winifred Pifer, Flamson, and Paso Robles High School. After college, I worked in Paso Robles schools with pregnant and parenting teens through AmeriCorps, as a high school girls' basketball coach, and as a K-12 substitute teacher.

My dad was a public elementary school teacher for 37 years, 28 of those years in Paso Robles schools, at Winifred Pifer, Georgia Brown, and Pat Butler. My mom substitute taught in Paso Robles public schools for almost 10 years and then taught full time at Saint Rose for 12 years.

I am proud to have grown up in the Paso Robles schools and to have had my parents work in them. I know so many teachers in Paso Robles, both past and present, and believe that there are many talented educators in our small town.

I am one of the founders of AACA, and one of the current administrators as the Program Director. I helped to develop the Charter petition and then have helped to implement the programs since AACA opened in 2012. I have well over 20 years of experience in education and am proud to be a part of this school.

By closely working together, Almond Acres and PRJUSD could provide even more amazing experiences for students in Paso Robles and surrounding areas.

Our mission at AACA is to help students be successful both academically and socially by educating the whole child: heart, mind, body, and soul. At AACA, we use a Formation of Learning Framework and Philosophy in all aspects of our school. This allows us to focus on four key areas in all that we do: disposition, knowledge, reasoning, and creativity. We have chosen programs and curriculum that fit into our framework and philosophy. They also allow us to easily differentiate in order to meet the needs of both accelerated learners, as well as struggling ones.

As an administrator, I have seen the positive impact that this school has made on so many students over the past 8 years. I have also been fortunate enough to have my daughter, Amelia, go through AACA since Kindergarten and she is now entering 5th grade. Her experience at AACA has far exceeded what I could have ever imagined for her.

AACA is small, but mighty. Our faculty is extremely dedicated to all students. They go above and beyond daily to work with students based on their individual needs.

Each year, Amelia has had such positive experiences at school. She has been blessed to have the most wonderful teachers who have helped her to not only grow academically, but socially emotionally as well. All of Amelia's teachers have known exactly who she is as a learner, but more importantly as a person. They have made her feel smart, funny, confident, talented, important, and loved.

Due to the programs that we have chosen and the differentiation in instruction, Amelia has been able to accelerate in all academic areas. She mastered all 1000 High Frequency Words as a second grader, mastered all of her math facts as a third grader, and was reading at an eighth grade level as a fourth grader. And yes, I recognize that Amelia is lucky enough to be a student who would be successful academically in any school. However, she was only able to do the above because her teachers took the time and effort to help challenge her by creating goals, monitoring those goals, and working with her to achieve them.

While as an educator, academics are certainly very important to me, as a parent, the end goal for my daughter is to have good character, to figure out what she is passionate about, to pursue her dreams, and to have a positive impact on others.

Not only has Amelia been able to master her grade level content each year, but she has been exposed to and allowed to have more experiences than I could have ever dreamed for her at school.

One of the most important habits that she has learned at AACA is to take responsible risks. This has allowed Amelia to participate in so many different aspects of school. She has gained extreme confidence, while increasing her public speaking and presentation skills, and determining how she wants to dedicate her time.

She has been part of some extremely powerful Service Project Based Learning Units. For her 100th day project in kindergarten, Amelia decided to donate 100 cans to the SLO Food Bank. While in first grade, she helped to purchase and provide goods for the people at ECHO homeless shelter. Our recreation teacher has encouraged Amelia to try different sports even if she is unfamiliar with them and this encouragement has allowed her to take part in cross country, basketball, football, and ultimate frisbee. She has also participated in our Annual Maker Faire and Talent Shows. She has spoken multiple times at Shared Start in front of over 350 people. Amelia has been cast in all of AACA's annual theatre productions. Through our partnership with PRYAF (Paso Robles Youth Arts Foundation), Amelia has discovered that drama is her true passion. She has taken that passion and participates in acting classes and productions with this organization. She even landed her first starring role as Gretel in Hansel and Gretel. I am grateful that AACA has helped Amelia to be a part of these experiences that she will forever remember when she thinks back to her elementary years.

What I haven't told you is that Amelia is a very anxious little girl. She constantly worries. She wants to follow the rules. She wants everyone else to follow the rules. She wants to do the

right thing. She wants to clarify everything. She likes to have control. She likes things to be perfect. She wants to feel safe and secure. Without the right environment, she would work hard to survive, yet at Almond Acres she has been able to thrive.

