

**COLE ARTS AND SCIENCE ACADEMY (C.A.S.A.)**  
**innovation Plan**

November 2016

Denver Public Schools School Board,

As one of the first innovation schools in Denver, Cole Arts and Science Academy has learned many lessons, and has been a pioneer in innovation practices. We are always learning and challenging ourselves to provide the best education possible to the students of Cole.

Innovation status will continue to allow Cole Arts and Science Academy to build a culture of high achieving students who engage in and contribute to culturally diverse communities. With autonomy over people, time and money, Cole Arts and Science Academy will be able to create a school that prepares elementary students for the world ahead. The following innovations allow us to address the needs of the school and our community quickly and creatively:

-Autonomy to focus on professional development in order for teachers to have the knowledge and skills to ensure the development of internationalized curriculum, critical thinking and collaboration skills.

-Autonomy from the DPS school calendar to better meet the needs of students and staff. Staff members return to school earlier than traditional teachers in order to deeply plan and practice for the scholars entering the building.

-Autonomy will allow for an open timeline for hiring exemplary teachers internally and externally, and allows us to get and retain gifted teachers.

-Autonomy to substantially increase financial resources into our school budget for allocation towards strategic goals, priorities and values of the school community, especially as we move out of turnaround status.

I am lucky to serve as the school leader of Cole Arts and Science Academy and am excited to continue to serve a community committed to innovation in the best interest of students.

Thank you,

Jennifer Jackson  
Principal

**A. MISSION STATEMENT**

- I. **Vision** – At CASA, children learn to become well-rounded and thoughtful individuals who are grounded in the values of the school and its community while developing responsibility for their learning and citizenship.
- II. **Mission - Our Mission is to have:**
  - o High-quality instruction that is equitable and focused on creativity and critical thinking for every student.

- A culture and environment that supports the social and emotional growth of our students and staff.
- Interactive collaboration between the community, families, students and colleagues.
- Intentional reflection of our practice in order to pursue excellence in all facets of our vision.

## **GOAL**

Our ultimate goal at C.A.S.A is to ensure that all students will leave fifth grade at or above grade level in all academic subject areas. We believe enhanced math, science, and humanities curricula enriched through technology and arts must be rigorous and standards based. In addition, we believe authentic arts and science infusion tasks promote high levels of student engagement and higher order thinking skills. Our collective, unwavering commitment is that all staff members are highly qualified, caring, compassionate, and dedicated to excellence. We understand that a quality education depends, first and foremost on the efforts of the people who work at our school and by working together we can overcome the adversity that has preceded us in our immediate community.

As an innovation school, C.A.S.A. will have the appropriate freedom to control its educational program, budget, staff, time and incentives as outlined in this plan to ensure that C.A.S.A. becomes one of the premier schools in Near Northeast Denver and serves as a model of successful educational reform for schools across the country.

## **BELIEF STATEMENTS:**

**To bring to life our mission and vision, all stakeholders are accountable to uphold the following beliefs.**

### **- High-quality instruction that is equitable**

-We believe that high quality instruction is culturally responsive.

-We believe that instruction should be driven by data and values appropriate

assessments.

-We believe that multiple, diverse learning opportunities, including the use of technology, provide students mechanisms to attain and demonstrate their growth and proficiency.

**- A culture and environment that supports the social and emotional growth of our students and staff**

-We believe that relationships must be built and cultivated among and between all community members.

- We believe all members of the school community must be invested in the school-wide culture as well as each and every student's success.

- We believe explicit school-wide behavior expectations must be equitable, consistent, and fair and grounded in restorative approaches.

**- Interactive collaboration between the community, families, students, and colleagues**

- We believe that strategic and varied family and community involvement in student learning and school-life is significant.

**- Reflection of our practice and learning in order to grow**

-We believe that reflection should be intentional, regular, and the responsibility of staff and students.

-We believe that time for reflection should be incorporated throughout the school day.

**A. INNOVATIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED**

**1. School Staffing**

To meet the needs of our students and to fully implement our educational program, C.A.S.A requires the flexibility to select and hire individuals. Under our current innovative status, we are not subject to a district direct placement process, which allows us to ensure that every staff member is reflective of our mission and can best meet the needs of our students.

