



# **Montana Board of Public Education**

**Public Charter School Application  
Billings Public Schools  
Billings Opportunity School**

*October 31, 2023*

# PUBLIC CHARTER APPLICATION COVER PAGE

Check One:  New Public Charter under Existing Local School Board       New Public Charter District

Name of Public Charter School Billings Opportunity School

Local school district in which the public charter school will be physically located: Billings Public Schools

## Contact Information for the Governing Board Chair

Contact Person: Scott McCulloch      Billings Public Schools Board of Trustees Chairman  
Name      Title

Contact Address: Lincoln Center, 415 N. 30th St      Billings, MT 59101

Telephone Number: 1-406-281-5066



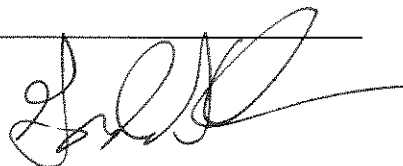
E-mail Address: scott.mcculloch@billingschools.org

## Contact Information for the Person Completing this Application

Contact Person: Gordon Klasna      Executive Director of Secondary Education  
Name      Title

Contact Address: Lincoln Center, 415 N. 30th St

Billings, MT 59101 Telephone Number: 1-406-281-5120



E-mail Address: klasnag@billingschools.org

# PUBLIC CHARTER APPLICATION

Name of Public Charter School: Billings Opportunity School

Provide an executive summary with the general purpose and rationale for the creation of the public charter school.

**See accompanying document**

Opening Date: August 2024 Public Charter Term Length: Fall 2024 - Spring 2029

Grades to be served: 9-12

Minimum Enrollment Per Year: 40

Planned Enrollment Per Year: 260

Maximum Enrollment Per Year: No maximum

For each year of the public charter term, indicate the number of students the public charter school plans to serve in each grade.

	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Year 1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	20	30	39	104
Year 2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	30	45	56	156
Year 3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	50	55	67	207
Year 4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	65	70	90	260
Year 5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	65	70	90	260

## ACADEMIC PROGRAM

We recognize that this section does not provide the space to fully and accurately respond to each of the questions below. Attachments and appendices are permitted. Please make sure to clearly state where corresponding responses are located.

1. State the public charter school's mission and vision and describe why this initiative is important to the community it will serve.  
**See accompanying document**
2. Identify the targeted student population and the community the public charter school proposes to serve.  
**See accompanying document**
3. Describe plans and timelines for student recruitment and enrollment, including lottery procedures.  
**See accompanying document**
4. Describe the public charter school's academic program, specifically focusing on why it is innovative in your school district. Include plans to formally assess student achievement on an annual basis.  
**See accompanying document**

5. Describe any variances to existing standards that the public charter school requires to enhance educational opportunities.  
**See accompanying document**
6. Describe the instructional design, including the type of learning environment, class size and structure, curriculum overview, and teaching methods.  
**See accompanying document**
7. Describe plans for identifying and successfully serving students with disabilities, students who are English Language Learners, students who are academically challenged, and gifted students, including compliance with applicable laws and regulations.  
**See accompanying document**
8. Describe student discipline policies, including those for special education students.  
**See accompanying document**

## **SCHOOL GOVERNANCE**

**We recognize that this section does not provide the space to fully and accurately respond to each of the questions below. Attachments and appendices are permitted. Please make sure to clearly state where corresponding responses are located.**

9. Describe the public charter school's organizational chart that clearly presents the proposed organizational structure, including lines of authority and reporting between the governing board, staff, related bodies such as advisory bodies or parent and teacher councils, and external organizations that will play a role in managing the public charter school.  
**See accompanying document**
10. Describe the roles and responsibilities of the governing board, the proposed leadership management team, and other entities shown in the organizational chart.  
**See accompanying document**
11. Provide a staffing chart for the public charter school's first year and a staffing plan for the term of the public charter school.  
**See accompanying document**
12. Detail the public charter school startup plan, identifying tasks, timelines, and responsible individuals.  
**See accompanying document**
13. Describe the plans for recruiting and developing school leadership and staff.  
**See accompanying document**
14. Describe the proposed leadership and teacher employment policies, including performance evaluation plans.  
**See accompanying document**
15. State the proposed governing bylaws.  
**See accompanying document**

16. Explain any partnerships or contractual relationships central to the operations and mission of the public charter school.

