



# Access & Admissions Policy

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# I. SCHOOL VISION, MISSION, AND PHILOSOPHY

Our vision is to be a dynamic learning community where students become life-long learners, develop self-knowledge, and are challenged to excel.

The mission of the Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School (ANCS) is to use the principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools (Appendix B) to:

- BUILD an empowered and inclusive community of students, parents, and educators
- CHALLENGE each student to take an active role as an informed citizen in a global society
- ENGAGE the whole child - intellectually, social-emotionally, and physically
- HELP all students to know themselves and to be known well by their community
- COLLABORATE with the larger community to advocate for student-centered schools.

In carrying out our mission, we are guided by the following values and principles.

ANCS is affiliated with the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES), a national network of schools focused on creating schools that are intellectually challenging, personalized, and democratic. CES schools are simply united by a shared commitment to ten Common Principles (Appendix A) that guide teaching, learning, and decision-making at each school. They are:

- Learning to use one's mind well
- Less is more: depth over coverage
- Goals apply to all students
- Personalization
- Student-as-worker/Teacher-as-coach
- Demonstration of mastery
- A tone of decency and trust
- Commitment to the entire school
- Resources dedicated to teaching and learning
- Democracy and equity

At ANCS, our Guiding Principles describe how we are to behave as members of the ANCS school family. We have an individual and collective responsibility to:

- Come to school and every class prepared to learn and do our best
- Respect each other, our surroundings, and ourselves
- Take responsibility for our actions and learning
- Resolve conflicts in a peaceful, thoughtful, and meaningful way
- Celebrate our individual and collective successes.

Additionally, the learners within our school community seek to embody the attributes of the IB MYP Learner Profile.

- Inquirers
- Knowledgeable
- Thinkers
- Communicators
- Principled
- Open-Minded
- Caring
- Risk-Takers
- Balanced
- Reflective

## II. PURPOSE, PHILOSOPHY, AND PRINCIPLES OF ACCESS & ADMISSIONS

### **PURPOSE**

ANCS was founded as a free, public charter school to bring a unique and innovative educational experience to a diverse neighborhood where students were previously zoned to several different schools. Those neighborhoods have changed over the years, and those changes have had an impact on the demographics of the ANCS student body, as well as the surrounding neighborhoods. ANCS is committed to serving a student population that is ethnically, culturally and socio-economically diverse.

### **PHILOSOPHY**

ANCS believes that an IB education is appropriate for all students. As such, all students who attend the ANCS middle campus will participate in the Middle Years Programme and will meet full programme requirements for class hours and assessment. Any modifications to full participation will be based on documented student needs as determined by members of the pedagogical leadership team, and modifications will be preceded by significant support from within the programme.

### **PRINCIPLES**

Part of what makes ANCS unique among other Atlanta public charter schools is the origin and history as a neighborhood school. ANCS will utilize measures that maintain our close connection to the core neighborhoods served, Grant Park, Ormewood Park and Summerhill, and allow us to meet our goal of serving a student body that is socioeconomically diverse. Current demographic trends in these neighborhoods, however, will present formidable challenges to our pursuit of a socioeconomically diverse student body throughout the 5-year period of our next charter.

(from Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School – Renewal Application, Submitted to Atlanta Public Schools on August 26, 2020)

## III. ACCESS AND ADMISSIONS PRACTICES

ANCS has experienced an increase in the number of applications from economically disadvantaged students seeking to become a part of the ANCS family, including a significant number from families outside of the primary attendance zone. The school has also exercised the right afforded by the Charter Schools Act of 1998 to provide economically disadvantaged students an increased chance of admission through a weighted lottery. In the current configuration, however, the primary attendance zone and lottery preferences have admitted a minimal number of economically disadvantaged applicants.

Presently, the percentage of individuals living in poverty among the three neighborhoods served by the school is 22.8%. In an effort to align our goal for socioeconomic diversity with current and federally registered demographics of our primary attendance zone, the objective over the course of the next charter term is to close the gap between that number (22.8%) and the percentage of economically disadvantaged students enrolled, which now stands at 13%.

In order to accomplish this goal, ANCS will work strategically to tap into a broader pool of applicants, seeking, whenever we are able, to work from precedent and best practices of peer institutions in the APS charter system. ANCS will first intensify outreach efforts in the primary attendance zone, redoubling our investment in recruitment and working even harder to improve our standing to new constituencies in our community. This will continue to be our first and foremost focus. In addition to increasing the applicant pool of economically disadvantaged students, we will utilize the highest possible lottery weighting to increase the likelihood of serving more economically disadvantaged students.

In the event the ANCS Board reasonably anticipates that it will not have sufficient lottery applicants from students who are economically disadvantaged in our primary attendance zone (“Zone 1”) to meet its goals of serving economically disadvantaged students, then randomly selected economically disadvantaged students from Zones 2 and/or 3 may be placed in the lottery in numbers sufficient to make it statistically likely that ANCS will reach its stated goal. These admissions policies are consistent with ANCS’s mission to serve a large number of economically disadvantaged students while remaining a neighborhood school. ANCS’s Board reserves the right to make changes to its attendance zones and priorities to fulfill its mission.

For specific information about the lottery process, including priorities and waitlist procedures, please visit <https://atlncs.org/enrollment-policies-procedures/>

It is the practice of ANCS for all students enrolled at the Middle Campus, which serves grades six through eight, to undertake years one through three. As the school ends in eighth grade, there are no students in Years 4 and 5.

It is the practice of ANCS to maintain full enrollment in order to allow access to the programme for as many students as possible. As a public school, maintaining full enrollment also secures maximum funding in order to support the resources needed for implementation of the programme.