## 2. CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

C.A.S.A. will offer a viable ECE- fifth grade Common Core State **Standards-Based** academic program that will be achieved with integrity and commitment to the mission, vision, and belief statements. The pacing and planning of curricula components will be determined by the school leadership team based upon relevant, timely, student data. The education plan is aligned with both the Denver Plan and the Colorado State Standards. The education plan is composed of the following areas:

- A. Standards-based curricula
- B. Backwards-planning lesson design
- C. Data Driven Instruction
- D. Assessment
- E. Art and Science infusion
- F. Student engagement
- G. Student goals
- H. Technology
- I. Responsive to Intervention

Note, even though the components are separated below, in practice the components are seamless. Furthermore, the educational plan is a general overview that functions much like a map. The educational components will help us to our destination, which is to achieve high student academic results through curricula and instructional consistency, but by no means describes the intricate details. In addition, included in each of the following educational components are current barriers or hurdles that inhibit or limit or ability to maximize our educational program.

Occasionally, recommendations are made by the district to implement a program, use an assessment or modify the scope and sequence of curricular content in a way that does not match our educational program or meet the needs of our students. Thus, C.A.S.A. must have the liberty to make curricular and instructional decisions that are in alignment with our educational plan, in alignment with state standards, responsive to student needs (time to scaffold and provide depth), approached through the lens of Creativity and Inquiry (Arts and Science) and allow us to provide rigorous, appropriate grade level instruction. Cole will follow the District curriculum and/or assessment waiver request process for any requested changes.

## **A. Curriculum:**

At C.A.S.A., we will use the Common Core State Standards to create our instructional plans, and will use curriculum that best matches the needs of the students as described below.

### **Literacy:**

The five components of literacy (Phonemic awareness, Phonics, Vocabulary, Comprehension, and Fluency) will be integrated throughout instruction with individual instruction as needed. Methodology of vocabulary instruction will be consistent and focused (i.e. word banks) across grade levels. The skills block (explicit phonics instruction) will be taught for 30 minutes by every literacy teacher during the literacy block. A school-wide writing emphasis and rubric will be implemented ECE through fifth grade.. The school is also part of the Early Literacy Grant, which allows for targeted literacy instruction in the primary grades. Cole will be Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) curriculum in grades K-5.

Because we platoon, to provide science and a large block of time for mathematics, we need flexibility to integrate content (scientific thinking and artistic creativity) as needed, which may not adhere to the District defined Literacy pacing and planning documents. C.A.S.A. teachers will need the flexibility to compact, pace, extend, adjust, and deviate from, and integrate curricula based on student needs. To be truly data driven, CASA staff must be able to respond to the student needs and honor that data driven decisions (time and intensity variables) may supersede fidelity to the pacing and planning District programs. For instance, students who are 2 to 3 years behind in grade level reading would benefit from both a Literacy intervention program that will directly address their gaps in an intensive manner in addition to grade level content, which would require additional time being taken from other content areas.

### **Mathematics:**

The standards-based mathematics curriculum will be rigorous and balanced. The curriculum will emphasize conceptual understanding, while building mastery of basic skills. CASA will be implementing Engage NY curriculum for math instructions grades k-5 and instruction will be delivered by a Math Specialist who pushes into the classroom.

C.A.S.A. teachers and administration will need the flexibility to continue to compact, pace, extend, adjust, and deviate from curricula based on student needs. To be truly data driven, we must be able to respond to the student needs and honor that data driven decisions may supersede fidelity to the District core curriculum in order to implement Common Core State Standards and well as thoughtfully infuse art and science

### **Science:**

Science at Cole will be an interactive learning experience. It will be taught in grades first to fifth. An inquiry-based search for knowledge, understanding, and application for the standards will be the heart of the science curriculum. Authentic tasks will include scientific thinking, scientific tools and technologies, and communication. The three standards of earth, life, and physical science will be explored from ECE to 5<sup>th</sup> grade with a constructivist, hands on approach. In addition, the achievement of scientific literacy will be an overarching goal. Thus, students will pose questions derived from everyday experiences and discover the answers to the questions. Students will also predict and explain natural phenomena, identify national and local scientific issues, and understand scientific content material. Each year the first through fifth grade students will explore units in physical, earth, life, and/or an application unit. In addition, materials will be used to provide more in-depth scientific explorations for grades ECE to Fifth grade.