**See accompanying document**

17. Provide the proposed calendar and sample daily schedule.

**See accompanying document**

## **BUSINESS OPERATIONS**

**We recognize that this section does not provide the space to fully and accurately respond to each of the questions below. Attachments and appendices are permitted. Please make sure to clearly state where corresponding responses are located.**

18. Describe plans for providing transportation, food service, and all other significant operational or ancillary services.

**See accompanying document**

19. Describe co-curricular and extracurricular programs and how the programs will be funded and delivered.

**See accompanying document**

20. Describe the proposed financial plan and policies, including financial controls and audit requirements.

**See accompanying document**

21. Describe the insurance coverage that will be obtained.

**See accompanying document**

22. Describe the startup and five-year budgets with clearly stated assumptions.

**See accompanying document**

23. Describe the startup and first year cash flow projections with clearly stated assumptions.

**See accompanying document**

24. Describe anticipated fundraising contributions and evidence, if applicable.

**See accompanying document**

25. Describe the facilities plan, including backup or contingency plans.

**See accompanying document**

## **COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND NEED**

**We recognize that this section does not provide the space to fully and accurately respond to each of the questions below. Attachments and appendices are permitted. Please make sure to clearly state where corresponding responses are located.**

26. Describe the specific evidence of significant community support.

**See accompanying document**

27. Describe the opportunities and expectations for parent involvement.

**See accompanying document**

## **NOT AN EXISTING LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD? COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION**

**We recognize that this section does not provide the space to fully and accurately respond to each of the questions below. Attachments and appendices are permitted. Please make sure to clearly state where corresponding responses are located.**

1. Provide specific evidence that the applicant has sought from the local school board the creation of a school or program of the located school district serving the mission and vision of the proposed public charter school.

**Not applicable**

2. Provide specific evidence that the local school board declined to create the school or program and declined to submit a proposal for the creation of a public charter school to the Board of Public Education.

**Not applicable**

3. Provide a legal description of the property of the existing school district from which the boundaries of the public charter school district are proposed to be formed.

**Not applicable**

4. Share background information on the initial governing board members and, if identified, the proposed school leadership and management team.

**Not applicable**

*Questions? Contact [bpe@mt.gov](mailto:bpe@mt.gov)*

**Montana Public Charter School Application Attachment**  
**Billings Public Schools**  
**Billings Opportunity School**

**Executive Summary**

The Billings Public Schools Community has a mission to inspire, educate, and empower students to become responsible and innovative global citizens who reach their full potential. Their commitment to these core principles places a strong focus on education and empowering students, emphasizing the value of earning a high school diploma. This mission aims to instill in students a sense of inspiration and determination to achieve their graduation goals.

The Billings Opportunity School (BOS) plays a vital role in this mission by providing an alternative environment for at-risk students within the Billings Public School system who may not graduate through traditional means. The BOS is dedicated to preparing these students for life after graduation, whether they choose to continue their education, enter the workforce, or serve in the military. The BOS's commitment to nurturing and refining students' educational experiences ensures they are well-prepared for success in the future. The community's celebration of these students' remarkable achievements reflects their belief in the power of resilience and determination.

**Academic Program**

1. State the public charter school's mission and vision and describe why this initiative is important to the community it will serve.
  - The Billings Public Schools Community strives to inspire, educate and empower students to be responsible and innovative global citizens who achieve their full potential.

The Billings Opportunity School (BOS) will provide the community with graduates prepared to take the next steps after graduation. Whether they are continuing their education, joining the workforce or serving our country in one of the amazing branches of the military, graduates will be able to be successful because of their hard work and determination they learned while earning their high school diploma.

In our district, we place a distinct emphasis on three core elements outlined in our mission statement: "inspire," "educate," and "empower." Among these, the primary focus is on education, as we believe in prioritizing the learning journey of our students. Moreover, we are deeply committed to empowering our students, underscoring the notion that opportunities abound when they earn their high

school diploma. We aim to instill in them a sense of inspiration to achieve success and attain their graduation goals.

