



Alameda Community Learning Center

The Alameda Community Learning Center is an educational model that empowers all youth to take ownership of their educational experience, to celebrate their diverse community, and to actively participate as members in a democratic society.

Alameda



Community



At the Alameda Community Learning Center (ALCLC), youth prepare to be successful citizens in a democratic society by becoming self-motivated lifelong learners. This brochure provides an introduction to a unique learning environment and explains how one community's vision for education became a reality.

Creating the School of the Future

The pursuit of educational reform in Alameda began in 1991 when Arthur Andersen and the Alameda Unified School District brought together diverse groups of students, parents, teachers, administrators, community and business representatives to envision a new future for public education. As part of this process, participants created a Graduate Profile which identified the skills they believed graduates needed in order to best participate in the world of the future. In addition to their commitment to the basics (math, science, history and language arts) the community recognized the need for new basics, which would later be named the "Learning to Learn" skills. For example, they felt graduates should be multilingual, cross-culturally literate and technologically adept with developed skills in creative thinking, reasoning, effective presentation and participatory democracy. The community's vision for the District and the Graduate Profile have since become the foundation for the educational practices at ALCLC.



Learning



Center

Empowering Learners and Facilitators

The Alameda Community Learning Center is a public charter school in Alameda, California, located across the bay from San Francisco. At the “Center”, students (referred to as learners), are challenged to become active participants in their education. They document, self-assess, and demonstrate mastery of their learning through multimedia, artistic and written presentations, and practical applications. As empowered members of this small school community, the learners engage in the administration and evolution of the Center, shaping it for those who will follow in their footsteps.

Combining best practices in education with state-of-the-art technology, ACLC teachers (referred to as facilitators), play a dramatically different role from those in a traditional classroom setting. As facilitators, their role is to challenge and guide learners as they gain knowledge through a wide array of project based activities. They integrate the basic curriculum- math, science, history and language arts- with “Learning to Learn Skills” such as teamwork, problem-solving, and effective communication. Working as a team, the facilitators create an environment that fosters the development of self-directed, lifelong learners.

Creating a Culture of Community

At ACLC learners commonly use the terms “democracy, freedom, self-motivation, community and independence” to describe the characteristics of their ACLC experience. This powerful and shared culture has evolved organically as the result of ACLC’s **physical space**, **shared governance** and **small student body**.

Physical Space

The design of ACLC’s physical space allows an array of interactions and learning practices to take place in one fluid, dynamic space. In this large community room, where learners of all ages spend time when not in academic seminars, there is unfettered access to our counselor, facilitators, computers, comfortable work stations and cozy couches. Though learners tend to make their strongest connections to classmates, most learners interact and build meaningful relationships across grade levels and cultural and ethnic divides. Due to the fact that older learners model appropriate behavior, the community space becomes a safe, natural environment for powerful social growth, thus transferring school culture to newer community members. This culture, which nurtures relationships between learners and between learners and staff, challenges the paradigm that learning and socializing are mutually exclusive.

Democratic Governance

The open nature of interactions at ACLC supports a culture of equity and empowerment. At ACLC each stakeholder is empowered to participate in key functions of the school’s administration and educational programs. We have redefined the traditional roles of educator, student and parent. Staff is encouraged to fill administrative roles, and learners and parents have many opportunities to act as educators. At ACLC learners and parents hold workshops, study halls, and participate as guest speakers. Parents and learners are also integrally involved in collecting and analyzing school data and performing high level administrative tasks such as accounting, grant writing, and hiring.

Small student body, large student voice

The small size of our student body ensures that every learner is known by the learner community and the staff. Learners who are struggling are assigned an advocate and weekly staff meetings allow for meaningful collaboration to improve learner performance. Due to flexible learner and facilitator schedules, intervention and academic support can be easily provided for those learners with individualized education needs. Additionally, our student body’s small size creates powerful opportunities for each learner to be involved in our school’s democratic practices such as weekly town hall meetings, voting and learner-generated proposals. In our small school, that emphasizes direct democracy, every learner has a voice.



