

Changing the ANCS Calendar and Elementary Campus Schedule to Better Support Students and Teachers

Proposed School Calendar Changes

<i>Why needed?</i>	<i>What would it look like?</i>	<i>What else should I know?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Increased days for faculty/staff planning, collaboration, and training to better serve students in grades K-8 ∞ Reallocation of school breaks for rejuvenation and targeted support and enrichment for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Add 2 days to faculty/staff calendar ∞ End school year 4 days later to create 2 break weeks during October and February→ each week, faculty/staff report 2 days (students off) and optional support/enrichment activities available for all students during remaining 3 days of each week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Students still in school 180 days ∞ Same first day of school as APS calendar ∞ Same start to major holiday breaks as APS calendar ∞ Oct/Feb break weeks would overlap with some days off in APS calendar ∞ Academic support (formerly Saturday school) offered during these breaks free to invited students ∞ Other enrichment activities offered during these breaks at low cost (or free with scholarship) to any interested students ∞ ANCS aftercare available on support/enrichment days for families who need it ∞ Activities and aftercare available from 8:30 to 4 on support/enrichment days during breaks

Proposed Elementary Campus Weekly Schedule Changes

<i>Why needed?</i>	<i>What would it look like?</i>	<i>What else should I know?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Increase amount of uninterrupted instructional time ∞ Create longer blocks of uninterrupted time for teachers to plan, collaborate, and train in order to better serve students at the elementary campus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Extend school day to 3 PM on M, T, Th, & F (currently 2:50 PM) ∞ Reconfigure daily schedule to give consistent planning time and longer instructional blocks to grade level teams ∞ Earlier dismissal for students on Weds. at 1:30 PM to allow for longer weekly collaboration time for all elementary campus faculty/staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ ANCS elementary campus students in school 1 hour more each week than other APS elementary schools ∞ ANCS middle campus has had weekly Wednesday early dismissal since 2008 ∞ Aftercare will be available on Wednesdays at same daily rate (or free with scholarship) as all other days of week ∞ Additional enrichment activities available to interested students at low cost on Wednesdays after school ∞ Early dismissal on Wednesdays provides a time for students and families to take care of certain needs and appointments without having to miss school

Why Adjusting the ANCS Calendar and Elementary Campus Schedule is Better for Students and Better for Teachers

There are many benefits to students when their teachers have sufficient and consistent time for collaboration and planning. Research bears this out, but also reveals that traditional school calendars and schedules significantly limit schools' ability to capitalize on these benefits:

- ∞ <http://www.districtadministration.com/article/benefits-teacher-collaboration>
- ∞ <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept93/vol51/num01/Finding-Time-for-Collaboration.aspx>
- ∞ <http://cie.asu.edu/volume6/number15/#conclusions>

Beyond the benefits cited above for all schools, at a school like ANCS, in which...

- curriculum is planned by teachers around creative projects that cut across disciplines rather than relying on superficial textbooks;
- teachers are engaged in whole staff learning about topics such as Conscious Discipline to help students manage the social-emotional well-being and meeting the needs of academically-advanced students;
- high levels of feedback and information for students and parents—through blogs, narrative report cards, conferences—is expected;
- there is a higher percentage of students with special needs than 75% of all APS schools which requires more training and more time in which teachers are involved in SST and IEP meetings; and
- the expectation exists for K-8 alignment—educationally and operationally—across two separate campuses...

...there is even more of a need for ample time for teacher planning and collaboration. Add to that...

- the demands of learning about and implementing new Common Core standards;
- new teacher and leader evaluation systems developed by the state that have real implications for the professional careers of teachers and principals, and;
- complicated new school accountability requirements to which our school is held...

There is clearly not enough time to do our best work for students with our current calendar and schedule.

Therefore, ANCS is proposing changes to the school calendar and elementary campus schedule designed at increasing the capacity for *effective* collaboration and planning time for teachers throughout the entire school year, which will:

- ∞ Directly benefit *all* students through better instruction, better projects, better feedback **allowing us to meet the student learning goals of our charter and strategic plan for students of all ability levels;**

- ∞ Enhance the operational alignment between the two campuses so that we can **maximize our merger through more efficient, similar, and cost-effective systems and procedures**;
- ∞ Sustain the professional lives of our teachers to **retain talented teachers** for longer and keep the engaged in meaningful and manageable work;
- ∞ Create greater capacity among ANCS teachers for **collaboration with Maynard Jackson High School and other area schools** serving our students; and
- ∞ Help us to **live up to the 9th CES common principle about resources dedicated to teaching and learning** that calls for “substantial time for collective planning by teachers”

When it comes to time, we realize that what is best for teachers may not always be best for families. However, placing most of the faculty and staff planning time at the beginning of the school year proves difficult to addressing all of the needs listed above and to adapt to student needs that arise during the year that we cannot foresee in early August. We believe ANCS can be a leader in showing what is needed to create the conditions for educators to provide the best possible teaching and learning experience throughout the school year while balancing the needs of families’ schedules. Ultimately, all of our students will benefit.

