

Agile Learning Center: New York 2018-2019 Annual Report



In this year of reflection and care, our ALC-NYC community focused on deepening our practices locally and taking more ownership of our influence globally.

In this year, our sixth, even visitors notice we have cultivated a strong and healthy culture. It's as alive and complex as we humans are, but our roots ground us while collaboration among now-practiced culture-keepers of different ages guides our continuing adaptation to life's changes.

We started the year with 22 returning students out of 24 total. We enrolled 9 new students gradually over the course of the year, including 1 who had attended a summer training and 1 who had been enrolled previously. The new students quickly found their rhythms, and many of the new parents began engaging with other parents right away. Grateful for our seasoned students and parents helping make new families' transitions easier and easier.

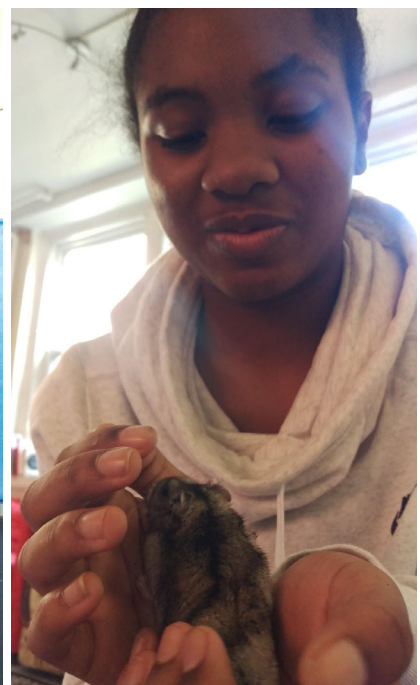
With "self-directed education" becoming more widely known, we've decided it's important to share our voices, to make sure the inclusive, liberatory, collaborative way we practice self-directed education informs the imagination of the broader movement. To this end, staff and students have started speaking and publishing more. So far we've shared talks, workshops, articles, essays, and social media posts. And we're just getting started.

Landmarks/Milestones:

- Science, table games, painting, bouldering, writing time, Steven Universe screenings, acro, Pokemon Showdown, cooking, and window gardening were especially popular offerings this year
- Field trips to Central Park, museums, Randall's Island, and Philadelphia were some favorites among the 60+ trips we took this year
- We welcomed visiting students from as close as Philadelphia and as far as Switzerland! We also hosted adult guests from the US, Mexico, Canada, Brazil, Russia, and Romania.
- Regular offerings in Spanish and Japanese continued, while students also practiced Hebrew, Hungarian, French, and a number of programming languages in the space.
- We got a hamster! And more plants!
- Teen Facilitators began practicing running trainings for adults, co-facilitating events locally as well as in Sacramento and Philadelphia.
- Teens and Parents took larger role in running quarterly Assembly meetings.
- Parent Community Working Group hosted a number of well attended community-building events and published a parent guidebook.
- We co-hosted the Rooted Us unconference.



"Here we're free to explore our talents safely. And we're not limited to a single, narrow path; we can really explore and learn who we are, what we have to offer the world." - 14 yo student



"This place is so special..."

"I'm not sure where to start trying to put 'how' into words." - 10 yo student



Among the Students...

This year was full of collaboration and creation! Field trips included regular trips to parks, bouldering gyms, and ice skating. There were also trips to the Brooklyn Museum's Art In The Age of Black Power exhibit, the Philadelphia Franklin Institute's Vikings exhibit, a Captain Marvel screening, and to try new games at The Uncommons. Some offerings--like math, cooking, acro, and Japanese--continued multi-year streaks. Writing Time, Wall Ball, and Spanish all took new forms as they continued into year two. New science offerings--from Magic School Bus and Bill Nye screenings to Anatomy and Chemistry on Khan Academy--had us asking interesting questions. Steven Universe, Pokemon, and Star Wars enthusiasm kept us singing in the hall. We painted portraits in a variety of styles, made a bunch of mobiles, expanded our shared Minecraft world, and built shelters for our pet hamster. By May, kids were co-running Assemblies and workshops...and updating their résumés.

Among the Community...

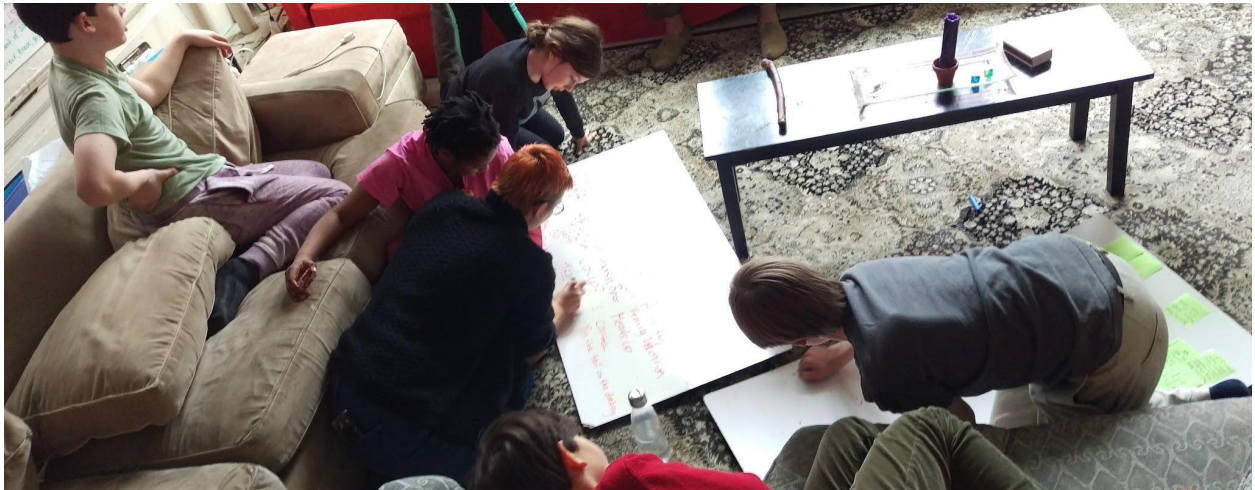
In the 2017-2018 school year, we continued efforts to connect our staff, parents, students, volunteers, and partners. We also started to activate 'work groups,' teams of individuals focused on initiatives like tending the parent community, fundraising, and improving our space. We wrote, held fundraisers, cleaned, sang, shared meals, celebrated, mourned, and generally brought our practice of community to a new level. This year, that momentum continued building. Thanks to collaborations between community members, especially parents, we celebrated picture day, family breakfasts, a picnic, a parents-only painting evening, and getting the space professionally cleaned. We're grateful for the Parent Support Group, the folks working on the guidebook for new families, and those who open the school early to make mornings easier for others. We're grateful to adrienne maree brown for inspiring our book club, and we have big summer plans together for the first year in our history. We're growing!

