

SWS Charter

SWS Mission: School-Within-A-School (SWS) is a cohesive learning community within East Anchorage High School, which provides a unique, enhanced learning experience for self-directed students with an emphasis on independent thinking, integrated learning, and community development. SWS accomplishes this through a partnership of skilled, innovative teachers and staff, a small cohesive student population, and parental support.

Goals

1. Students will develop academic self-direction and assume responsibility for their own learning to their highest potential.
2. Students will develop a sense of community by participating in the SWS community, the East High School community, and the Anchorage community-at-large.
3. Students will develop interpersonal skills by treating all members of the community with dignity and respect.
4. Teachers will develop a unique, personal learning environment using a variety of innovative and small group curricula. Teachers will have the flexibility to modify their curricula scheduling and offerings to meet SWS student needs.
5. Parents will be active and welcome members of the SWS community.

Program Structure and Autonomy

Autonomy

- The SWS program is semi-autonomous within the host school while cooperating fully in developing curriculum, budget, and activities.
- The SWS program is autonomous in regards to curriculum methods and community events.
- The SWS program works to meet the needs of the SWS community for staffing, scheduling, and discipline decisions with consideration of the greater East High community.
- The SWS program complies with the Anchorage School District for policies and procedures.
- The SWS community should have access to the SWS facility to the fullest extent feasible.

Student body

- The student body consists of up to 200 students selected through the ASD lottery system, plus foreign exchange students hosted by East High.
- Increases in the size of the student body require a consensus of the SWS Community.
- Students are selected in compliance with District lottery guidelines.
- Lottery applications must be signed by both the prospective SWS student and parent/guardian.
- Applicant shall make all efforts to understand the importance of independent learning and community service.
- Prospective students and their parents or guardians must acknowledge that they have read and understand the SWS Charter. They are encouraged to gain an understanding of the program by visiting the school; talking to faculty, staff, and students; and participating in SWS community activities within existing ASD policy.
- Prospective students and families joining SWS should uphold the goals of the SWS program.

Staff selection and structure

- The Program Administrator will select the SWS teaching staff and classified personnel after applicants are interviewed by a panel consisting of at least two staff (including at least one teacher), two students, and two parents. Within the constraints of East High's staffing needs and SWS program needs, the Administrator will give priority to the panel's selection.
- It is critical to the success of the program that SWS faculty work predominately for SWS. The goal of SWS is to maintain and incorporate as many full time staff members in the program as possible.
- SWS teachers will teach a majority of SWS classes for students within SWS program.
- In addition to a Program Administrator, an Administrative Assistant, a counselor, and a security person, the number of teaching staff or the equivalent FTE, will be proportionate to the number of students. The number of teachers must also reflect and support the program goals.

Administrator selection

- The Unit Principal will choose the Program Administrator after applicants are interviewed by a panel consisting of at least two staff, two students, and two

parents. Within the constraints of East's staffing needs and SWS program needs, the Administrator will give priority to the panel's selection.

- It is beneficial to the SWS program for the SWS Administrator to work in the SWS community for three or more years to foster the integrity and continuity of the program.

Administrative Assistant selection

- The Program Administrator will choose an Administrative Assistant after a committee of SWS students and staff and parents interviews all applicants. Priority will be given to the panel's selection.

Governance

- Students and parents are a part of the decision making process in SWS. Decision-making is marked by collaboration among students, teachers, parents, and administrators. The program Administrator will work with East High School to implement the program, curriculum, and scheduling.
- The Student Advisory Board (SAB) and Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) represent the students and parents respectively in working with teachers and staff on program planning, implementation, evaluation, and hiring, and are advisory to the SWS principal and faculty.
- The Student Advisory Board (SAB) provides student leadership in building a student community and planning and implementing community service and social activities.
- The Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) supports SWS through participation in matters requiring a collective voice from parents, advocacy for the SWS program, and volunteer support for SWS activities.
- Parents are automatically members of the PAC.
- The Program Administrator is directly responsible to East High's Unit Administrator and accountable to the Director of High School Education.
- The SWS Charter will be reviewed and revised as needed through collaboration of students, teachers and staff, parents, and the Administrator.