Adjust the Yearly School Calendar

Proposed Use of Faculty/Staff Days – 2014-15 SY
Days listed in yellow added to faculty/staff work calendar

July 23-24: K-8 Retreat and Learning Institute (off-site location)

- ∞ Team building
- ∞ Introduction of new faculty and staff
- ∞ Goal-setting for 2014-15 school year
- ∞ Discussion and action planning related to faculty/staff summer reading book (previous summer reading books have focused on topics such as Conscious Discipline, grading/assessment, Understanding by Design)

July 25-August 1: Pre-planning

- ∞ Curriculum planning
- ∞ Grade level meetings (first weeks of school activities, orientation)
- ∞ Room set up to prepare for students
- ∞ Mandatory health and safety trainings (abuse/neglect, emergency drills, first aid/CPR, etc.)
- ∞ HR presentations (finance and operations procedures, employee handbook review, benefits providers, financial planning seminar)

October 6: Planning and grading

- ∞ Grade level curriculum planning K-8 (3.5 hours)

- ∞ Grading of common assessments in grade level teams (3.5 hours)
 - *What does “meeting” the standards look like?*
 - *Looking together at student work*

October 7: Professional learning K-8

- ∞ Conscious Discipline workshop (3.5 hours)
 - *Debrief successes and challenges from first 8 weeks of school year*
 - *Discuss and practice techniques to implement moving forward*
- ∞ Meeting the needs of academically advanced students (3.5 hours)
 - *Debrief successes and challenges from first 8 weeks of school year*
 - *Discuss and practice techniques to implement moving forward*

November 4: Report cards and conferences

- ∞ Narrative report card writing time for term one
- ∞ Conferences with parents/students

January 5: Planning and professional learning

- ∞ Curriculum planning and prep for return of students (4 hours)
- ∞ Revisit 2014-15 school year goals and assess progress towards them by examining student and school data (2 hours)
- ∞ HR presentation (1 hour – open enrollment for health benefits)

February 16: Planning and grading

- ∞ Grade level curriculum planning K-8 (3.5 hours)
- ∞ Grading of common assessments in grade level teams (3.5 hours)
 - *What does “meeting” the standards look like?*
 - *Looking together at student work*
- ∞ Narrative report card writing time for term two

February 17: Professional learning K-8

- ∞ Common Core math and reading training (3.5 hours)
- ∞ How to support students with non-verbal learning disabilities (3.5 hours)

June 1-2: Grading and report writing

- ∞ Narrative report card writing time for term three
- ∞ Archiving student portfolios
- ∞ Classroom inventory

June 3: Reflection and planning

- ∞ K-8 review of progress towards 2014-15 goals (2 hours)
- ∞ Initial discussion of major initiatives for 2015-16 school year (1 hour)
- ∞ Curriculum planning and collaborative time in grade level teams with focus on summer tasks and 2015-16 school year (4 hours)

Adjust the Elementary Campus Weekly Schedule

The current daily/weekly schedule for the Elementary Campus faculty and staff makes it challenging for teachers and staff to carry out the educational and operational needs of the school. By addressing this issue with some changes to the schedule, the student experience will be directly impacted in a positive way at the Elementary Campus.

Allocation of an Elementary Campus Teacher's work time within current EC schedule:

Daily

- ∞ Direct teaching/supervision of students: *370 minutes per day*
- ∞ Lunch: *20 minutes per day*
- ∞ Time for curriculum planning with team, special education/SST meetings, parent emails/phone calls, updating blog, assessing student work, maintaining classroom and hallway space, reading faculty/staff emails, using the bathroom: *90 minutes per day*
 - *25 minutes prior to morning meeting*
 - *40 minutes during school day*
 - *25 minutes after school*

Weekly faculty meeting

There is a *faculty meeting each Wednesday after the 8-hour teacher workday ends that lasts about 90 minutes*. This time is used to work as a full EC faculty or in teams on the following:

- Announcements from the board, PTCA, outside groups
- Discussion of implementation of plans and programs such as Conscious Discipline, new standards, Understanding by Design curriculum planning
- Critical Friends Group meetings
- Examining and discussing campus student data from assessments and surveys
- Committee work: resources, environmental education, etc.
- Whole campus initiatives or logistical planning: report cards, allergy awareness, Winterfest, conferences, employee benefits, new teacher evaluation process, etc.

Allocation of an Elementary Campus Teacher's work time within proposed EC schedule:

Daily

- ∞ Direct teaching/supervision of students and lunch times remain the same
- ∞ Time for curriculum planning with team, special education/SST meetings, parent emails/phone calls, updating blog, assessing student work, maintaining classroom and hallway space, reading faculty/staff emails, using the bathroom is maintained and made more effective by longer chunks of time allocated

Weekly faculty meeting

Following the earlier student dismissal at 1:45 on Wednesdays, there would then be a *faculty meeting that lasts about 120 minutes, an increase of 30 minutes per week* of time

to work as a full faculty and/or in teams of Elementary Campus needs listed above. Coupled with the 2 additional faculty professional learning days added to the proposed school calendar, this would allow for much more sufficient time to attend to the complex and creative work of teaching and to the operational needs of the school.