Empowering Staff

At ACLC the staff is ultimately responsible for our school's educational program and administration. While our learners and parents are very involved in the school's functions, our school's foundation rests upon our hard-working staff.

At ACLC there is no Principal. Instead, facilitators split their time between administrative tasks and facilitating seminars. To ensure involvement in the school's administration, facilitators sit on or head governing committees and attend weekly administrative meetings where real programmatic decisions are made. The democratic environment we strive to create for our learner community is modeled in our staff's collaborative practices. ACLC's success demonstrates that an empowered staff creates a supportive and powerful work and school environment.

Learning at ACLC

At ACLC, rather than relying solely on direct instruction and classroom-based activities, our educational program facilitates learning through peer interactions and self-directed inquiry. Through our **curriculum, technology, community environment, and individualized learning**, youth explore, interact and learn in a self-directed manner that leads to success.

Curriculum

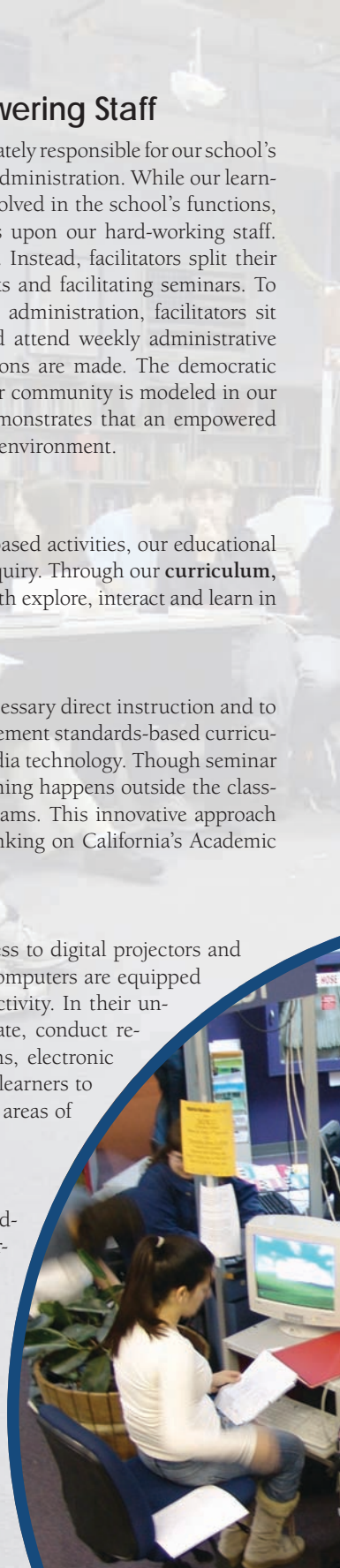
Facilitators run seminar meetings two to three times a week to provide necessary direct instruction and to allow learners to discuss, present and debate course topics. Seminars implement standards-based curricula through project-based learning, collaborative assignments and multimedia technology. Though seminar meetings are the vehicle for enacting our educational program, most learning happens outside the classroom, when learners work on projects, do research and collaborate in teams. This innovative approach to education makes learning dynamic, and has produced the highest ranking on California's Academic Performance Index (API).

Technology

At ACLC technology is a valuable learning tool and all courses have access to digital projectors and wireless internet. Our computer-to-learner ratio is one-to-four, and our computers are equipped with office software, digital media editing programs, and internet connectivity. In their unscheduled time, ACLC learners utilize internet resources to communicate, conduct research, and produce high quality written work, slide shows, digital films, electronic music and digital art. Unlimited access to technological resources allows learners to teach one another skills and perform powerful inquiry into curricula and areas of personal interest.