We are lucky that she has been a student at AACA. I have been able to communicate with her teachers to make sure that we are all on the same page. Her teachers have been able to give Amelia the reassurance to help her move forward and not enable her to continue habits that are detrimental to her success. She has been taught to fail forward at AACA. She has been taught that it is okay to be different and that everyone is perfectly imperfect.

This is not just Amelia's story. This is the story of many students who have gone through AACA. I have seen students make three years worth of reading growth in one year. I have seen students who would barely say anything when they first arrived at school, ending up leading our schoolwide shared start assembly. I have seen extremely introverted students become the leads of our annual play or star athletes and shine. Most importantly, I have seen students become confident in who they are as both learners, and as people. What a wonderful gift to give children, and this is happening at AACA.

People often ask me what makes AACA different, which is a hard question to answer. I think that when you step onto our campus and meet our staff and students, you can instantly feel what makes us unique. It is difficult to put into words though. Here are just a few ways that we are special.

We are a district and school in one. We have the ability to make decisions that are best for one specific school site. We are able to affect change very quickly. One example of this just occurred with the success of our Distance Learning Program during COVID. We look at our data and make decisions regarding our students daily. Due to the fact that we are small, we know each and every one of our students. The leadership and faculty work very closely together. We have created a positive culture. We have a high level of parent and community involvement. We hold a daily schoolwide shared start assembly. We are able to implement our programs and curriculum schoolwide, providing consistency for all students. We use a framework and philosophy to guide our social emotional, behavioral, and academic teaching. We have fully implemented a multi-tiered system of support in all aspects of our school. We have developed Service and Project Based Learning Units across the school year for all grades. We have been successful in developing the whole child: heart, mind, body, and soul.

I believe that there should be school choice for families at all levels. As educators, we know that each child is unique and while one school may be a good fit for one child, it may not be for another. AACA has been proven to be a good fit for many children.

We want to work together with PRJUSD to help make schools in Paso better for all students. AACA is an option that many parents have chosen and should have the opportunity to continue to choose. AACA is providing an excellent education for so many students in the North County.

We are helping children to be socially and academically successful, as well as teaching children how to be good citizens and leaders in order to play a vital role and have a positive impact on our community.

The children and staff of AACCA deserve to have the chance to have a facility that they deserve in Paso Robles. Thank you for allowing this to happen.

Sincerely,

Amy Baker

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

My name is Presley Bodenshot and I am the 2020-21 ASB President of Paso High. I have heard about Almond Acres through friends and the children I teach. As a Bearkitten Preschool teacher many of our children go to Almond Acres, and I only hear good things about the school. In my position at the high school, it has been hard for me to cope because of these unprecedented times. My experience with the district has been somewhat frustrating because as the new ASB President I was not contacted for any decisions for how the new school year should work. My purpose is to represent the entire student body, and no one from the District Office tried to contact me to understand what the students want for the 2020-21 school year. I believe this shows their level of concern for what the students want. It leads me to question if they truly want to advocate for what the students want? Are they scared of change and competition? Or are they more concerned about financial matters? Whatever the District's concern is they have not made it clear to be about what the students want. From my perspective, our country has been allowing the government, like our governors, to control our education system when in reality most of those people have never worked in an educational position. How can one make decisions about a school when they have never worked in a classroom? It takes a basic understanding of how children interact in the classroom to understand how to create curriculum, let alone guidelines. If we want to truly advocate for our students' wants and needs, then how can we deprive an entire school of children from being built? Almond Acres deserves the chance to grow and flourish, and no district or person should be allowed to stop that.

Sincerely,

Presley Bodenshot

August 03, 2020

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Almond Acres Charter Academy is not perfect, but we are a team of dedicated educators and families that are striving to create meaningful education through service/project-based learning experiences. For example, in Kindergarten, we partner with Annette Lodge, a senior living facility in downtown Paso Robles. It's a beautiful relationship built on visits, exchanging written letters and surveys between the kindergarten students and the residents at Annette Lodge. They teach us about life then and now, answer questions about life as Americans, and tell us their stories. Kindergarteners think of the seniors as "the wise people" because they have collected the most stories.

Throughout the year we explore why stories are important, from the classics we all know to the ones passed down through our families. We add value to our community. In addition, we will add value to the Paso district. In my own head and heart, I have a story about how AACA fits in Paso Robles.

