What are your feelings, thoughts, and reflections as you walk through the gallery?
The Ann Arbor Open School Experience
Overview

- **Our Partnership**
  - Introduction to the community
  - Complete discussions, classroom visits, and review of documents
  - Complete CPA report
  - **Present an overview of the CPA report**
    - Ann Arbor Open Picture Gallery
    - Highlights of CPA report
    - Our next steps
The CPA Report

- History and philosophy
- Constituency perspectives
- Comparison of perspectives
- The Ann Arbor Open Experience
- Strengths and opportunities
- Addendum - Teacher Assistant Perspectives
Open Education Begins in Ann Arbor

Michigan’s first nationally recognized Exemplary Open School
Ann Arbor Open School - Our History

- **Early 1970s** - Pilot of the first informal classrooms begin at Mitchell and Wines Elementary Schools
- **1972** - The Ann Arbor District has 15 informal classrooms at Angell, Burns Park, Carpenter, Haisley, King, Mitchell, Northside, Pattengill, and Wines
- **1975** - Interest grows among parents; 36 informal classrooms are created and Allen and Bach are added to the list of schools.
- **1976** - Middle Years Alternative (MYA) begins as a 7 and 8th grade alternative program; it is housed at Forsythe.
- **1982** - The Philosophy of the Open Classroom Program in Ann Arbor Public Schools is established.

From the beginning, the open classroom program was about radical education and an alternative for students.
The open classroom concept expands from program within a school to school that provides the program with a specific philosophy.

- **1982-83** - Informal classrooms become “open” classrooms. An official open classroom program launches at Wines and Pattengill (5 classrooms respectively)
- **1983-84** - The School Board officially approves the open classroom concept as the alternative for elementary education in Ann Arbor
- **1986** - Bach officially becomes solely a K-6 grade open school program with its own Principal; the school becomes known as “Bach Open School” and a updated philosophy statement is drafted.
Ann Arbor Open School - Our History

- **1989-90** - 6th grade moves from Bach to the MYA program.
- **1995** - Updated (and current) philosophy statement of Bach Open is approved by the General Assembly.
- **1998** - With the addition of 6th grade, the open program moves to the Mack Building. The school’s name is changed to Ann Arbor Open School.
- **1999** - 7th grade moves from MYA to Ann Arbor Open at Mack.
- **2001** - Ann Arbor Open at Mack graduates its first 8th grade class.

Remaining true to the philosophy that was laid out in the beginning, innovation and self-reflection have kept Ann Arbor Open School ever evolving.
Open Classroom Philosophies Through the Years in Ann Arbor Public Schools
Philosophy Language of the 1970s

- Pilot program approach
- Focus on student choice
- Cultivation of the teacher as a facilitator of learning
- An emphasis on experiential learning
- Thematic curriculum designs
Philosophy Language of 1982

- Child-centered education, alternative approach
- Focus on the child being self-confident, independent learner, and self-directed
- Students learn from their environment
- Teachers teach through providing questions
- Parents as active participants in learning at school and at home
- Focus on social and emotional development
- Meet the needs of individual learning styles
Philosophy Language of 1986

- A K-8 educational option in the district
- Committed to achieving the Common Learnings adopted by the Ann Arbor School Board--but provides a unique educational experience based on research and experience about how people learn
- Learning takes place through interactions with our environment
- Encourages active exploration, curiosity and risk taking
- Learning goals/outcomes may be reached by many different routes
- Evaluating the effectiveness of learning environment must include assessment of the process as well as the quality of the outcome
Our Philosophy - Approved by the General Assembly, March 31, 1995
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 (except kindergarten).
- 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.
What We Saw, Heard, and Felt

Who You Are
You are learning catalysts for students

What Is Taught
Students are taught to curiously explore the world

How It Is Done
Everything that is done is with the whole child at the center
Parent Perspectives at AAOS
What Makes AAOS, AAOS?

- Student-centered learning
- The philosophy and flexibility of the program
What Areas Would You Like to See Grow or Develop at AAOS?

- The math program
- Diversity
- A clear articulation of the Open program
Shared Perspectives at AAOS - Parents, Students, Teachers, and Administrators
Shared Perspectives
What Makes AAOS, AAOS?

• A student-centered program
• Focus on individuality
What Areas Would You Like to See Grow or Develop at AAOS?

- An increase in diversity
- Improved communication
Strengths of AAOS
Strengths of AAOS - Open Education

- Is a student-centered approach
- Emphasizes experiential and project-based learning
- Promotes choice and voice
Strengths of AAOS - Teachers

- Are deeply committed
- Facilitate learning
- Are passionate and engaged
Strengths of AAOS - Students and Parents

- Are empowered
- Bring their individual passions to the school
- Strive to support the school
Strengths of AAOS - Social/Emotional Development

- Emphasizes the development of the understanding of self
- Focuses on relationship building
- Encourages individuality and empowerment globally
Continuing the Growth at AAOS
Opportunities to Grow

- Articulate open education at AAOS
- Articulate the “what” and “how” of AAOS
- Strengthen communication between all members of the community
- Articulate and document the social/emotional aspects of the AAOS program
Next Steps

Develop and implement a plan to move forward in growth areas

- Communicate the process
- Gather any additional information
- Determine the timeline
- Continue to work with all members of the school community
Thank you!