

Input & Decision-Making at the Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School

In making decisions for our school community, we are guided by principles and supported by practices that give voice to those directly impacted by decisions and provide clarity so that decisions can be made effectively *and* efficiently.

What principles guide the decision-making process at ANCS?

Our ANCS Guiding Principles are used to guide the decision-making process at ANCS.

1) We come to school and every class prepared to learn and do our best.

- We define problems clearly and involve all those affected in inquiry before we advocate for solutions.
- We propose solutions that are crafted with thoughtful consideration primarily on how they affect teaching and learning and the health and wellbeing of the children in our community.
- We balance the need for efficient decision-making with the need to solve problems collectively and cooperatively.

2) We respect each other, our surroundings, and ourselves.

- We are all part of the same team; we collectively own problems, and we collectively solve them.
- We share feedback and input in a constructive way. We listen to feedback and input with an open-mind.

3) We take responsibility for our actions and learning.

- We accept the responsibilities associated with our role in the school community as teachers, parents, or administrators and respect the roles of others.
- We recognize that we can learn from the perspectives and experiences of others and commit to listening and assuming goodwill.

4) We resolve conflicts in a peaceful, meaningful, thoughtful way

- We allow conflict and differing ideas to exist, and we recognize that tension may be a part of making decisions.
- We focus on solutions, not blame, and presume positive and constructive intentions on the part of others.

5) We celebrate our individual and collective successes.

- We celebrate our culture of cooperation, trust, and partnership as part of what makes us special as a school community.

Who makes what decisions?

Decision-Making Body	Jurisdiction	Examples of Responsibilities
<p>Governing Board</p> <p><i>ANCS by-laws require majority of board members to be ANCS parents</i></p>	State and federal law, the school's charter agreement, core strategic issues	Sets policies and priorities aimed at making sure school is in compliance with laws, charter, and mission and vision; approves budget; approves changes to school's charter and/or strategic plan
<p>K-8 Leadership Team</p> <p><i>Executive Director, Principals & Assistant Principals, Director of Business/Operations, Special Education Coordinator, Director of Collaborative Learning & Partnerships</i></p>	Big issues that affect core aspects of school life or school program	Implements Board policies, charter and strategic plan, and state mandates; directs the educational program and implementation of curriculum
<p>Executive Director/Principals</p>	Day-to-day operations; immediate student or personnel matters	Ensures student and employee safety; develops procedures to support state law and school policies; evaluates the quality of educational programs
<p>Campus Leadership Teams</p> <p><i>facilitated by Principals; representatives from grade levels</i></p>	Elements of the educational program that require professional design and affect one campus	Creates daily schedule for students and faculty/staff; Recommends and provides professional development; Establishes norms for common spaces; Organizes curricular goals and educational programs for grade level trips
<p>Full Faculty/Staff</p>	Elements of the educational program that require professional design and affect the whole school	Creates curriculum scope and sequences; Establishes grading practices
<p>Task Force</p> <p><i>Could include students, parents, teachers/staff</i></p>	Involves design after whole group instructions given; outcome is to make recommendation	IB task force
<p>PTCA</p> <p><i>led by Executive Committee made up of a president, an elementary campus vice-president, a middle campus</i></p>	Parent and community events and committees	Coordinates and promotes parent, teacher and community involvement and communication within the school; Provides financial and volunteer support for initiatives that reinforce the educational program

<p><i>vice-president, a secretary, a treasurer, two volunteer coordinators, one from each campus, and two faculty representatives, one from each campus</i></p>		
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At ANCS, we aim to live out the 10th common principle of the Coalition of Essential Schools by “modeling democratic practices that involve all who are directly affected by the school.” Therefore, although certain bodies have decision-making authority in certain areas, the input of those people—teachers, students, parents, etc.—who will be impacted by certain decisions is sought prior to a decision being made (see below).

How are decisions made?

In general, the appropriate decision-making body for a particular issue or proposal will be guided by the principles for decision-making at ANCS and, as appropriate:

- 1) outline a process that includes gathering input from those individuals and/or groups impacted by the decision;
- 2) specify a timeline by which a decision will be made.

In some rare instances where time is of the essence, it may be necessary to make a decision on an issue without gathering input.

The Executive Director and Governing Board Chair will determine which decision-making body should address a particular issue or proposal if it is unclear to whom the issue should go.

Unless otherwise specified by the decision-making body, decisions should stand for at least three months before changes are proposed.

How is input gathered prior to making big decisions that impact all students, families, and/or faculty/staff at one or both campuses?

Some decisions at our school will impact all (or most) of the students, families, and/or faculty/staff at one or both of our campuses. Examples of such decisions might include the adoption of our school’s annual budget, approval of the yearly school calendar, or the employee leave policy. For these decisions, the Executive Director and Board Chair will consult with the Principals and PTCA President about the process for gathering input from those groups most likely to be impacted by the decision. The process and timeline for gathering input along with key background information on the matter to be decided upon will be explained and communicated to impacted groups through a variety of means, such as:

- Courier
- Email and phone messaging system
- Website and social media

The actual gathering of input should also involve multiple avenues in order to give everyone in impacted groups an opportunity to express their opinion. Those avenues for gathering input and feedback can include (but do not need to be limited to):

- Anonymous surveys
- PTCA meetings and/or separate community meetings
- Focus groups

A summary of the feedback gathered should be presented along with the final recommendation to the decision-making body.

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