Through innovation, not only is Science taught, but will be extended and enriched with more hands-on Science opportunities. Science as a core content will be a corner stone for infusion opportunities, field trips, projects, and learning opportunities for students to work with authentic scientists working in a science based career. Development of the school garden is one example of an infusion opportunity for students. Each student will participate in the school science fair and selected projects will be displayed at the city and state science fairs.

### **Social Studies:**

Having innovation status will ensure that Social Studies will be taught at every grade level and integrated in a cohesive manner and not at the expense of teaching Science every day.

The State Standards social studies standards include: history, geography, economics, and civics, which are studied throughout the Kindergarten to 5th grade. Real-work and problem-solving authentic tasks will be relevant to learners, such that, the content will make strong connections to the student's world, be representative of multiple and multi-cultural perspectives, and contain cultural competency elements. Social studies exploration will enable students to talk openly about culture, celebrate diversity, and establish their own cultural competency.

First through fifth grade will also center on units of studies that embody one to two of the standards.

**English Language Development:**

English language learners will receive sheltered content instruction in all classes as well as targeted English language development via an ELD block. The ELD block consists of targeted language development delivered via EL Achieve curriculum. English phonics and English leveled reading will occur during flooding. ELD component for students will be based on ACCESS scores. To anchor instruction in language development particular emphasis in the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, will be implemented throughout all content areas.

Innovation status would enable ESL teachers to also team-teach in content classrooms, rather than be restricted to a pullout ESL model. In addition, teachers would have the liberty to use ELD curriculum as necessary and adjust where needed to connect and bridge their English development with their content development. The ESL teachers can make data driven instruction decisions based on ACCESS scores, rather than the coverage of a curriculum program. Furthermore, innovation status would ensure that every student would be exposed to special classes (art, P.E., etc.) AND receive ESL support, as needed, not one at the expense of the other. Honoring that each and every student at C.A.S.A. receives specials addresses the whole child and supports the belief that being a second language learner a privilege rather than a punishment.

**Specials:**

Special classes that will be offered include: P.E./Dance/Health, Visual Arts, and general and instrumental music. Students will rotate through the specials each academic year. All of the specials will be standards-based and offer hands-on opportunities for students to extend their core content knowledge. Students will also have the opportunity to learn library skills through joint projects between the classroom teachers and librarian.



## **B. Instruction:**

The innovation status, will support consistent Instruction that will be data driven; student-focused, differentiated, fluid, and promote high-levels of student engagement and creativity.

In addition, the RTI (Response to Intervention) multi-tiered model will incorporate proactive intervention and prevention for struggling a student, which is outlined below in further detail.

## **C. Assessment:**

With innovation status, the school leadership team along with school assessment team will have the liberty to create interim assessment tools, and use and own data to positively impact student learning. Teachers would have the liberty to create tools that would assess higher order thinking skills (creativity and inquiry).

The school will continue to participate in state mandated assessments such as PARCC/CMAS and READ Act assessments. The school will use a variety of data to positively impact student achievement including formal high stakes assessments, benchmark exams, ongoing progress monitoring (Aims web) common formative assessments and other formal and informal teacher observations. Data is a common link for our school plan, instructional content areas, interventions, and focused classroom instruction. Data will be accessible and tracked in a way that is public and comprehensible for students, teachers, parents and community. The data will be timely and specific to be used to drive classroom instruction. Based on assessment, we will implement research based instructional strategies to create learning opportunities for all learners, both teachers and students.

## **E. Arts and Science Infusion:**

There are three major components of the Arts and Science Infusion at CASA:

1. By having the autonomy to plan professional development at the building level instead of following the district PD schedule, our staff will have concentrated time to design overarching principles of Creativity and Inquiry in every unit and in every class.

