Picture yourself on your first day of school. For many of us, that was quite a few moons ago, but humor me and try.

In larger cities, like Flint, Michigan, where I grew up, the city was divided like a pie to form school district boundaries that provided for a more diverse student population. Moab only has one school district, the Grand County School District. Albeit an excellent learning district, in 2003, a group of parents and community members decided to provide another education option. They opened Moab
Academy/Moab Community School, founded as an arts-based school for those students struggling in conventional classrooms.

In 2005, Moab Community School formally established their relationship with Utah State Board of Education (USBE) as a charter school and became Moab Charter School (MCS). MCS is now a well-established option for Moab’s youth, grounded through experience with students of all learning styles. Since 2008, MCS has been on a focused trajectory of financial accountability and stability, solid enrollment and greater outreach in the Moab community. Our high standards start with ourselves and show in our exceptional faculty and staff.

We’re proud of our team of extraordinary educators who bring years of expertise, outstanding qualifications, energy, creativity and joy to their work every day. Following Utah’s Common Core State Standards, our teachers carefully plan engaging lessons to bring learning alive and to make it applicable to life outside of school. It is through these cross-curricular experiences that students develop greater understanding and love of learning.

I moved to Moab in August of 2012 for the kindergarten teaching position at MCS. Having taught fifth, fourth and second grades in Montana, I was ready for younger students. To-date, MCS is my favorite school that I have ever attended or taught at. As a teacher and now the director, I can attest to the team approach to student success.

Like Grand County School District, MCS operates under the governance of a board, with highly qualified educators, and through full transparency and accountability to the USBE. The differences that set Moab Charter School apart are meaningful. With classes capped at 20 students each, teachers have more time to give each student one-on-one attention, a luxury not afforded in many district schools. As a child myself, I had upwards of 36 students in a class and as a teacher I had 27 students for a class one year. Teaching at MCS where classes are capped at 20 is a breath of fresh air. The opportunities for student success and relationship building are endless.

This year, I am excited to bring our staff on stage for a song or two at our annual spring musical to show off our collaborative talent with our students. With a career in dance education and modern dance performance prior to teaching, the MCS charter (the founding document of the school) endows teachers with the autonomy to structure their lessons for the needs of the students. I have been able to bring movement and dance to our students in meaningful ways.

Students and parents at MCS are a part of our family. Having grown up in a large city, I always felt like a number, but this unique feature is definitely one of my favorite parts of MCS. To promote this family feel we begin each day with morning circle outside as the whole school. We recite the Pledge of Allegiance, sing our school song, honor birthdays and other special occasions, have performances by classes and more.

My favorite annual school and family events include the Thanksgiving feast, the winter holiday concert, the St. Valentine’s Day tea, the spring musical, the end of year barbecue and talent show, and the year-end promotion ceremonies. Each event is like a family reunion.

Another special feature of MCS is our proximity to community partners. Continuing those ties with our community, our teachers actively get their students outside our school gates to grow.

Thanks to all of the folks at the BEACON Afterschool Program, Canyon Country Outdoor Education, Dead Horse Point State Park, Grand Area Mentoring, Moab Arts Festival, Moab Music Festival, Moab Folk Festival, Moab Valley Multicultural Center, WabiSabi, Seekhaven Family Crisis and Resource Center, and the Museum
of Moab, our students don’t have just one teacher … they have a community of teachers. We are here to serve Moab’s youth.

Carrie Ann Marinelli is the director at the Moab Charter School.

“As a teacher and now the director, I can attest to the team approach to student success.”