

Philosophy Statement

Ann Arbor Open School

Ann Arbor Open School offers a radical educational alternative to students, teachers and parents in the Ann Arbor Public School District. Parents and teachers founded The Open School in the belief that children come to school already immersed in their own learning and have their own strengths and interests. We seek to support the individual and provide guidance, stimulation and support. Ann Arbor Open School strives to be a leading educational force in open education.

As an Open School, we promote social and emotional development. Children learn to share knowledge and feelings, to solve interpersonal problems, to develop common goals, and to respect each others' values. The emphasis is on challenging students individually based on cooperation rather than competition. Freedom, responsibility, self-discipline and consideration of others are learned by daily practice. When combined with the richness of the school's diverse population and a daily commitment to multicultural education, these various components challenge the barriers of sexism, racism and classism.

Our school is a community of lifelong learners. School and home are blended into a larger community as children, teachers and parents work together. Ann Arbor Open School draws families from the entire Ann Arbor School District. The community extends beyond the classroom walls to other classes, to our urban community, and out into the world.

The following describe classrooms at Ann Arbor Open School:

- Each class has two or more grades and students remain in the same class for more than one year.
- Children move about freely within the classrooms and hallways.
- Curriculum is developed by the teacher with the children. The emphasis is on learning through experience using ever-developing problem solving skills. In this child-directed learning environment, the teacher's role is one of facilitator. Academic goals are achieved through an integrated approach linked with the children's interests and needs.
- The teacher supports the learning environment as well as the learning style of each student. Attention is paid to the variable ways in which children learn. The idea is not what children should do at a given age or time, but what the child needs to help them develop to their full potential.
- Decisions are made democratically at Ann Arbor Open School. Democracy is practiced in the classroom by students with the teachers and extends throughout the school. Through our General Assembly, everyone has a vote.

Families at Ann Arbor Open School are active participants in their children's education and are integral to the Open School environment. We encourage all Open School families to educate themselves and others in open school principles, philosophies, theories and action. We believe these actions will strengthen our common bonds and facilitate community acceptance of innovating open school programs.

We are proud of our pioneering program. We offer our students the continuity of our program year after year. We look forward to many years of innovation and self-evaluation to keep us on the cutting edge of open education and as a model the Ann Arbor Public Schools can display with pride.

- Approved by the General Assembly, March 31, 1995