Financial Information

The school continued to offer sliding scale tuition, ranging from \$22,500 to \$4500 annually based on reported family income. At the start of the school year, we adjusted our budget in response to a number of families falling behind on tuition payments. We were expecting around \$260,000 in tuition payments for the 2018-2019 school year. By May, tuition contributions were projected to amount to \$266,313. Of the 31 families enrolled for some or all of the 2018-2019 school year, 90% received financial aid in the form of adjusted tuition.

With our Chipotle fundraiser, Amazon Smile, Facebook Giving Tuesday, and TeeSpring campaigns we managed to raise about \$700. We were grateful to receive direct donations of over \$2000 for unrestricted use and over \$3000 to fly staff to Puerto Rico for a work retreat. Our summer training is projected to raise an additional \$2,000. Over the next few months, members of our fundraising working group will be meeting to apply for grants, as well as to begin planning for an October Gala.

We are grateful for a number of generous donations of materials and services this year. We particularly want to thank Nancy Hooper, Diane Tinsley, Svetlana and Wally Shaykhoun, Tamar and Trevor Burrows, Robin and Gary Murphy, Mercer Carlin, Calder Zwicky, Liz and Jeff Oulton, Alexander Aldarondo, and The Muse.



What are we making? Games. Sculptures. Slime. Movies. Dances. Portraits. Essays. Pillows.



Lunch. Schedules. Budgets. Commitments. Decisions. Experiments. Trips. Discoveries. Friends.



Summer Program

For the 4th summer, our staff will host a workshop and a facilitator training in East Harlem over the summer. After co-facilitating Assembly meetings, workshops, events, and last summer's Sacramento, California "ALF Summer" training with teens, staff asked if they would be interested in helping run this summer's NYC program.

As a result, we're excitedly looking forward to co-facilitating our 4th training with a team of 3 teens. In addition to their previous experience, they've been preparing and practicing together over offerings, planning dinners, trips, open houses, and workshops since January. The program will run the first 2 weeks of August.



Network

One of the distinctions that sets our Agile Learning Center apart from other public and private schools is that we are in active collaboration with other ALC communities around the world. Our facilitators are a part of a community of Agile Learning Facilitators or (ALFs) who work together to share best practices, support each other, and evolve our ALC model.

From the start, we have arranged trips and exchanges with other ALCs. We also organize, host, and co-facilitate trainings for facilitators. This year, we welcomed ALC folks from the Philly ALC, Wildwood, ExAlt, Mont Libre, Little Lake Learning Community, Green School Romania, Abrome, La Orquídea, and ALC São Paulo. Members of our community visited ALC folks in Georgia, California, Puerto Rico, Pennsylvania, San Luis Potosi, and Xalapa.

Abby remains on the board of the ALC Network. She participated in the network's first international unconference in Mexico, ALC Heartwood's Racial Equity in SDE Summit in Atlanta, and a number of smaller initiatives intended to nurture interALC connection while helping projects figure out what it means to operate in accordance with our philosophy.

Mel served as one of the coherence holders for a weekly Facilitators' Call, connecting with and supporting facilitators in projects across the network. They also joined the team organizing the first international ALF Retreat for summer 2020. Other community members active with the network this year included Mercer Carlin, Nahla Simone, and Beth Simon.



We build and care for relationships across the ALC network. We share encouragement and tips, stories and meals. We exchange games and books and skills and sometimes even homes. There's deep learning and joy in sharing our worlds, for facilitators, kids, and families!



Photos are from the AAGIL 2018 unConference in Mexico, the staff retreat to work with Alex Aldarondo in Puerto Rico, trainings in California and New York, and from a travel day!



<i>People</i> <i>Staff</i> Mel Compo, facilitator & librarian Charles Savoy, facilitator & maker Ryan Shollenberger, co-director & facilitator Abby Oulton, co-director & facilitator-admin <i>Regular Guest Teachers</i> Nancy Hooper, offering cooking Yoni Kallai, offering acro-balance Yasushi Tamaki, offering Japanese language Rachel Landsberg, offering Climate Justice <i>Non-discrimination Statement</i> The Agile Learning Center does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, national origin, or ethnic origin in administration, admission, or any associated activities.	<i>Mission</i> New York City's first Agile Learning Center is an independent school for self-directed learners. Students at Agile Learning Center individualize their learning within the context of a supportive community. We have adapted simple tools for self-organization and intentional culture creation to better support young people in engaging with their passions and curiosities while shaping the environment of the school. <i>Address</i> 115 East 106 Street Second Floor New York, NY 10029 nycagile.org
---	---