# IV. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ACCESS AND ADMISSIONS WITHIN THE ANCS LEARNING COMMUNITY

## A. GOVERNING BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

- regularly review the procedures and results of the lottery system to ensure that the system continues to allow access to education at the school
- maintain supports the school to continue offering the MYP to all students served at the Middle Campus

## B. LEADERSHIP and STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

- provide support within the structures of the MYP in order to ensure that all students are appropriately supported and are able to participate in the programme
- maintain full enrollment through use of the waitlist in order to allow access to the highest number of students possible
  - the exception to maintaining full enrollment is that ANCS does not enroll new students into 8th grade (Year 3) in the second semester of the school year as that is the final year offered at our school
- continue outreach efforts to the community in order to ensure that the community is aware of the programme and has access should they chose to enter into the lottery to attend ANCS

## C. PARENT AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

- become familiar with the requirements for and maintain verification of residency in order to stay enrolled at the school and submit necessary documentation in a timely manner
- maintain communication with the school about needs and supports for students in order for them to successfully navigate the programme

## V. PROCEDURE FOR REVIEW OF ACCESS AND ADMISSIONS POLICY

This Access and Admissions policy was created by the IB Coordinator in conjunction with the IB Team in 2023 with improvements made based on input from the full faculty and staff. This policy will be reviewed annually to make additional improvements and will also be referenced during the planning of each unit of study. Students and families will be provided with this policy at the beginning of each school year so that it can be reviewed as often as necessary to ensure that the practices outlined in this policy are observed.

The IB Standards and Practices addressed in this policy are included below, in order to ensure that as the policy develops it continues to meet all requirements.

### **Standard: Culture through policy implementation(0301)**

Schools develop, implement, communicate and review effective policies that help to create a school culture in which IB philosophy can thrive.

### **Culture Practice 1: The school secures access to an IB education for the broadest possible range of students. (0301-01)**

- Culture 1.1: The school implements and reviews an access and/or admissions policy that clearly describes the conditions for participation in the school's programme(s). (0301-01-0100)
- Culture 1.2: The school provides relevant support materials, resources and structures to promote access to the school's programme(s) for as many students as reasonable. (0301-01-0200)
- Culture 1.3: The school provides opportunities to access the programme(s) for the broadest possible range of students. (0301-01-0300)
  - MYP 1: The school monitors and evaluates its efforts to provide students with equal opportunities to undertake the MYP. (0301-01-0321)

Initial policy creation September 2023 based on existing practices.

# VI. APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: COALITION OF ESSENTIAL SCHOOLS 10 COMMON PRINCIPLES

### **Learning to use one's mind well**

The school should focus on helping young people to use their minds well. Schools should not be “comprehensive” if such a claim is made at the expense of the school’s central intellectual purpose.

### **Less is more: depth over coverage**

The school’s goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. While these skills and areas will, to varying degrees, reflect the traditional academic disciplines, the program’s design should be shaped by the intellectual and imaginative powers and competencies that the students need, rather than by “subjects” as conventionally defined. The aphorism “less is more” should dominate: curricular decisions should be guided by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement rather than by an effort to merely cover content.

### **Goals apply to all students**

The school’s goals should apply to all students, while the means to these goals will vary as those students themselves vary. School practice should be tailor-made to meet the needs of every group or class of students.

### **Personalization**

Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent. Efforts should be directed toward a goal that no teacher have direct responsibility for more than 80 students in the high school and middle school and no more than 20 in the elementary school. To capitalize on this personalization, decisions about the details of the course of study, the use of students’ and teachers’ time and the choice of teaching materials and specific pedagogies must be unreservedly placed in the hands of the principal and staff.

### **Student-as-worker/Teacher-as-coach**

The governing practical of the school should be “student-as-worker”, rather than the more familiar metaphor of “teacher as deliverer of instructional services.” Accordingly, a prominent pedagogy will be coaching students to learn how to learn and thus to teach themselves.

### **Demonstration of mastery**

Teaching and learning should be documented and assessed with tools based on student performance of real tasks. Students not yet at appropriate levels of competence should be provided intensive support and resources to assist them quickly to meet standards. Multiple forms of evidence, ranging from ongoing observation of the learner to completion of specific projects, should be used to better understand the learner’s strengths and needs, and to plan for further assistance. Students should have opportunities to exhibit their expertise before family and community. The diploma should be awarded upon a successful final demonstration of mastery for graduation: an “Exhibition.” As the diploma is awarded when earned, the school’s program proceeds with no strict age grading and with no system of “credits earned” by “time spent” in class.

### **A tone of decency and trust**

The tone of the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress values of unanxious expectation, of trust, and of decency (fairness, generosity, and tolerance). Incentives appropriate to the school’s particular students and teachers should be emphasized. Families should be key collaborators and vital members of the school community.

### **Commitment to the entire school**



The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first (teachers and scholars in general education) and specialists second (experts in but one particular discipline). Staff should expect multiple obligations (teacher-counselor-manager) and demonstrate a sense of commitment to the entire school.

### **Resources dedicated to teaching and learning**

Ultimate administrative and budget targets should include student loads that promote personalization, substantial time for collective planning by teachers, competitive salaries for staff, and an ultimate per-pupil cost not to exceed that at traditional schools by more than 10 percent. To accomplish this, administrative plans may have to show the phased reduction or elimination of some services now provided to students in many schools.

### **Democracy and equity**

The school should demonstrate non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies. It should model democratic practices that involve all who are directly affected by the school. The school should honor diversity and build on the strength of its communities, deliberately and explicitly challenging all forms of inequity.