

ACS Values in Action

In January 2005, the ACS Board of Trustees adopted the ACS Strategic Plan 2005-2009 prepared by a committee comprised of ACS parents, teachers, students, board members and administrators. The plan includes the ACS mission statement, strategic objectives and a set of eleven core values.

In March of 2006, 50 ACS community members participated in an exercise to define the core values and identify expected behaviors that will ensure that the values shape the day to day operations and interactions among parents, teachers, and students at ACS. We also identified an initial set of actions that form part of the implementation plan.

We Believe:

A safe and nurturing student-centered learning environment is essential

At ACS, “the best interest of the students” is the guiding principle for decision making and resource allocation. Student are recognized both collectively and as individuals and their opinions, interests, experiences, and needs are actively sought in designing and evaluating curriculum, instruction, and activities. Students take initiative and responsibility for their own learning and teachers are responsive to different levels and learning styles so that everyone has an equal chance to learn and to grow academically, ethically, and morally. The ACS campus is a welcoming, friendly, and non judgmental, environment that celebrates student achievement. Students feel safe to take chances, without the risk of embarrassment and have access to a range of academic and emotional support services. The ACS campus is a physically safe place where adults exercise oversight of the campus atmosphere and activities at all times.

We expect teachers, students, parents and administrators to:

- Believe in the abilities of our students and create an environment that encourages student participation in all decisions that affect them
- Ensure that actions and words reflect respect and trust among all members of the ACS community
- Take advantage of teachable moments – use situations to illustrate concerns and effective solutions
- Be conscious of the emotional needs of students and give positive reinforcement
- Ensure that ridicule, sarcasm, and insults have no place on the campus or in the classroom.
- Actively communicate, cooperate, coordinate, and collaborate with each other
- Support and participate in evaluation of the success of our programs and student learning
- Be patient, flexible, and responsive

In the fundamental principles of democracy.

The fundamental principles of democracy guide decision-making processes within the ACS community. We recognize the importance of giving all segments of the community – students, teachers and staff, administrators, parents and the board – a well defined and active role in decision-making. The governance structures of the school explicitly define the ways in which community members can participate in shaping decisions. An important element of ACS culture is sharing information, soliciting broad input, and providing feedback to the school community. We recognize the importance of creating an environment that encourages all members of the community to take initiative in shaping our school culture and to assume responsibility for open, participatory and transparent governance. Ultimately, policy decisions are made by the Board of Trustees and implementation is the responsibility of the professional administrators and faculty. Evaluation of the effectiveness of these bodies and individuals is the responsibility of the entire school community through Board elections and honest, constructive feedback.

We expect students, teachers, parents, administrators and the board to:

- Support the active participation of various segments of the ACS community through the established bodies: General Assembly, Board of Trustees, Parent – Teacher Association, and Student Council.
- Cultivate and participate in other spaces and mechanisms for broad community input

In honesty, transparency and accountability

A careful balance of candor and compassion creates trust, a basic condition for building the ACS community and working together to nurture our students. Clear expectations and criteria for participation, performance, and evaluation ensure that everyone knows their roles and has information needed to fulfill their responsibilities. The basis for decisions and assessment at all levels is evident through open access to records, proceedings, and results. Discussions are open and constructive and all members of the ACS community can express themselves freely without losing respect for other's feelings. We all make an effort to engage the people involved in a dispute or concern first before going to supervisors, parents, or other levels of authority. Everyone accepts responsibility for their words and actions, including acknowledging mistakes.

We expect students, teachers, parents, administrators and the board to:

- Be honest and responsible for one's own actions
- Support open communication
- Know the rules and who is responsible
- Ensure that issues are handled in a fair manner
- Give constructive feedback through both formal (evaluations) and informal mechanisms

In ethical behavior

Ethical behavior includes respect for self, others and the entire school environment. Such behavior allows the world to move forward with people demonstrating respect and concern for individuals. We should make decisions based on the best interests of the entire ACS community, always considering the greater good, not just the personal interests of an individual or a particular group. We should be true to the “core values” of the ACS Strategic Plan as well as our own personal values. We will create an accessible environment in which students, teachers, and parents can openly discuss issues. Ethical behavior must be practiced and modeled at all times by everyone within the ACS community.

We expect teachers, students, parents, and administrators to:

- Express themselves politely, listen to others, and maintain an open mind.
- Be an example to others—model ethical behavior at all times.
- Protect school premises.
- Be helpful and inclusive.

Modeling is the most effective way to teach core values

The ACS core values are beliefs that allow us to implement our educational philosophy and strategic plan. The values are the “face” of the philosophy and provide a framework for action. Modeling expected behavior sets an example and conveys expectations of conduct embedded in these values. It is an active, intentional process that strives to create practical understanding. We recognize that we are all teachers and learners. Ultimately, we aim to create a community of learners and to have all members of the ACS community internalize the values and practice them at school, at home, and in the wider community.

We expect teachers, students, parents, and administrators to:

- Act in accordance with the ACS values

The acquisition of life skills empowers individuals to make healthy and responsible decisions

Life skills include both technical (academic) and social skills (communication, conflict resolution, decision making, time management, nutrition, physical fitness, stress management, family, legal and financial responsibility, etc.). They are acquired through critical thinking and awareness of the local and global environments and through modeling, practice, and learning from experiences. Attention to life skills enhances the curriculum and educational process by introducing pertinent health and social issues which require and reinforce positive behaviors and responsible decision making in young people. A grounding in life skills enables students to become independent, to face challenges in a positive way, and to be responsible to themselves, the environment, and the larger community.

