

aspen | COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 12, 2023 | VOLUME II



Interview With Carolina Lopez, School Counselor at Aspen Ridge Public

BY SHELLY LETHER, *EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR*

Mrs. Lether: How did you come to work at Aspen Ridge?

Ms. Lopez: I feel like to answer this, I have to tell you my journey as a counselor. I used to work at a traditional public school district and actually decided to take a break from being a school counselor. I then decided to work in the non-profit sector as an administrative analyst helping low-income families build their own homes, but I was still not as satisfied as I was when I helped students graduate high school and go to college. That is when I started looking at school counseling jobs again, and I came across Aspen Public Schools. I went on our website and saw our mission, “Transforming the Community and Developing Exceptional Leaders.” I also noticed we were a 501c3. It seemed like everything I was looking for in my career aligned, and I decided to apply. I have never looked back.

Mrs. Lether: How long have you worked here at Aspen?

Ms. Lopez: 2 years, going on my 3rd year. I am a founding year staff member at Ridge.

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INTERVIEW WITH CAROLINA LOPEZ, SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Mrs. Lether: Would you please share what your job duties are?

Ms. Lopez: As a school counselor, there are three domains to our job: socio/emotional, academic, and college & career. For socio/emotional, I help students who have any socio/emotional needs. If they are struggling, they can come to me. Through Student Success Team (SST) meetings, if students need short-term individual counseling, I can help them. I am not a licensed therapist, so I can't provide therapy. However, Aspen Ridge does have a partnership with Fresno County Superintendent of Schools (FCSS), All-4-Youth, which is located on our campus. If a student qualifies, they can see a licensed therapist. We also run group sessions. If a student is struggling, they can be referred to that service well. Additionally, I support our administrators if the student is in a social-emotional crisis. I facilitate restorative justice meetings and am involved with IEP, 504, and Student Success Team (SST) meetings.

I also help with various interventions and identify at-risk students, both socially and academically. I help plan the master schedule, and I coordinate monthly counseling lessons, which include personality and career assessments, study skills, learning skills, stress management, college information, financial aid information, resume building, summer school information, transcript review, and anything you might think a student might need. These academic counseling lessons are taught in their homeroom. I have also been in charge of Aspen Ridge's Summer School program. Then, for college and career, I'm the A-G coordinator. I coordinate the Fresno City College classes that we offer. I also plan college campus visits for students who are in high school.

As we add grades, my duties will change because every time we add a grade, the needs of our students change.

I also assist the Administration with anything they might need my help with.

Mrs. Lether: What are some challenges you face?

Ms. Lopez: The biggest challenge is that there is only one of me and every year, Aspen Ridge grows by one grade. Right now, we have five grades. The needs of a 7th grader versus the needs of an 11th grader are very different. Next year, when we add 12th graders, we'll have six grades, which means the needs will be completely different, and that has been the biggest challenge--time.

Mrs. Lether: What strategies do you use to help students with academic and career planning?

Ms. Lopez: Right now, because I'm limited with time, I have a counseling intern. And I made sure that she and I worked as a partnership. We divide and conquer. So she knows exactly what to do, and this year, I'm tasking her with doing a lot of transcript reviews and a lot of career planning with our students. For example, with the 9th graders, I will ask her to do a lot of 4-year planning. I'm providing a template, and I want her to practice 4-year planning.

For our 10th and 11th graders, I did the background work as well, but because I'm limited in time, she will do the planning. She will go in with the 10th and 11th graders, review transcripts, and do more individual career planning.

And also, for the students that want to go to four-year colleges, we'll do career planning with A-G requirements.

I also strategically placed an Adulting Class on the schedule for 10th and 11th graders. I work very closely with their Adulting teacher. She has planned to teach some college, interviewing, financial aid, budgeting, and what to expect in college. Students have already begun researching different colleges and the cost of textbooks, etc.

Mrs. Lether: How do you help students connect their academic goals with their desired future careers?

Ms. Lopez: By four-year planning, career planning, and electives. We plan to have more electives in the future so students can choose classes they are interested in. We also plan to connect them with internships in the career fields they are interested in.

Mrs. Lether: What exciting things are coming to Ridge in the future?

Ms. Lopez: I'm so excited for our future. I know that as we grow, we are going to have many opportunities! We plan to visit many colleges. There is also more to life than just college. There are many careers available out there, and we will get to explore them. We want to have career fairs on campus. That is something we wanted to have last year and didn't get to, but in the future, we will have that. As we grow, I know that we are going to have a lot more to offer our students. I hope that our students are hopeful and excited, too!