Most of the families that attend AACA live in Paso Robles. I haven't heard these families speak poorly of their neighborhood schools. Many have friends and family attending neighborhood schools. For whatever their reasons, they are choosing Almond Acres Charter Academy because they think the program is what is best for their children, not to get away from neighborhood schools. My hopes are that we can honor these families, bring them back into Paso Robles, let go of whatever reasons have kept us apart in the past, and start fresh in our new location.

It makes sense for AACA to be chartered in Paso Robles where our students feed into Paso Robles High School eventually. We have some pretty incredible learning and student leadership happening that could make Paso Robles proud of being our authorizer. In my story, Paso Robles Joint Unified School District can and should use AACA the way charter schools were intended, to test out innovative teaching and build powerful models from which the larger system of public education can learn.

For the past eight years we have been creating, learning, and refining a school made from scratch. It's been the most challenging work some of us have ever done, but we are now at a place where programs, curriculum, policies, and processes have been put in place and we are seeing the fruits of all of that labor. We want to be here in Paso Robles because it's where most of us live, play sports, participate in 4-H, and eventually go to high school. We want to make the community proud and we want to make you proud of the choice to let us charter here.

Sincerely,

Amy Brabenec

August 04, 2020

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to support the move of Almond Acres Charter Academy. The school serves families all over the North County and has proven to be very successful. Moving the school would allow them to meet their needs and expand. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Ian Parkinson
Sheriff
1585 Kansas Ave
San Luis Obispo, CA 93405
iparkinson@co.slo.ca.us

Dear Jim,

I am contacting you this time in my capacity as a member of the community and not as a member of the school board.

You will soon be making a decision about allowing AACCA to set up shop in Paso Robles. I would welcome their presence in Paso Robles.

There is obviously a demand for their services, perhaps even more now in the age of the Wuhan virus. There are many families that find that the public schools cannot serve their children as well as AACCA. The reasons are as varied as the students. Education affects children and their families more than any other aspect of the government and public life. Therefore, families should have as broad a choice as possible, even at the expense of the public schools.

Public schools have a virtual monopoly in education, especially for those people who cannot afford tuition at private schools. Public school officials and staff generally dislike charter schools. After sorting through all the arguments raised against a reputable charter school such as AACCA, the real reason is invariably that they fear the competition. That is natural for any player with a dominant market position and the people who work for that player. However, nothing hones skills better than genuine competition, and charter schools are the only real competition in the market.

If there is any way at all to allow AACCA to open in Paso Robles, that would benefit everyone involved in education in Paso Robles, especially in the long run.

Best regards,
Chris Arend

Christopher Arend

Member of the Bar (California, inactive status)

Rechtsanwalt (admitted in Germany, Frankfurt am Main)

Arend Law Firm (a professional corporation)

9610 Nacimiento Lake Dr.

Paso Robles, CA 93446

USA

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Education,

Hi, my name is Melanie McWilliams. I am a parent of three students (4th grade, 7th grade, and 8th grade) who attend Almond Acres Charter Academy.

We have been a part of the Almond Acres family from the very beginning. I was so intrigued by the school's philosophy over eight years ago, that we opted to make a 17-minute commute from the outskirts of Paso Robles each way, twice a day. The school absolutely has become everything we dreamed it would be...with the exception of the facilities.

I know each and every one of you has a vision for our students--a vision of an educational community that is "dedicated to preparing all children and youth for responsible citizenship, meaningful work, and lifelong learning."

Almond Acres Charter Academy is helping make that vision a reality.

I'm seeing the results in my own children. The school has recognized the uniqueness in each of my children, their strengths, their struggles, and their individual learning styles. Because they feel understood and heard, my children have blossomed. They have gone from wanting to blend in with the crowd, to young leaders of the school. My two oldest children are an active part of the leadership team. They are now comfortable with speaking in front of the entire student body and participating in the annual theatre production. My oldest was told he had language delays as a pre-k student and given an IEP. Within a year of being at Almond Acres, he no longer had an IEP, and now, as he enters 8th grade, he loves to read and is an advanced reader and researcher.

AACA's service and project based learning units have given my children the opportunity to see the world through a different lens and helped them identify ways that they can make a meaningful difference in our community and our world. Even as young first graders, they developed their entrepreneur skills, selling products they created, then used the money to benefit the local homeless shelter. Earlier this year, Brandon, my oldest, found a school in Africa that had a need, partnered with a local charity, made jam and sold it, then donated the money so a whole classroom of 7th graders in Uganda had pens, pencils, paper and textbooks. My kids already know they have something valuable to offer, and are offering it. That's a bonus I NEVER expected to get from public school.