Creativity is defined as unique and original thought, expression of understanding, interpretation, integrating visual/music/physical components. Whereas inquiry is defined as a thinking cycle including immersion, question, explore, discover, learn, gather, produce, and reflect. We will take a multi-learning style approach to propel our understanding to a new level by reading, writing and thinking mathematically through the arts and science in our world.

2. By having autonomy to organize our daily schedule in a way that differs from the current mandated schedule, our school will be able to provide a depth of understanding and experiences to our students in the arts, sciences and technology through weekly 60-minute blocks.

The Enrichment activities will occur weekly and will be the core component of the arts and science infusion. Our students will experience a wide range of enrichment activities with a focus on science and art. The enrichment component will enhance academic development, address individual interests, provide background knowledge, extend vocabulary development, and raise engagement for our students. This enrichment projects will include exposure to the arts, such as, dance, music, visual, and creative writing, to name a few.

Overall, Arts and Science will extend and enrich content standards across grade levels. Arts and science will address different learning styles, increase student motivation and engagement, and elevate higher order thinking skills (i.e., creativity and inquiry). Through embedded writing and a common thread for inquiry, students will connect science and the arts authentically to themselves and the world.

### **Student Academic Goals**

Cole Arts and Science Academy will increase in Math proficiency for all students as measured by PARCC assessments and District interims from the current measurement of 12 percent meets to match the district average of 27 percent's meets in year 2 and exceeding district to have 40 percent meeting by year three. Cole will show measureable growth data every year in Math.

Cole will increase achievement for ELL students as measured by increased students exiting ELA services, and closing the achievement gap between ELL and Non-ELL students as measured by state standardized tests in both English Language Arts and Math. Cole will increase our median growth percentile as measured by ACCESS from the current rate of 51 percent to 65 percent over three years.

Cole will increase positive student engagement culture as measured by reductions in out-of-school suspensions every year, with the goal of zero out of school suspensions by year 3. The school will also have reduced in-school suspensions from and the annual amount of 15 to 5 students, and reduce the number of students who serve in school refocus for behavior from the current rate of 24 per day to 6 or less, as measured by the internal school data systems and behavior reports submitted to district.

### **6. Participatory Leadership**

All faculty members at C.A.S.A. will work with strong instructional leaders to share the decision-making responsibility in order to provide professional leadership and expertise needed to ensure high student achievement. Although the principal will always remain accountable as the final decision-maker at C.A.S.A, there is a commitment to participatory leadership in all aspects of school operations, especially instruction. This



commitment includes a strategic, deliberate induction plan in the event of leadership turnover.

### **7. C.A.S.A Leadership Council (“CLC”)**

The principal will continue to lead an instructional leadership team which will include 4-rotating teacher members, 2-non teacher staff member, 3- community members/parents The staff members will be nominated and voted on by the whole faculty. The leadership team will be responsible for establishing the conditions for student learning at the school, including the following:

- Identifying student academic needs based on all available student performance data;
- Setting academic goals and priorities, based on student academic needs;
- Monitoring and managing consistent delivery of high quality curriculum to every student;
- Providing instructional support to all teachers;
- Building the master calendar and the student schedule;
- Establishing assignments, job responsibilities and workloads for all staff and faculty
- Communicating and updating all staff members of leadership team work
- Identifying creative solutions to problems faced in the operation of the school;
- revising the School Improvement Plan
- Monitoring progress toward the goals of the School Improvement Plan
- Reviewing the principal’s recommendations for extra duty compensation or incentives if the rates exceed those established in the DPS/DCTA Agreement;
- Establishing community and parent involvement activities;
- Approving the school budget;
- Approving calendar and schedule
- Evaluate the principal
- Participate in hiring process
- Making recommendations regarding general school governance.
- Establish school-based commitments

### **8. Professional Learning Community**

The principal, faculty and staff at C.A.S.A. will collaborate to promote the professional growth of all staff members, including programs for peer assistance and ongoing professional development for all staff. The professional growth system will incorporate practices vital to improve the achievement of all students at C.A.S.A and ensure teachers the professional latitude necessary to enact the mission of C.A.S.A. and the Denver Plan. Professionals and coaches may be hired on a contract or short-term basis to meet the school’s and faculty’s differentiated professional development needs.