While our core objective is to inspire our students, it is a remarkable and recurring reality that, more often than not, our students are the source of inspiration for our community. Their resilience in the face of adversity and their stories of remarkable achievement serve as a wellspring of motivation for our community members. These inspiring narratives, reflecting the triumphs our students have experienced, are the reason we come together to celebrate their success.

Billings Public Schools further strives to cultivate excellence every day. Cultivating is a process akin to nurturing and refining. We are committed to fostering, developing, enriching, and improving our students through the educational experience at the BOS.

2. Identify the targeted student population and the community the public charter school proposed to serve.
  - The BOS will be a school for students in the Billings Public School system that are at-risk of not graduating and need an alternative environment to earn their high school diploma.
3. Describe plans and timelines for student recruitment and enrollment, including lottery procedures.
  - School counselors and administration from the existing Billings high schools will work together to identify students that are at risk of not graduating or need a different environment in order to graduate. We will further announce to the public the process of how students can enroll if they feel that the BOS would be a better learning environment for them. If more students than seats available want to attend, a lottery will be held. Students will be assigned a number beginning at number one, and a random drawing from the numbers will be conducted before school starts. An additional 10% will be drawn for a waitlist to be called upon should other students decline to enroll after being selected. Once a student is enrolled, they will not have to go through the lottery process again. If seats are open, out of district students will have the opportunity to attend.
4. Describe the public charter school's academic program, specifically focusing on why it is innovative in your school district. Include plans to formally assess student achievement on an annual basis.
  - We will utilize a combination of in-person and hybrid learning environments as well as internships and work place experience to ensure that students are meeting the Montana requirements for graduation. Each student will be on an individualized



learning plan to optimize the best way the student learns. Billings, the largest school district in Montana, currently does not have an established alternative program for high school students with the previous school closing more than 15 years ago. An alternative pathway and setting would greatly benefit students that have not found success in our large comprehensive high schools. We recognize that our Native American students have a higher dropout rate than other demographics. The BOS will make a concerted effort to reach out to these students and provide them with information on the school. We will also connect our Home to School Coordinators through the Indian Education Department with students to help provide support. Staff will continually track all students as they progress towards their graduation requirements. We will utilize surveys of students and parents to make sure that student needs are being met. Formal assessment of student achievement will be done individually by staff as we continually track student progress towards their graduation requirements.

5. Describe any variances to existing standards that the public charter school requires to enhance educational opportunities.
  - The BOS does not require any variances at this time. They will ensure that all students meet the Montana requirements for graduation as outlined in 10.55.905 of the Administrative Rules of Montana. These requirements will be met through a combination of seat time and proficiency based education.
6. Describe the instructional design, including the type of learning environment, class size and structure, curriculum overview, and teaching methods.
  - We understand that students learn in different ways and paces. As noted earlier, the BOS will have varied learning environments including in-person, project based and hybrid learning as well as internships and work place experience. Our goal is to have an average class size of 20 knowing that students will benefit from the smaller class sizes and more individualized attention can be given. The use of Individualized Learning Plans will lay out a structure of what students need to take in order to graduate. The state standards will be employed as we develop the curriculum.

We also recognize that students enrolled in the school may be working through some challenges and issues that they are facing. In order to help with this we will utilize aspects of the Restorative Practices to help work through and overcome these problems in their lives.

7. Describe plans for identifying and successfully serving students with disabilities, students who are English Language Learners, students who are academically challenged, and gifted students, including compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

- The counselors, administrators and teachers in Billings Public Schools can help identify all students that would benefit from enrollment in the BOS regardless of any barriers that they may face. Students that are English Language Learners (ELL) will be served by our ELL department. Whether they are behind because of lower academic abilities or advanced and struggling in the “regular” school, students would be served and challenged to achieve their full potential. Students with IEPs or 504s would all be assisted with their accommodations and their educational needs met.
8. Describe student discipline policies, including those for special education students.
- Students attending the BOS are expected to adhere to all of the established expectations, policies, and procedures that have been carefully reviewed and approved by the trustees of Billings Public Schools.

It is important to emphasize that, particularly for students in special education, not only do they enjoy the rights stipulated in the aforementioned policies, but they are also entitled to all rights mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Our commitment to providing a supportive and inclusive environment ensures that all students, including those with unique educational needs, are afforded the protections and opportunities they rightfully deserve.