Almond Acres encourages students to ask questions and seek answers rather than silence them and give them answers. This has given my children confidence. They continue to be curious, innovative and resourceful, which, I know, will take them far in life.

Yes, Almond Acres is creating responsible citizens, who are performing meaningful work, and are lifelong learners. And they're doing it all while housed in older portables on a dirt lot without their own cafeteria, gymnasium, play structure, or library.

I respectfully request that Almond Acres Charter Academy be granted their appeal. These students are our future.

Sincerely,

Melanie McWilliams

P.S. And, yes, even though we moved to San Miguel, we'll happily commute to Paso Robles.

July 23, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I am the proud father of a child who has thrived as a student, leader and all around human being at *Almond Acres Charter Academy*. Therefore, I would love to see AACCA relocated to Paso Robles so that it will be more accessible to more students who could similarly benefit.

As a special educator for the Paso Robles Joint Unified School District, I am especially impressed with AACCA's guiding philosophy. It emphasizes the uniqueness of every person, including his/her strengths and weaknesses, and, therefore, the fact that every student has a different learning style which must be accommodated through differentiation by all teachers and staff.

Another unique strength that AACCA has to offer, which sets it apart from most public schools, is its small school atmosphere, strong sense of community and a high level of parent/family participation in, and commitment to, this community. My older daughters attended private schools in order that they could benefit from this. But I am happy to say that my youngest daughter, Divyana, has experienced this at AACCA no less than her sisters did before her.

Finally, another strength of AACCA, which is similarly more likely to be seen in private schools, is its emphasis upon character development, learning strong and effective social skills and the importance of teamwork. But what I really appreciate about this is that students at AACCA learn these with a sense that their success as students is not just a matter of looking out for themselves. On the contrary, they come to understand that they are there to learn and grow as human beings that will make a contribution to their communities as a whole.

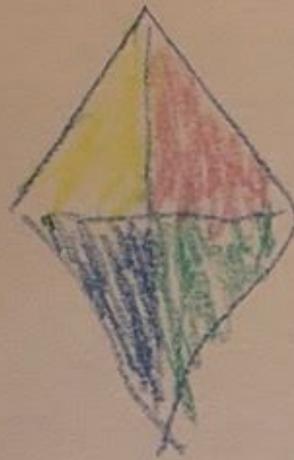
For these reasons, and many reasons more, I hope and pray that Almond Acres Charter Academy will one day attain a property and facilities worthy of her mission and a location that can be accessed by as many students as possible.

Sincerely,

Christian Emmons

BENTLEY I LOVE

AACA





AACA

I LIKE AACA BECAUSE
EITHER THEY TEACH ME.

THEY TEACH ME
HOW TO READ.

I PLAY AT
RECESS.

I HOPE YOU HAVE
A GREAT
BOY.

BY MALACHI 1ST GR

I think AACA should move
because it is a great school. I've
learned math. I like recess with
friends. I liked visiting Echo
Homeless Shelter. I love AACA,
Brook ~~2nd~~ ~~grade~~ ~~at~~
2nd



Dear SLO County Board of Education,

Hello! My name is Josef. I enjoy Almond Acres Charter Academy because I can be creative with my work and how I do it. Another reason is, we get a lot of time outside but we still get to learn.

Also, going to Almond Acres is fun and cool because I get to learn how to be the best version of myself which I think most kids don't get to learn about at school.

Almond Acres helped me and other kids with some of the stuff we were not good at. For example, in the second grade I was not reaching my personal reading goals but they helped me reach them.

Going to Almond Acres helps me stay fit, healthy, and strong with recreation class everyday and with their afterschool sports programs that they have.

Almond Acres provides me with lots of after-school sports programs which has taught me I love sports!

Almond Acres helps me improve my my heart, mind, body, and soul. They also teach me to be trustworthy, respectful, responsible, fair, and caring our five main traits. Almond Acres teaches me to be a good citizen, a respectful and kind leader, and a good friend. I may only be in 4th grade, but it's clear to me that AACA is GREAT!

We are the leaders of AACA
we are trustworthy, respectful, responsible,
fair, and caring. We are TERRIFIC!
GO KITES!!!

Sincerely, Josef Parkhurst