Year-long professional development calendar will be issued at the beginning of the school year by the school leadership team. The topics for the upcoming school year will be decided by the school leadership team based on student data and teacher LEAP scores.

All hours of professional development will be documented for re-certification credit. In addition, a school wide PDU will be collaboratively designed and contain a

required component that will enable teachers to apply for PDU credit in the pro comp structure.

## **9. Positive Work Environment**

A supportive working environment for staff is integral to providing a positive learning environment for students.

### **Hours of Work**

The Leadership Team will collaborate with the faculty and staff at C.A.S.A. to establish a calendar and schedule focused on improving student achievement. The Leadership Team will make hours of employment clear to all employees, and make adjustments only with their participation. No later than 90 days before the end of the school year, the principal in consultation with the CLC will determine the following year's school calendar and school day schedule that meets or exceeds district and state determinations of the length of time during which schools shall be in session during the next school year as well as student contact hours.

## **10. Assignment of Staff**

To create and maintain an outstanding school, C.A.S.A. will assemble a faculty and staff who will work together to improve achievement for every student and be committed to the school vision. We expect this committed workforce to remain stable over time. The principal at C.A.S.A, in consultation with the Leadership Team and DPS HR, will prepare job descriptions for all staff and faculty assignments at the school. The principal may use standard District job descriptions, but is in no way limited to them.

The principal at C.A.S.A., in consultation with the personnel committee, will select all school staff and faculty as soon as possible after a vacant assignment is determined. Assignments at C.A.S.A. are annual. The performance of each employee is of critical importance for the decisions regarding each annual appointment. Year-to-year decisions regarding returning staff will be made in timely fashion for departing staff to participate in the DPS teacher staffing cycle. The recruitment and selection process for new staff will be rigorous and focused on best meeting student needs. Under extraordinary circumstances, and with just cause, the principal may discharge an employee during the school year. In this event, the school will follow the dismissal procedures outlined in the DPS policy GDQD and GDQD-R

New teachers hired by C.A.S.A. from outside the District will not be subject to the Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act of 1990 (22-63- 101, *et seq*, C.R.S. and will not have any employment rights within the District.

Teachers hired from within the District retain their continuing employment rights within the District. Teachers with continuing employment rights within the District leave C.A.S.A.; they will continue to have the right to bid on an assignment in accordance with the DCTA Master Agreement.

## **11. Compensation**

Staff at C.A.S.A. will receive professional compensation that reflects their commitment to the school and their success at improving student learning. This compensation and

benefits package will have, as its foundation, the salary systems established in the DPS/DCTA Master Agreement and the ProComp Agreement. The principal with consent

of the leadership team will have the discretion to exceed these minimum base salary expectations according to a bonus structure developed by the principal and CLC, C.A.S.A. will be responsible for developing the compensation package for teachers and any changes from District compensation will be announced at the release of the budget in late January, early February, and Cole Arts and Science Academy will be exempt from § 22-63-401, *et seq*, C.R.S. All full time employees at C.A.S.A. will participate in the Denver Public Schools Retirement System (PERA). Should any staff or faculty member transfer from C.A.S.A. to another DPS assignment, all pension benefits will be portable and there shall be no loss of benefit. Following the rules of the PERA, part time employees and temporary staff will not participate in the retirement system.

## **12. Leave**

All employees at C.A.S.A. will receive the same long leave entitlements granted under district policy. Notification procedures for sick leave and personal leave are outlined in the Faculty Handbook **unused** leave days accrue according to district rules. The district and school may provide additional leave days for the purpose of professional development or instructional development.

## **13. Budget**

### **13. Budgeting**

Cole Arts and Science Academy is a member of an innovation zone, the Luminary Learning Network (LLN). In alignment with the MOU between the LLN and DPS, The District shall provide to Cole Arts and Science Academy their pro-rata share of funds associated with District services to which they have opted-out, if such pro-rata share can reasonably be calculated and implemented, and if the withdrawal of such funds will not result in a long term measurable increase in cost to the District nor a long term measurable reduction in the funding available to other schools within the District.

