



Aventura Community School  
Community Handbook  
2026-2027

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# INTRODUCTION AND AVENTURA MODEL

## Director's Welcome + Handbook Purpose

Hello Families! We are grateful to have you as part of Aventura Community School as we continue to co-create the school that delivers on our ambitious Mission Statement:

*Our mission is to elevate peace and justice by inspiring our diverse community to live as curious global citizens dedicated to changing the world.*

This Community Handbook provides an overview of important policies and procedures that will ensure we maintain a productive school culture, including purposeful academics and a committed community that ensures the success of our Aventura students. Please set aside some time to carefully review this handbook as a family and keep it handy so you can refer to it when needed. Keep in mind that this handbook is a living document and will be revised at least once each year. The most current version can be found on the Aventura Community School website. Please always feel free to contact your child's teachers or ACS leadership should you have any questions about policies and procedures at Aventura. We look forward to the learning adventure we have ahead this year and are so thankful to have you on board!

Warm regards,

Dr. Natalie Morosi

## Achieving Our Vision

Aventura Community School (ACS) is a dual-language K-8 public charter school with a diverse community of students, educators, and families committed to imagining and creating the best versions of ourselves, our communities, and our planet. The vision for achieving our mission is built around five key elements of our school model:

1. An immersive bilingual learning environment with resulting cognitive, social, and cultural benefits: Bilingual individuals have a clear advantage in our interconnected global society. Our dual language school model is a valuable addition to a school system with growing enrollment of students whose first language is not English, and we look forward to partnering with MNPS to offer a new educational model for English Learners (EL). As a dual language K-8 school our students develop fluency in English and Spanish during the critical early years when the brain has the greatest plasticity and potential for acquiring language. In addition to the obvious linguistic and cultural benefits of bilingualism, through early language study our students develop advantageous traits including cognitive flexibility, enhanced listening skills and memory, and greater creativity and divergent thinking in complex problem solving.
2. A Project Based Learning approach incorporating rigorous academics, 21st century skills, and social emotional learning: We empower students to be active participants in directing their learning experience through a rich and rigorous Project Based Learning (PBL) curriculum. Purposeful multidisciplinary projects inspired by challenges in our school, local, and global communities form the foundation of standards-based learning activities in all grades. Academic learning is intrinsically coupled with productive school culture, social emotional learning, and the development of 21st-Century skills, such as communication and collaboration, that students need to be successful in solving the problems of the future. Comprehensive and varied assessments ensure that our careful blending of best practices for achieving equitable results for all students with a child-centered PBL approach results in high performance, establishing our students as leaders prepared for high school, college, and meaningful lives.
3. A curricular focus on the Global Competence Framework: ACS is a whole-hearted learning environment where the emphasis on students' physical health, social and emotional wellbeing, connectedness with their community, and commitment to steward the health of the planet are in balance with rigorous academic inquiry. ACS students engage in units of study incorporating learning standards from many content areas as they engage in anti-bias education and develop key competencies from the four domains of the OECD's PISA Global Competence Framework:
  - Examine issues of local, global, and cultural significance

- Understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others
- Engage in open, appropriate, and effective interactions across cultures
- Take action for collective well-being and sustainable development

Our diverse school community leverages our varied experiences and perspectives in our pursuit of social and environmental justice. The bilingual model connects with this approach and ensures that our students will be prepared to learn from diverse perspectives throughout their lives and offer more complex, empathetic ideas to solve the problems of the world.

4. A connected and engaged diverse-by-design community: Children benefit from learning in schools that reflect the true diversity of their communities and provide opportunities for diverse perspectives and cultures to shape their understanding of the world. While schools across the country have grown increasingly segregated, as a diverse-by-design school we are committed to cultivating a learning community that is racially, socioeconomically, culturally, and linguistically diverse through strategic location of our school and intentional recruitment of students and faculty. External efforts to attract a diverse community of students, families, and faculty necessitate concentrated internal integration efforts to facilitate understanding and appreciation of diverse perspectives. We provide varied opportunities for families to engage in cross-cultural interactions and learn from each other as we work together to make our school and greater Nashville a welcoming community for all.
5. An inspiring professional culture where excellent teachers are supported and empowered to grow as professionals and individuals: The culture of respect, diversity, and excellence that characterizes our students' learning environment is a natural extension of the professional culture cultivated for and by our faculty. We empower all staff to experience autonomy, mastery, and purpose in their work through a culture of both high expectations and high levels of support, including broadly-shared leadership opportunities and individualized professional development tracks. Staff community circles, continuous development of our staff's Global Competence, and study groups guided by teachers' interests ensure that our teaching team embodies the spirit of "lifelong learners" that we set out to inspire in our students. Through this inspiring, purposeful professional culture we recruit and retain outstanding teachers committed to furthering the ambitious mission and vision of ACS.