CAROLINA LOPEZ
SCHOOL COUNSELOR



SHELLY LETHER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hello, My New Aspen Family!

Thank you so much to everyone for making me feel so welcome in the past few weeks as I transitioned into my new role as the Expanded Learning Coordinator of Aspen Public Schools. Jessica Pittman did a great job bringing me up to speed on all she has worked so hard to establish in our after-school programs at Aspen Valley and Meadow campuses before she transitioned her focus to growing the Community Schools programs of Aspen Public Schools. Prior to this new role with Aspen Public Schools, I spent seven years in Fresno Unified teaching Special Education (Mild/Mod), History, Ethnic Studies, and Men's Alliance. In addition to teaching, I worked as an After-School Tutorial Program lead teacher, a Behavior Intervention Specialist-II, an Ethnic Studies Curriculum Development cohort member, and a Varsity Football Coach. It's been an amazing start to my 8th year in education, and I appreciate all the support and encouragement I've received from our district leaders, school site administrators, teachers, campus staff, and especially my after-school program teams.

Our Aspen Meadow and Valley after-school program staff does a good job providing our students with academically enriching lesson plans activities that enable students' opportunities to explore new interests, enhance academic performances, promote physical health, and grow their social skills. The Aspen Valley after school program team is led by Site Leader Kaydence Ramirez, and currently has 181 students enrolled into the program. The Aspen Meadow team is led by Site Leader Lorissa Rankin, and their current enrollment is at 175 students. To add even more awesomeness to this year's after-school program, our students will be able to sign up for the Hip-Hop Dance Club, Art Club, Minecraft Club, Music Club, and Soccer Club.

ROBERT THEUS,
EXPANDED LEARNING
COORDINATOR



RAVENS BASKETBALL

2023 SCHEDULE

AT DUNCAN POLYTECH HIGH



ASPEN RIDGE VS **DEWOLF**



5TH SEPTEMBER 2023 - 5.30 PM

AT DUNCAN POLYTECH HIGH



ASPEN RIDGE VS **BIG PICTURE**



7TH SEPTEMBER 2023 - 4.30 PM

AT CTEC HIGH SCHOOL



ASPEN RIDGE VS **PANTINO**



14TH SEPTEMBER, 2023 - 5.30 PM

AT CTEC HIGH SCHOOL



ASPEN RIDGE VS **CTEC HIGH**



19TH SEPTEMBER, 2023 - 4.30 PM

AT DUNCAN POLYTECH HIGH



ASPEN RIDGE VS **UNIVERISTY HIGH**



21ST SEPTEMBER, 2023 - 4.30 PM

AT DUNCAN POLYTECH HIGH



ASPEN RIDGE VS **CLOVIS CHRISTIAN**



28TH SEPTEMBER, 2023 - 4.30 PM

AT DUNCAN POLYTECH HIGH



ASPEN RIDGE VS **DUNCAN POLYTECH**



3RD OCTOBER, 2023 - 4.30 PM

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MESSAGE FROM SITE DIRECTOR

BY LISA TAYLOR, *SITE DIRECTOR, ASPEN MEADOW*



Dear Aspen Families,

We are off to an exciting year! Our school has grown to over 300 students. We have plans to strengthen our sports program, and many extra curricular activities in our ELO-P (after-school program) this year.

I am grateful for our entire staff that work hard to serve our students. Each person takes their role seriously and works with excellence. The best thing is that we are a collaborative and TEAM-MINDED school. We model for each other and our students how to respect each other and work together to solve problems. Modeling is one of the most important ways children learn.

This year, there will be more opportunities for parents to partner with the school. They can volunteer to help on the playground, cafeteria, classroom, or serve on a parent committee. The home and school partnership is paramount to the success of our students.

Finally, our focus this year is improving student attendance. EVERY DAY COUNTS! Research shows that when students are at school, they are more likely to perform on grade-level and make the academic gains necessary for them to move forward in their education. Teachers begin their instruction at 8:00 am daily and have each moment of the day planned for students to engage in learning.

We are grateful for the privilege to work with ALL of our Aspen Meadow OWLS!



COMMUNITY EDUCATION



JESSICA PITTMAN,
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
COORDINATOR

Happy Fall! In the past month, I have been listening to many of you about the strengths and needs in our community. I've also been strengthening existing partnerships and developing new ones with many others on our staff team. We're excited to have our next Advisory Council meet in September and review a report of the strengths and needs of our three schools. If you were here last May, Every Neighborhood Partnership worked with us to host focus groups, surveys, and listening sessions, and the results will be in soon! Thank you to all who participated in this important process.

