

Discussion Points for Updates to ANCS Enrollment Policy for Charter Renewal

Priority attendance zones

Following the merger of the Neighborhood Charter School and Atlanta Charter Middle School in 2011 to form the Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School (ANCS), the priority attendance zones of each former school remained in place for the elementary and middle school campuses:

- ELEMENTARY
 - Zone 1: Grant Park/Ormewood Park
 - Zone 2: Neighborhood Planning Unit-W (NPU-W)
 - Zone 3: Rest of city of Atlanta (zoned for Atlanta Public Schools)
- MIDDLE
 - Zone 1: NPU-W
 - Zone 2: Rest of city of Atlanta (zoned for Atlanta Public Schools)

Charter school regulations now require that, as a part of the renewal of our charter, the priority attendance zones be the same for the entire school. These updated priority attendance zones would take effect for enrollment for the 2016-17 school year.

[A range of different allowable priority attendance zones options was initially presented and discussed at the January meeting of the ANCS Governing Board.](#) Since that time, the ANCS leadership team has considered these different priority attendance zone options guided by the following principles:

- The updated priority attendance zones should not exclude neighborhoods in one of our current priority attendance zones.
- The updated priority attendance zones should align with our founding as a “neighborhood” charter school.
- The updated priority attendance zones should reflect our commitment to serving a diverse student population.

Each of the allowable options discussed was accompanied with a set of benefits and challenges. In line with these principles, **the ANCS leadership team recommends the following guidance to the board as it makes a decision on updated K-8 priority attendance zones:**

- Widen the primary priority attendance zone beyond simply Grant Park/Ormewood Park
- Include Grant Park/Ormewood Park in the primary priority attendance zone while also including other neighborhoods currently in our other priority attendance zone (NPU-W) as 75% of our currently-enrolled students reside within NPU-W

- Carefully consider the inclusion in a priority attendance zone of other neighborhoods geographically close to our campuses so as to align with being a “neighborhood” charter school
- Use boundaries for the primary priority attendance zone that are politically-designated (such as neighborhoods, neighborhood planning units, and/or zip codes) rather than boundaries that are ANCS-designated (such as a certain geographic radius around each campus)

We are happy to provide additional data to assist the board in making a final decision on updated priority attendance zones.

Weighted enrollment lottery

Our school has also been focused on increasing the socioeconomic (SES) diversity of our student population. [A board presentation in January highlighted the benefits of SES diversity that underlie this focus and our outreach efforts aimed at increasing our SES diversity.](#)

In addition to continuing these outreach efforts, ANCS has worked with other area charter schools and Georgia state representative Margaret Kaiser to advocate for legislation that would allow Georgia public charter schools to use a weighted enrollment lottery to insure serving a higher percentage of students who qualify for one or more categories of students who fall under the federal definition of “educationally disadvantaged”. This definition includes students whose families qualify for free or reduced price school meals (FRL). At present, Georgia HB 474 passed the House by a vote of 166-2 and now moves to the Senate. It appears likely to pass in the Senate, and then, we hope, receive the signature of the governor, after which point the Georgia Department of Education would provide guidance for schools who wish to use a weighted lottery under this law.

Assuming that HB 474 will become law, **our leadership team recommends that the board discuss and consider the possibility that our charter renewal include a weighted enrollment lottery based on FRL status as an addition to our current enrollment policy.** After reviewing guidance from the GaDOE, policy language would be drafted and recommended to the board, but our initial idea is that in the ANCS lottery, students from the priority attendance zone whose families qualify for FRL would receive 2x the weight of other applicants in the lottery as we work towards achieving a schoolwide FRL percentage in the 30%-50% range.