Expectations

Program

- Self-directed study (SDS): SWS is dedicated to promoting lifelong learning and student inspired learning. SDS gives students an opportunity to learn ‘outside-the-box’. An SDS can be fun, challenging, and often provides a student with lessons that last a lifetime. Currently SWS recognizes the following types of self directed studies: Independent Study, Enrichment/Passion Experience, Mentorship, Adapted Courses, and Community Involvement.
- Community service is an essential piece of the SWS program and complements the personal commitment to individual excellence within SWS. Community service activities may be included as part of some course requirements.

Students

- Students are responsible for upholding the goals of SWS individually and as a group.
- SWS students are motivated, responsible individuals who give back to the SWS community through active participation in classes, activities, and community service.
- Students will treat all members of the SWS community with dignity and respect.
- Students will commit to self-direction and personal responsibility in academic progress, behavior and attendance.
- SWS students comply with the East High School attendance and disciplinary policies.

Teachers

- Teachers, both individually and as a team, determine and create the SWS educational environment, which may include both traditional and alternative instructional methods and means of assessment.
- Teachers and staff monitor the academic progress, behavior, attendance, and other concerns of all SWS students. If issues cannot be resolved at the staff level, the Administrator will meet with parents. If a different educational situation would be advantageous, the student may be counseled about other educational options and encouraged to pursue a program that would better fit the student’s needs and ensure his or her success.
- Teachers will be responsible for developing course offerings based on teacher expertise, and student needs and interests.

- Teachers will help students establish, define, and evaluate their academic needs and personal goals.

Program Administrator

- The SWS Administrator believes in the SWS program, mission, and goals; advocates for the SWS program; and actively participates in the achievement of its goals.
- The Administrator will foster open communication among the East Administration, and the SWS faculty, staff, students, and parents.
- Decisions that affect SWS program or staffing will be discussed with the SWS community prior to final decisions.
- The SWS Administrator will regularly brief the SAB and PAC on SWS funds, expenses, and balances.

Parents

- Parents are responsible for becoming fully informed of the program's mission and goals.
- Parents participate in the program in ways commensurate with their talents and time.
- Parents are expected to treat all members of the SWS community with dignity and respect.
- Parents collaborate with the SWS students, teachers, staff, and administration to support and enhance the program.

Curriculum Development and Scheduling

- The curriculum and SWS course offerings will be reviewed annually. There will be emphasis on innovative course offerings that engage students in meaningful learning.
- Class schedules will be developed with the input of the staff, students, and the Program Administrator. On approval by the Unit Administrator, it is encouraged up to two full days are provided for cross-curricular collaboration and schedule development.
- To facilitate development of a cohesive program, including creative, innovative classes, teachers will meet weekly after school as a staff to review and assess students, develop a monthly calendar, and review ongoing concerns. Teachers, the SWS staff, and the Program Administrator are expected to attend.

- Within the limitations imposed by scheduling, students are required to take at least three (3) SWS classes per semester to be considered a full-time SWS student. Full-time SWS teachers will also teach a minimum of three (3) SWS classes. Students may take a self-directed study to fulfill this obligation.

Budget

- The East High Unit Administrator will determine the total budget allowance. The Program Administrator will recommend determinations within the total allowance with appropriate input from staff, students, and parents.
- SAB's budget and separate fundraising monies may be used for program enhancement, charitable giving and supply purchases. These monies will be held in an independent account, separate from the department budget.

Program Review and Reflection

- Teachers and staff, students, and the Administrator will collaborate on an annual review of the SWS goals, objectives, and accomplishments. A summary of the annual review will be provided to teachers, staff, parents, and the Administrator.