We expect teachers, students, parents, and administrators to:

- Assume their roles and shared responsibilities in the educational “trinity” (students/parents/teachers) by modeling, learning, sharing, practicing, and supporting the acquisition and continuous improvement of life skills
- Induce each other to analyze issues from different perspectives
- Recognize consequences of words and actions; any decision made has an effect in the present and in the future
- Teach and model good manners
- Practice shared responsibility and contribute to others’ learning experience

A broad based curriculum including local and international content better prepares individuals for success

A well rounded curriculum that includes local and international content will prepare all members of the ACS educational community to participate effectively in today’s challenging global society. Knowledge and understanding of different cultures allows members of this community to accept, respect, and value diverse points of view. As we appreciate individual and collective histories and cultures we will be able to contribute to shared prosperity and world peace.

We expect teachers, parents and students to:

- Support the development of curriculum that includes experiential learning in order to understand “others” and their experience of discrimination.
- Be conscious and intentional about the importance of including information on historically diverse philosophical, religious and cultural perspectives.
- Embrace an open and diversified curriculum for elementary, middle and high school that integrates and takes into account the histories, literatures, etc., of other countries, but especially the histories and literatures, oral and written, of Bolivian people.

Success in education requires collaboration among students, parents and educators

Education is most successful when students, parents and educators are integrated as a team that supports student learning. Students can excel more readily when their parents and teachers are actively engaged in defining and supporting the achievement of their educational goals. The tripartite relationship between each student, his/her parents and his/her teachers is the foundation for success. At ACS, the relationships among students, parents and educators are open to innovation and based on respect and careful listening. We recognize that it takes energy and conscious effort to achieve effective tripartite communication that inspires students to achieve their maximum potential on and off campus. We believe that the collaborative relationship among students, parents and teachers should include an intentional effort to engage with the world around us – “we work on the world and the world works on us.” In other words, at ACS we not only learn about the world, we learn from the world in our shared effort to be responsible global citizens.

We expect students, teachers, parents, administrators and the board to:

- Support student goals.
- Look for opportunities and develop mechanisms for regular communication between parents teachers, and students
- Participate in opportunities for the school community to come together to discuss issues and contribute to the development of the ACS educational philosophy, values in action, and implementation of the strategic plan
- Contribute to, monitor and provide feedback on the quality of information sent home to parents

Critical thinking and problem solving are essential skills

Critical thinking is the ability to sort through issues and make informed choices. It involves a purposeful exploration and questioning of concepts. We will encourage all members of the ACS community to look at issues from different perspectives. The critical thinking process includes investigation (gathering information), experimentation, and decision-making. Creativity is a key element of the process. *Problem solving* is a process that includes the following steps: 1) Look at a problem from a wide perspective, considering all possible viewpoints; 2) Analyze the possible causes of the problem; 3) Develop a time frame for addressing the problem; 4) Identify possible solutions to resolve the problem; 5) Select and implement the best solution; 6) Evaluate the effectiveness of the solution; 7) If the selected solution is not effective, be ready to implement a new solution. In working through the problem solving process, everyone must consider when to use a team approach and when it would be best to address the problem individually.

We expect teachers, students, parents and administrators to:

- See things from a variety of perspectives.
- Apply the Socratic method in daily interactions that challenges us all to use critical thinking skills to address problems.
- Provide and accept feedback on the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction.
- Use a problem-solving model to address problems at all levels, from interpersonal conflicts to major issues throughout the broader school community.
- Build on best practices for problem solving that currently exist within our community and seek to incorporate these practices school-wide.

Respect for and celebration of cultural diversity enriches individuals and the educational community

We are a diverse community and we live in a rapidly globalizing society that brings us into contact with myriad nationalities, cultures, and traditions. To acknowledge and appreciate diversity in our community and beyond opens up new ways to teach and learn. We respect and celebrate our differences and actively engage in overcoming gender, ethnic, and class inequalities. Individuals in our community will be enriched when we consider diversity as an asset and actively work to end discrimination.

We expect teachers, students, parents and administrators to:

- Be flexible, aware, and open minded and embrace diversity
- Accept differences in order to fight against gender inequities, ethnic and class discrimination within and outside ACS.
- Be open minded about Bolivian reality and history

In fostering global awareness and that each individual has a responsibility to contribute to the larger community

Our students are part of a global society that is economically, socially and politically integrated. To help our students become effective citizens, they must be aware of the interconnections and differences among individuals, peoples and nations and be able to see the importance of their actions for themselves, their environment and the larger society. Awareness starts with asking the question: Why? As an educational community, we process information about global issues, internalize it, and actively pursue intellectual understandings. We also encourage and embrace affective responses because they lead to commitment and action. The ACS community strives to overcome gaps between the privileged and the excluded and to break down prejudices that accumulate from a lack of awareness and understanding. Global awareness is important because it leads to inner motivation to assume responsibility and to work toward meaningful goals. Being part of ACS means being privileged and means we all share a responsibility to contribute and make a positive difference in the world and in our communities. We believe that in doing so we experience the powerful reality that by giving you receive extraordinary rewards.

We expect teachers, students, parents and administrators to:

- Recognize that we are privileged and to consider our responsibilities as individuals and as a community to the broader society
- Appreciate what we have and who we are
- Collaborate in finding solution by offering our gifts and talents
- Change for the better of yourself / environment / society; participate in community service activities that build understanding and make real contributions
- Be active and inquisitive and lead by example
- Work to end prejudice, racism, and injustice

*Board Approved
15 May 2006*