Community Environment

Our educational program is purposely designed to give learners unscheduled time to do self-directed work, interact with peers and take ownership of our school community. Learners spend their unscheduled time in our community room working on computers, reading on couches, doing group projects, tutoring, socializing, or taking snack or exercise breaks. ACLC also provides spaces for quiet work, team meetings and interactions with facilitators. Our community space creates an environment in which learners interact across grade levels and seek academic assis-



tance and guidance from peers and facilitators. This self-directed time also provides opportunities for learners to become leaders by tutoring, peer counseling, or working on administrative tasks. Because ACLC learners have time to do self-directed work, participate in meaningful educational leadership and interact with peers informally, they gain mastery in vital skills such as effective communication, time and task management, systems thinking, team work and citizenship.

Individualized Learning

Learners with unique learning needs are welcome at ACLC where they thrive and benefit from our full inclusion model. The school-wide culture of respect for individual differences, allows ACLC to offer a supportive program for all learners with special needs, without the typical Resource Room stigma. With time built into the day to meet with facilitators and project teams, all learners have easy access to seminar support and project-based learning encourages creative responses to academic assignments. Learners are also free to pursue the curriculum at their own pace. Our Resource Specialist/Full Inclusion Specialist creates and implements meaningful accommodations for learners with disabilities and also provides general education support.

Participating in a Vibrant Democratic Community

At ACLC parents, learners and facilitators are encouraged to participate in the administration and governance of the school. We increase stakeholder participation by making it part of our administrative structure and educational program. ACLC challenges social paradigms and the traditional conceptions of school administration by providing learners and parents the opportunity to get involved in our **Governing Board, Governing Committees, Leadership, Community Meetings Leadership class and Judicial Committee.**

Governing Board

The Governing Board functions as the ultimate administrative body for ACLC. Our vision of creating a school run by our community is reflected in the Board's composition. Three facilitators, two learners, two parents, one district representative and one community representative sit on the ACLC Governing Board. All Board members, including learners and parents, are voting members who use their vote and voice to represent their constituents and ultimately set ACLC's policies.





Governing Committees

Governing Committees report to the Lead Facilitator and Development Director and serve to create, implement and change school policies. There are four Governing Committees: Financial Committee, Personnel Committee, Curriculum and Standards Committee and Program Evaluation Committee. Each has oversight over a particular school function. Each Committee is composed of a facilitator Committee Head, three or more learners and at least one other facilitator and one parent. Parents with skills in Human Resources, budgets and statistical analysis provide critical expertise to ACLC, and our school could not function without them. Equally important are the learners and facilitators who collaborate with parent experts to carry out the committee work which is essential to our school. ACLC relies on the Governing Committees to complete many of ACLC's administrative tasks.



Leadership

All ACLC learners are invited and encouraged to enroll in our Leadership course that meets three times a week; approximately 20% of ACLC learners, including the Governing Board learner representatives, join Leadership each year. Leadership meetings at ACLC focus on core issues of school administration, school-wide policy and provide learners with the opportunity to discuss academic, social and community issues and generate proposals to strengthen our school's performance. Leadership also uses their meeting times to analyze proposals generated by learners and facilitators. Proposals that effect the greater school community are sent for discussion and voting at our weekly community meetings which are run by Leadership learners. The Leadership seminar engages learners in meaningful school governance decisions.



Community Meetings

At ACLC we schedule weekly community meetings to provide a time for all learners and facilitators to come together as a community to hear important school news, discuss proposals and participate in community-building activities. Learner groups also use this time to work on community projects such as preparing for dances, maintaining the library or fundraising for school beautification. After our community meeting, learner leaders split off with a smaller mixed-age groups for more in-depth discussions about ACLC policies and to conduct fun community-building activities.



Judicial Committee

Functional democracy requires empowered citizens; at ACLC this empowerment is modeled and practiced through our Judicial Committee. The judicial process engages learners in the monitoring of learner behavior and the preservation of justice. Learners are empowered to refer other learners to the Judicial Committee if there has been an infraction of the learner-generated rulebook. When learners are referred to the Judicial Committee their case is heard by three elected Judicial Committee clerks, five randomly selected learner jurors and one facilitator. The Judicial Committee process allows for facilitators to take a backseat in affecting learner behavior, and minimizes the need for facilitators to act as disciplinarians. This opportunity to interact in a less hierar-



chical disciplinary relationship allows adults to foster stronger bonds with learners based on mutual interests and mutual respect. At the same time, the judicial process helps learners practice community responsibility and fosters a culture of equity. Learner ownership of the ACLC discipline system is a core element of learner empowerment.