Being a Community School means we both contribute to and take advantage of all our community has to offer. The Fresno/Clovis area has a rich history of opportunities related to education that come from Community Based Organizations and nonprofits, as well as from more traditional educational institutions (such as Fresno Unified or Fresno City College). Knowing this, and hearing many of you asking for more resources open to the entire family, I've compiled a short list of some of the classes and trainings starting this fall in our area (both virtual and in person). Some classes on this list are from organizations we partner with.

Do your own research before you sign up, and know there are many additional options to explore. Is there a class or training you'd like Aspen to offer someday on our campus? Send me an email! And, let me know if you take advantage of any of these opportunities, and how it goes!



COMMUNITY EDUCATION

highlights | fall 2023

Your kids are back in school, so will YOU join them in the learning process?! There are many classes and opportunities for all ages in our community to take advantage of, and most are free or low cost. Here's a few highlights happening this fall! [Find more listed here.](#)



PARENT UNIVERSITY

Fresno Unified hosts a [variety of classes and resources](#) for all parents/grandparents, such as:

College Readiness

Positive Discipline

Technology Training

WANT TO START OR GROW A SMALL BUSINESS?

There's just a handful of spots left in [Launchpad](#), a 7-week online class offered by [Center for Community Transformation](#) providing business coaching, training on access to financial resources, marketing, and more. **Class Starts Sept 7!**



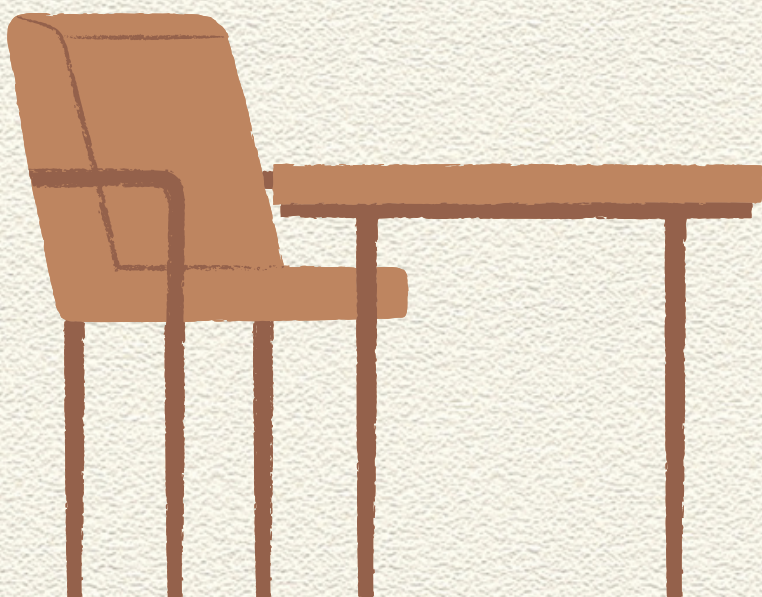
EXCEPTIONAL PARENTS UNLIMITED

Offers assessments, in home support, and [education](#) in areas such as:

- Navigating EIPs/504s
- "Beyond Trauma" for women
- Support for children with disabilities (and their families)
- Anger Management

QUESTIONS?

Community Schools Coordinator
jessica.pittman @aspens.org





Nancy Alvarez

Foster, Homeless Connection Coordinator



Lidia Marquez

Foster, Homeless Connection Coordinator Assistant

Foster, Homeless Connection Office

We love, care and listen to our students and families as they transition from crisis into community.

Connection Office @The City Center Open House coming soon!



Fresno County Schools of Superintendent Professional Development has taken place at APS to ensure our staff how they can identify and refer students to be provided with resources that will allow them succeed at school.

2023-24 off to a great start Partnering with our Community

Our sponsors have donated 250 backpacks, school supplies, \$500 for bus passes, hosted students at the Grizzlies game and a \$100 shopping spree to 50 students



Growing at all sites 

Valley Prep 42/11%

Meadow 59/19%

Ridge MS/HS 27/11%



Thank you for your referrals!

OPERATIONS UPDATE

BY MATT FLORES, MBA, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER



My Name is Matt Flores, and I am the Chief of Operations here at Aspen Public Schools. I attended Fresno State to receive my Bachelor's in Psychology and recently graduated from Sonoma State University with my Executive Master's in Business Administration. I started with Aspen in the winter of 2013 as a teacher's aide right out of college. I quickly transitioned into the After School Director. I took a small hiatus from APS to be an operations director for an organization here in Fresno. I returned to APS because education is my passion. As the COO, I can now utilize my business and operations knowledge to help elevate the already capable organizational community that Aspen has created.