### **School Governance**

9. Describe the public charter school’s organizational chart that clearly presents the proposed organizational structure, including lines of authority and reporting between the governing board, staff, related bodies such as advisory bodies or parent and teacher councils, and external organizations that will play a role in managing the public charter school.
- The Billings Public Schools Board of Trustees will be the governing body of the BOS. Oversight of the school will be provided by the school administrator under the direction of the Superintendent and the Executive Director of Secondary Education.

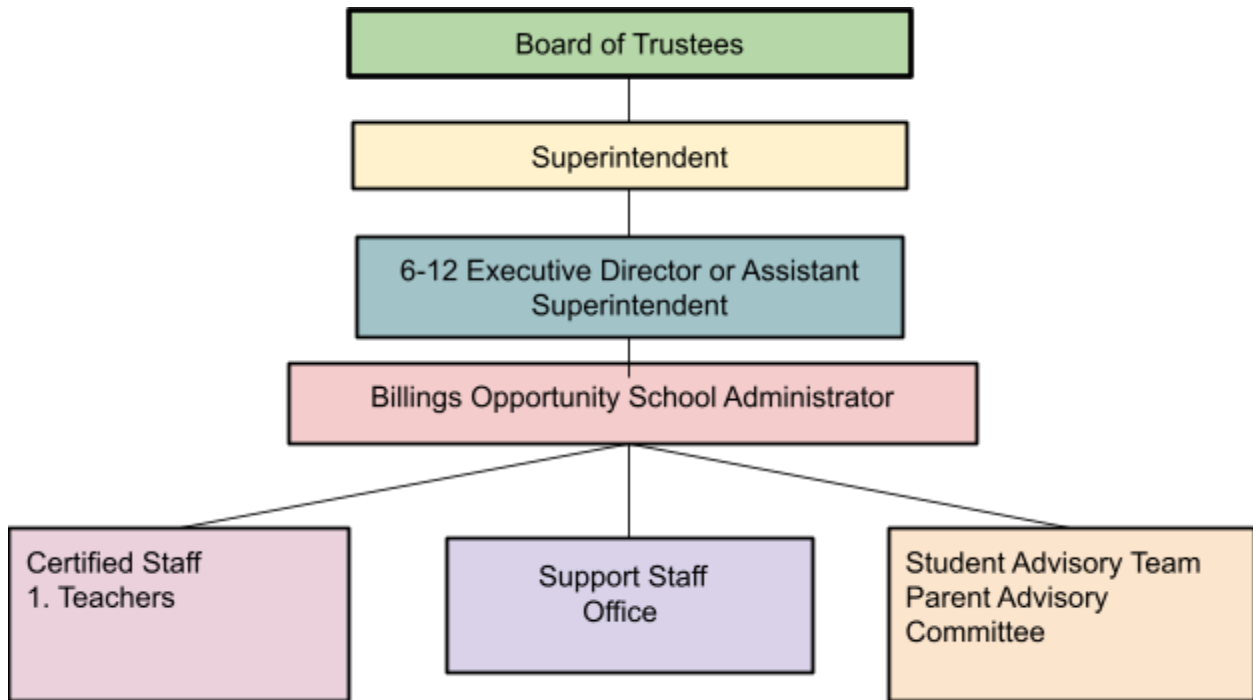
To ensure transparency and accountability, quarterly reports will be presented to the Board of Trustees by students and staff, detailing the ongoing activities and progress within the school. This practice allows the Board to stay informed about the developments and achievements taking place at the BOS.

Furthermore, fostering a strong partnership with the school community is a key priority. A dedicated parent advisory committee will convene on a quarterly basis to engage with the principal, exchange ideas, and discuss the educational experiences and needs of our students. This collaborative approach ensures that the school's direction is informed by the perspectives and aspirations of our students' families.

Recognizing the significance of students' voices in shaping their educational experience, a student council will be established to provide a platform for our students to express their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions. This initiative will empower our students to actively participate in enhancing the learning environment.

In addition to these community-oriented approaches, we understand that preparing our students for the future goes beyond the classroom. Therefore, we are committed to building partnerships with businesses and external organizations. These partnerships will offer students real-world exposure, internships, and valuable insights, ensuring they are well-prepared to thrive in the ever-changing landscape of tomorrow.

