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**Sent:** 2/22/2019 12:19:08 PM  
**To:** esthermanheimer@avlcouncil.com, Gwen Wisler <gwenwisler@avlcouncil.com>, Brian Haynes <brianhaynes@avlcouncil.com>, vijaykapoor@avlcouncil.com, Julie Mayfield <juliemayfield@avlcouncil.com>, Sheneika Smith <sheneikasmith@avlcouncil.com>, Keith Young <keithyoung@avlcouncil.com>  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** Requested Cover Letter for ACS Board of Education application

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Greetings, Mayor Manheimer, Vice Mayor Wisler, and Council Members Haynes, Kapoor, Mayfield, Smith, and Young --

Over the next few years, the Asheville City Schools Board of Education will be asked to approve sweeping changes to our educational system in order to close our achievement gaps between black and white students. These changes will likely include new curriculum initiatives, trading interventionists for general education teachers, and reevaluating or possibly eliminating our magnet school program. We are entering a contentious period. Education has so many moving parts that the risk of misinterpreting data points and throwing out the baby with the bath water -- thereby widening the achievement gap, harming the education of all students, and alienating the community -- is real.

While our Board of Education needs to work cooperatively toward common goals like closing the achievement gap, the process of this work must be informed by minority opinions, both within and outside the Board and the Asheville City Schools leadership.

Over the past several years, the Board has been asked to rubber-stamp recommendations from a revolving door of central office staff and superintendents. All of these recommendations had the right goals in mind -- to benefit our students. But many of these recommendations lacked community buy-in and real integration of input from parents and teachers. In particular, our teachers felt like their input, experience, and wisdom were not honored and used to create the best solutions for our students. This undermines staff retention at the bottom of the hierarchy and continuity of leadership at the top. We have high turnover rates for both.

By nature, I honor and seek out minority voices and opinions. I am neither conflict-averse nor difference-averse. In my more than 15 years of service on four different not-for-profit boards -- as a camp director, as a church officer, and as a PTO officer -- I have been amazed by the number of times a lone dissenting opinion held a wisdom that has changed the outcome of a board decision for the better.

As a candidate for the Board of Education, I offer my thirst for the devil in the details, my desire to hear differing voices, and my deep knowledge of what has come before the Asheville City Schools Board of Education over the past five years.

I have attended almost every General Meeting, Work Session, and Specially Called Meeting of the Asheville City Schools Board of Education since fall of 2014. I understand the time and energy commitment I am offering to undertake.

I reside within the Asheville City Schools district and am registered to vote at my home address below. I am available to answer any questions you may have.

Yours in service,

Pepi Acebo

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