Since I have returned, I quickly hit the ground running to make minor changes to the campuses with landscaping, having the soccer fields graded, and installing a new TK/Kinder playground at Valley. Valley's auditorium received a facelift with new lighting throughout the building and will soon undergo a complete paint job during the winter break. Some other plans for Valley are to redo the cafeteria floors, kitchen cabinets, and paint the inside of the cafeteria.

For Meadow, we are adding three new modular classrooms and a new bathroom building near the main parking lot between the basketball court and the art room.

The plan to break ground is in November, with a move-in date of mid-January. TK and kindergarten are receiving a new playground in mid-September. The students are going to love their new addition. There are other plans in the works, but the logistics are still in the works, and when they are finalized, we will announce what else Meadow will be acquiring.

Aspen Ridge has expanded into their new building at City Center. The students, especially the high school students, have enjoyed this new phase. It provides more space and a haven for our high schoolers to feel they have their own area. Ridge is adding a green space directly behind the school for our students to have lunch, incorporate P.E. classes, and play sports. The site will be ready in a few more weeks. Near the same area as the grass space, and with the help of the City Center, we are installing a multi-court sports court. It will consist of a basketball and a volleyball court where we can host games for our league.

I am honored to be a part of and to serve a community that genuinely cares for its students and families. Every move made within our organization, we always ask, "What is best for our students?" because they come first. We will continue to prioritize our choices around this. #Itsforthekids







MARKETING

BY AVNINDER SINGH

Since 2022, Aspen Public Schools has partnered with Larson Communications as our digital marketing partner. Aspen is genuinely grateful for Larson's assistance in many ways, from providing a content calendar that made planning and organizing easy, sending postcards to prospective families, and running digital advertisements. Over a year and a half, Larson brought 638 prospective families to the Aspen Community. Aspen has witnessed a significant positive outcome from this partnership, and we eagerly anticipate what is in store for our future.

HOW CAN YOU HELP ASPEN PROMOTE OUR SCHOOLS?

There are many ways our current families can help us promote and market our schools. One way is by tagging us in your social media posts and using the hashtag #AspenStrong. It's also helpful to "like" and comment on our posts whenever you see them. Another way is to mention us in your posts, and with your permission, we would love to reshare the post to our platforms. These simple additions can make a huge difference.

THE ASPEN MARKETING TEAM!

Matt Flores is the Chief Operating Officer for Aspen Public Schools and oversees all marketing for the APS. I am the administrative assistant at the Charter Management Office (CMO), and part of my job is to create new marketing material, make edits, take photos, and manage social media posts. I also work with Mr. Flores on the websites. If you have any questions about our social media content, feel free to ask. If you have any ideas for what we should post on our platforms, we'd love to hear them. Your contributions to our team are greatly appreciated. You can reach me at avninder.singh@aspenps.org. See you on Aspen's social media!



MATT FLORES
CHIEF OPERATING
OFFICER



AVNINDER SINGH
CMO OFFICE
ADMINISTRATOR

ASPEN | BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ASPEN'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND BOARD MEETINGS, PLEASE VISIT "GOVERNING BOARD" ON ASPENPS.ORG



Carlos Huerta
Vice Chair



Alicia Varela
Board Secretary



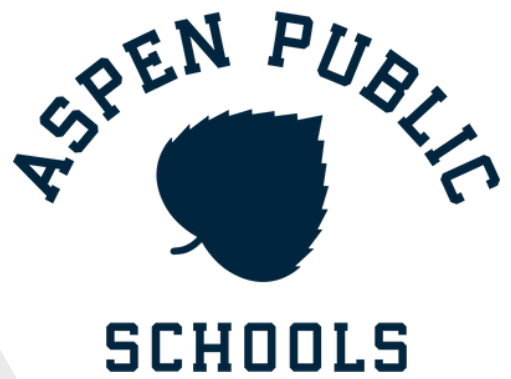
John Grice
Board Chair



Renee Dayton
Treasurer



Mark Snee
Member



NOW HIRING TEACHERS

- ✓ Small school setting
- ✓ Prep time
- ✓ Fall break
- ✓ Robust benefits package
- ✓ High-quality professional development
- ✓ \$1,000 masters degree stipend

***WATCH FOR
OUR ADS ON
EDJOIN.COM OR
ASPENPS.ORG***