Together, through collaborative leadership, transparent reporting, active engagement, and strategic partnerships, we will create an environment that equips our students for success and empowers them to shape their futures.



10. Describe the roles and responsibilities of the governing board, the proposed leadership management team, and other entities shown in the organizational chart.

- The school board will serve as the governing body, responsible for setting the overall strategic direction and policies of the BOS.

To ensure effective day-to-day operations, the hiring of a principal will be overseen by the Superintendent and the Executive Director of Secondary Education. The

principal will play a pivotal role in the school's administration, overseeing the daily activities and functioning of the BOS.

11. Provide a staffing chart for the public charter school's first year and a staffing plan for the term of the public charter school.

- The BOS will be staffed by teachers certified through the Montana Office of Public Instruction. We understand that the students in the school would benefit from smaller sizes. This will be a goal as we staff the school for not only the first year, but also subsequent school years as well.

Staff	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year	5th year
Teachers	4 FTE	6 FTE	7.5 FTE	9 FTE	9 FTE
Counselor	.5 FTE	.66 FTE	.75 FTE	1 FTE	1 FTE
Administrator	.5 FTE	.66 FTE	.75 FTE	1 FTE	1 FTE
Attendance Clerk/Secretary	.5 FTE	.66 FTE	.75 FTE	1 FTE	1 FTE
Custodian/Maintenance	.25 FTE	.5 FTE	.75 FTE	1 FTE	1 FTE

12. Detail the public charter school startup plan, identifying tasks, timelines, and responsible individuals.

- We need to start by identifying students that will be part of the BOS. The number of students will determine the staffing that we need. We will have students identified at the public high schools in the Spring of 2024 and provide them with an individual plan of what they need to do to graduate. The school will not only be open to those students currently in the Billings high schools. There will be communication to students that have already dropped out and provide them with the information about this new opportunity in the hopes that they will enroll and continue on their educational path.

13. Describe the plans for recruiting and developing school leadership and staff.

- The BOS will follow the hiring currently in place in Billings Public Schools. Relevant, focused and specific training will be provided to staff members working in the school.

14. Describe the proposed leadership and teacher employment policies, including performance evaluation plans.

- We will follow all current employment policies utilized in Billings Public Schools. Evaluations will follow the same procedures currently being used.

15. State the proposed governing bylaws.

- The BOS will follow the policies and procedures of Billings Public Schools.

16. Explain any partnerships or contractual relationships central to the operations and mission of the public charter school.

- The BOS will adhere to the mission and vision of Billings Public Schools.

17. Provide the proposed calendar and sample daily schedule.

- The school year will coincide with that of Billings Public Schools. With that, students may be on a flexible six period day. Flexible meaning, they may start their day at 8:00 am and end at 3:00 pm or start later and end later. Some students may only spend a portion of that time in school and the rest of their time could be spent utilizing online learning, internships or work based experience. The schedule that students follow will be based upon their needs. They may need to take care of siblings or their own children and need flexibility in their own school day. The BOS will work with students and provide a schedule that is best for them.

### **Business Operations**

18. Describe plans for providing transportation, food service, and all other significant operational or ancillary services.

- The BOS will use the same services as Billings Public Schools to provide transportation, food service and other needed services for students. We will also utilize the MET transportation system through the city of Billings.

19. Describe co-curricular and extracurricular programs and how the programs will be funded and delivered.

- Our goal for students at the BOS is for them to be part of starting different clubs and organizations. This will provide them an opportunity to have a connection to school outside of the classroom and also a way to give back to their community. Students will also be allowed to participate in established programs and clubs in the existing Billings high schools.

20. Describe the proposed financial plan and policies, including financial controls and audit requirements.

- A budget will be finalized and adopted by the Billings Public School Board of Trustees adhering to state law and board policy. This budget will be under control of the Billings Public School Chief Financial Officer and will follow audit requirements as outlined in state law.

21. Describe the insurance coverage that will be obtained.

- The BOS will be covered by the same insurance provider as Billings Public Schools. Current coverage is provided through Montana Schools Property and Liability Insurance Plan administered by PayneWest.