In order to determine the pro-rata share for Cole Arts and Science Academy the District will use the collaboratively developed School Based Budgeting + funding (“SBB+”) model for funding the IZone Schools. The BOE expects the District and LLN to continue refining in good faith the optional and required services list related to SBB+ and to review the overall funding model annually, in alignment with the District’s budgetary timeline. In alignment with the Innovation Schools Act of 2008, there is an expectation by the parties that a different funding model will be explored and implemented in the event that the SBB+ model is unable to allow the IZone schools the maximum flexibility over resource use. The BOE will balance the equity of allowing IZone Schools to use resources at the school-level to best serve its students and the District equity of serving all students across all District schools.

Cole Arts and Science Academy will receive the annual budget allocation based on the number of students enrolled on October 1. The budgeted funds provided by DPS will be supplemented by Cole Arts and Academy fundraising and grants.

## **14. Management Evaluation**

The principal, faculty and staff will engage in ongoing collaborative evaluation of the performance of the school, the Leadership Team and the principal in accordance with

LEAP and the District Leadership framework. This evaluation will include an annual formal review focused on accountability for student achievement (overall student performance and student achievement growth).

The principal, faculty and staff will engage in ongoing collaborative evaluation of the performance of the school. This evaluation includes an innovative school review process where two representatives of the LLN, the school leaders' executive coach and three external evaluators. This review team completes a minimum of two school reviews a year. Through SPF analysis, classroom observations, student, parent, teacher and administrator interviews, the review team gathers a wide range of data and perform a SWOT analysis and work to assist school leaders in identifying clear action steps to address areas of growth. After each round of school reviews, school leaders present the review teams' findings to the LLN Board, as well as the action steps their schools will be taking to address those findings.

LLN school leaders are evaluated under the DPS LEAD Framework. The LLN Executive Director will complete the evaluation based on observations, input from the school leader's executive coach, input from school staff, and data focused on student achievement (including overall student performance and student achievement growth).

### **15. Teacher Evaluation**

The principal or designee will evaluate teachers at C.A.S.A. through LEAP. The evaluation instrument will meet or exceed the standards specified by state statute and District policy. C.A.S.A. is requesting a waiver of the Licensed Personnel Performance Evaluation Act, § 22-9- 101, *et seq*, C.R.S.

## **16. Employee Handbooks**

General practices and procedures applicable to the school and articulated in the Academic Plan and the School Improvement Plan are incorporated into this Plan, and will be modified when necessary to be consistent with this Plan. Consistent with the mission of the school, ongoing development of the Faculty Handbook will be collaborative, incorporating the voices of school leadership and staff as well as parents.

## **17. Dispute Resolution**

The principal, faculty and staff at C.A.S.A are committed to solving problems in good faith and at the lowest possible level. Therefore, if faculty or staff member(s) believe that the terms of this Plan have been violated, or they have some dispute that they want resolved, they are expected to raise this matter with an appropriate member of the C.A.S.A. Leadership Team who will collaborate to resolve the dispute. If the dispute is not resolved to the satisfaction of the faculty or staff member, an appeal can be made to the Principal and the Principal's decision will be final. If the dispute involves the Principal, the faculty or staff member should raise the matter with Executive Director of the Zone, and any decision by the Executive Director as applicable, shall be final in such instance.

**E. COST SAVINGS AND INCREASED EFFICIENCIES.**

See section B.1, B.4 and B.12. The possibility of paying actual vs. average salaries would promote the efficient use of school funds and possibly significantly extend the resources currently available.

**F. ADMINISTRATOR, TEACHER, COMMUNITY, AND COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE SUPPORT.**

On April 24, 2009, of the teachers employed at the school voted in favor of continuing Cole's designation as an innovation School and the updated plan and waiver replacement policies outlined herein. The Principal and Assistant Principal as well as the CLC are in full support of Cole's request to become an Innovation School (see attached letter).

**G. LISTING OF STATUTORY, REGULATORY AND DISTRICT POLICY WAIVERS AND REPLACEMENT POLICIES (ATTACHED) waived.**

**H. PROCEDURE TO RESCIND INNOVATION STATUS.**

This agreement will remain in full force and effect unless a recommendation to discontinue is presented to the Leadership Team and supported by a vote of 50% +1 of the C.A.S.A faculty.