

Center for Collaborative Learning

Purpose & Initial Activities

Overview

As a charter school with over a decade of experience, ANCS has an obligation to use its success as a catalyst for creating collaborative learning opportunities that can transform classrooms and schools and influence wider discussions of teaching and learning in Atlanta and beyond. This focus is included in our school's new mission statement, which emphasizes "collaborating with the larger community to advocate for student-centered schools". This statement reflects both our sense of collective responsibility for helping to make all schools great and our belief that the best way for ANCS to fulfill this responsibility is not through replication or expansion but through collaboration with other schools. At the same time, these collaborative learning activities improve our school by allowing us to see different ways of teaching and learning from other schools and by giving our veteran educators an outlet for coaching and leadership in ways that enable them to grow in their practice.

To this end, beginning in the summer of 2014, ANCS started to facilitate opportunities for collaborative learning about practices grounded in the common principles for the Coalition of Essential Schools. This work has been led by Elizabeth Hearn, the head of our New Teacher Residency Project and, new this year, serving as our Director of Collaborative Learning and Partnerships.

Through our Center for Collaborative Learning, we aim to bring together individuals, schools, and organizations to build capacity for creating student-centered learning environments in the three distinct ways:

Dissemination

Under the umbrella of "dissemination", we share best practices and lessons learned from the ANCS experience and also provide opportunities for further learning on specific topics.

Examples of activities in this area include:

- Visits to ANCS to observe teaching and learning
 - Henry County Schools
 - Utopian Academy for the Arts
- Workshops to deepen knowledge of ANCS practices for possible use in their own settings
 - Universal Design for Learning - July 2014
 - Conscious Discipline - July & Oct 2014
 - Everyday Mathematics - August 2014
- Institutes and lectures by outside experts on specific topics
 - Educator certification programs and requirements (GCSA, GSU, GaPSC) - Nov 2014
- Publications and presentations of ANCS practices
 - Coalition of Essential Schools Fall Forum - Nov 2014

- Georgia Charter Schools Leadership Conference - Jan 2015
- Publication of chapters about ANCS New Teacher Residency Project in *Case Studies in Clinical Teacher Preparation* (2014) and associated presentation at Association of Teacher Educators conference - Feb 2015

Teacher/Leader Development

Under the umbrella of “teacher/leader development” are activities that foster the growth of teachers at ANCS to either improve ANCS and/or to take their learning to other schools.

Examples of activities in this area include:

- New Teacher Residency Project - Jan 2012 to present
 - Supporting 32 teacher residents in early stages of their career
 - Training for over 40 veteran ANCS educators to sharpen skills as mentor teachers, cooperating teachers, and coaches
- Critical Friends Group institutes - 5 institutes held from June 2012 to present
 - Over 40 ANCS educators have taken part in at least one CFG institute to strengthen their work as CFG coaches or to gain tools and perspectives to improve their teaching
 - Additionally, in part as a dissemination activity, ANCS invited several other interested schools to take part in CFG institutes in summer and fall 2014: Wesley International Academy, Dunbar Elementary School, Toomer Elementary School, King Middle School, Museum School, Weber School, New School
- Mindfulness training
 - Several ANCS teachers have paid to take part in ongoing mindfulness sessions organized by the CCL - Fall 2013 to present

Partnerships

Under the umbrella of “partnerships” are activities that are part of a longer-term relationship between ANCS and another school. These partnerships are with schools that ANCS sees as having a shared vision for student-centered schools and in which the partnership meets two or more of the following criteria:

1. benefit ANCS students now or in the future
2. hold the potential to make our own school stronger by providing access to professional development opportunities or teacher leadership
3. hold the potential for meaningful impact on the students of the partner school
4. focus on building collaborative relationships between the teachers and leaders across schools

Examples of activities in this area include:

- Ongoing coaching at GLOBE Academy Charter School in DeKalb County during leadership transition - May 2014 to present
- Collaboration and Reflection to Enhance Atlanta Teacher Effectiveness (CREATE) - Jan 2015 to Dec 2019

- Evolution of ANCS New Teacher Residency Project (NTRP) to bring on additional schools in APS's Maynard Jackson cluster in teacher residency program focused on collaboration across schools and math/science teaching and learning

Funding

The CCL operates with a goal of breaking even--or, ideally, generating marginal revenue--in its activities and it is currently meeting this goal through a mix of funding sources, including:

- Governor's Office of Student Achievement Innovation Fund grant (multi-year grant awarded January 2012)
- Atlanta Public Schools Office of Innovation grant to support clusterwide activities facilitated by CCL
- Fees from individuals and schools participating in CCL activities
- U.S. Department of Education Investing in Innovation grant (multi-year grant to be awarded January 2015)