22. Describe the startup and five-year budgets with clearly stated assumptions.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
State Basic Entit. 44.7%	\$158,143	\$162,887	\$167,774	\$172,807	\$177,991
Local Basic Entit. 80%	\$124,887	\$128,633	\$132,492	\$136,467	\$140,561
Total	\$283,030	\$291,520	\$300,266	\$309,454	\$318,552
ANB	-	\$689,853 104 Students	\$1,064,297 156 Students	\$1,451,788 207 Students	\$1,876,936 260 Students
Quality Ed.	-	\$15,133	\$23,380	\$30,102	\$37,206
At-Risk	-	\$1,313	\$2,625	\$3,281	\$5,250
IEFA	-	\$3,116	\$6,418	\$8,264	\$13,619
DFA	-	\$1,214	\$2,502	\$3,221	\$5,308
SPED	-	\$16,347	\$33,674	\$43,355	\$71,450
Total	-	\$37,122	\$68,599	\$88,223	\$132,832
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>\$283,030</b>	<b>\$1,018,495</b>	<b>\$1,433,162</b>	<b>\$1,850,185</b>	<b>\$2,328,321</b>
Certified	\$349,600	\$540,132	\$695,420	\$859,539	\$885,325
Counselor	\$43,701	\$59,415	\$69,543	\$95,505	\$98,371
Admin	\$66,125	\$89,904	\$105,228	\$144,513	\$148,849
Secretary	22,138	\$30,098	\$35,229	\$48,380	\$49,832
Custodian	\$15,250	\$31,415	\$48,536	\$66,656	\$68,656
Overhead 5%	\$24,841	\$37,548	\$47,698	\$60,730	\$62,552

Supplies & Technology	\$100,00	\$103,000	\$106,090	\$109,273	\$112,551
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$621,654</b>	<b>\$891,512</b>	<b>\$1,107,743</b>	<b>\$1,384,597</b>	<b>\$1,426,135</b>
<b>General Fund Implications</b>	<b>(\$388,624)</b>	<b>\$126,983</b>	<b>\$325,419</b>	<b>\$465,588</b>	<b>\$902,186</b>

23. Describe the startup and first year cash flow projections with clearly stated assumptions.

- We recognize that there will only be basic entitlement funding the first year. The remaining funding will flow through the general fund. If needed a multi-district agreement between the Billings Elementary School and Billings High School districts is in place and funding from there could be used, though this is not foreseen as a need.

24. Describe anticipated fundraising contributions and evidence, if applicable.

- The Billings Public Schools grant writer will continue to explore grant funding opportunities. Also, the Billings Education Foundation will be explored as another avenue for community fundraising to assist staff in providing assistance to students.

25. Describe the facilities plan, including backup or contingency plans.

- There is currently space available in the Lincoln Center to hold classes for the BOS.

In the Fall of 2024, BPS intends to run a High School Bond initiative that will not only update our existing high schools but build a new building to expand our Career Center opportunities as well as provide classroom space for the BOS.

As a backup, there are rooms in each of the high schools that would be available to provide a “school within a school” model.

#### Community Support and Need

26. Describe the specific evidence of significant community support.

- Local businesses and organizations in our community actively seek employees who have, at the very least, completed their high school education. They wholeheartedly recognize the intrinsic worth of attaining a high school diploma, particularly the perseverance and determination it symbolizes. Furthermore, they place great emphasis on the remarkable strength displayed by individuals who have faced and surmounted obstacles, such as academic difficulties, and have remained steadfast on their educational journey until graduation.

27. Describe the opportunities and expectations for parent involvement.

- Active parental involvement in their child's education is not just important but a heartfelt desire for us. This commitment becomes even more pronounced when we're working with students who have faced challenges and may be at risk of dropping out. In such cases, we recognize the vital role parents play in their child's academic journey.

Our approach is one of partnership with parents. We are dedicated to collaborating closely with them to craft individualized plans that cater to the unique needs of their children, setting them on a path to success. We firmly believe that parents are integral members of our educational team, and their insights and support are invaluable in helping their children thrive academically.

Furthermore, if a parent has their own aspiration to earn a high school diploma, we are equally committed to supporting their educational goals. We will guide them towards our Adult Education Program, where they can embark on their own journey to accomplish this significant milestone.

In essence, our commitment extends beyond the students to their families, ensuring that together, we create a supportive and empowering educational environment that paves the way for both academic success and personal growth.