Community Perspective

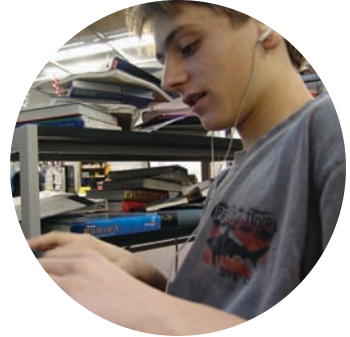
Parent Perspective:

Our daughter learns best when she knows, and is known by, her teachers. She responds well to the ACLC environment where she feels both accepted by her peers and intellectually challenged by adults who know her and have high expectations of her. After six years of inculcation in the idea that learning comes from a teacher and one must follow a rigid structure, ACLC is expanding her boundaries and helping her take responsibility for her own knowledge. The format of the school is causing her to work on her inner core of who she is, what she knows, and how she can effect her surroundings. We are extraordinarily grateful that ACLC lies within our district and firmly believe that, after graduation, she will have a multitude of skills that will allow her to successfully transition into college and beyond.



Learner Perspective:

What I found at ACLC was beyond my expectations of any traditional middle or high school. The Learners are on a first-name basis with Facilitators, and are comfortable enough to go to them for help with anything, school related or not. Learners are totally free to do as they please in their free time during school hours, and are granted immeasurable trust by the Facilitators. ACLC is not just a house of education; it is a lifestyle, which brings joy to the prison that once was known as school. It is no longer a daily appointment to find ways to cut, but a true community for those willing to learn and grow together. The Center has become a great new world in which I eagerly journey to each morning, and most regretfully leave each afternoon.



Staff Perspective:

During my ten years in a traditional high school, no matter how much I innovated, I always felt constrained the narrow definitions of student, teacher and administrator. At ACLC these constraints are gone. Educationally, I have the freedom to facilitate challenging educational experiences for learners because the task for learning has shifted to them. On a personal level, learners and facilitators get to know each other as human beings, rather than as roles, which creates a very powerful learning environment. Equally as powerful is the fact that I can create change in my workplace. If I don't like a policy I can change it, if I have an exciting idea I can run with it. The dynamic nature of ACLC creates an exhilarating work experience: I am not a cog in a machine; I am an engine among other engines.





Alameda Community Learning Center

A Public Charter School of the Alameda School District

Academic Success:

API Scores: 801 (2002-2003), 827 (2003-2004), 807 (2004-2005)

API Ranking: 10 raw score / 10 similar school ranking (2001-2004)

Graduating Seniors enrolled in 4 year Colleges: 75%

Graduation Rate: 95%

Colleges Attended by ACLC Alumni

California State Colleges: Chico, Hayward, Humboldt, Monterey Bay, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, Sonoma

University of California: Berkeley, Davis, Irvine, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Diego, Santa Cruz

Out of State or Private: Beloit College, Brown, Cal Maritime, Claremont Colleges, Evergreen College, University of Denver, Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.), Oberlin College, Sarah Lawrence College, Smith College, Stanford, University of Massachusetts, University of Oregon, University of Pennsylvania, University of Redlands, Wesleyan University

School Information:

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Please contact us to learn more about our exciting educational program, schedule a tour of our facility or meet with our dynamic staff. We are excited to share our best practices and experience with parents, educators and youth.

NEW LEAF PAPER
ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS STATEMENT

This brochure is printed on New Leaf Reincarnation Matte, made with 100% recycled fiber, 50% post-consumer waste, processed chlorine free. By using this environmental paper, ACLC saved the following resources on 6,000 brochures:

trees	water	energy	solid waste	greenhouse gases
3 fully grown	587 gallons	1 million BTUs	128 pounds	217 pounds

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