### School Hours

The school day for students in the Aventura Lower School begins at 8:15 am and ends at 3:15. Punctuality is important and ensures that instructional time for students is protected and prioritized each day at ACS. Punctuality is an important value that demonstrates respect for ACS staff and the engaging learning activities that students experience each day at school. Families can sign up for our morning before school care option from 7:15-8:15 a.m.

ACS offers before and after school care options to accommodate parents' work schedules if they are unable to pick up at 3:15. After school care ends at 5:00 p.m. Clubs hosted by teachers and community partners are another extended day option. Parents are responsible for making before and after care arrangements with the providers directly.

In case of inclement weather, school hours may be impacted:

- School Closing: Occasionally, weather conditions will cause schools to open late, dismiss early, or close altogether. If we are experiencing or expecting severe weather, please monitor the MNPS Website (<http://www.mnps.org>) or our local television and/or radio stations for the latest school closing information. Please do NOT call the school for this information. ACS follows the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) plan for school closings. If MNPS schools are closed, ACS will also be closed on the first day of a closing. If MNPS is closed for more than one consecutive day, please check your email and ACS social media to see if ACS will open. Sometimes MNPS bus routes are inaccessible, but bus routes are clear to our school after one day. In these cases, where MNPS cannot open but we can, we will send an email to families as well as post our opening on social media.
- Early Dismissal: If inclement weather causes an early dismissal, we will notify all parents through email, text message, in addition to the posting on ACS social media. ACS will follow the regular daily schedule until the time that students need to be dismissed early. Classes will continue the regular length of time, and students may miss some classes scheduled for the end of the day.

# SECTION 2: ACADEMICS AT AVENTURA

## Standards

Tennessee Academic Standards provide the foundation for all learning activities at ACS. The standards are *what* we learn at ACS, our curricular projects and instructional methods are *how* we learn, and our global competence focus provides the *why* for our learning activities and approach, including our dual language instructional methods.

## Curriculum and Instructional Methods

Our instructional methods blend practices of progressive, child-centered Montessori, Reggio, and Project Based Learning educational approaches with best practices for promoting equitable outcomes for all students, including students with special needs and English language learners.

A key element of Montessori education implemented at ACS is the structure of the school day in extended work cycles. All students participate in two extended daily work cycles of between 2-3 hours, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, one focused on Math and one focused on Literacy. In the Lower School work cycles are led by the two classroom Co-Teachers. Enrichment (Art, STEAM, PE) is incorporated daily as a part of classroom projects and has a dedicated classroom rotation time.

An important element of ACS work cycles is the four freedoms that help our students develop independence, intrinsic motivation, and confidence as leaders of their own learning. These four freedoms are given to students unless they demonstrate that they need additional support or structure:

- 1. Freedom to choose where to work
- 2. Freedom to choose how long to work on each task
- 3. Freedom to choose who to work with
- 4. Freedom to choose what order to do their work in

Instruction in ACS work cycles at all levels incorporates research-supported best practices designed to provide individualized and equitable learning opportunities and to maximize student voice and independence in the learning process. Our main instructional practices are outlined in the following table:

ACS Instructional Methods and Strategies

| Literacy Instructional Strategies |                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Content-Based                     | The EL Education curriculum is designed to engage students in reading, |

|                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Literacy                             | thinking, talking, and writing about engaging grade level texts on meaningful topics. Each quarter students will engage with texts and labs focused on a multidisciplinary project such as <i>Toys and Play</i> or <i>Trees in our Community</i> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Foundational Skills                  | Students develop foundational literacy skills including phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension through the EL curriculum, UFLI, the Estrellita approach to foundation skills in Spanish, and word study.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Interactive Read Aloud               | This Interactive Read Aloud is an effective strategy for whole-group literacy instruction, and can also be an engaging manner for introducing topics in other content areas through narrative or nonfiction texts. The teacher reads from an engaging text and periodically prompts students to turn and talk to each other about their thinking as they listen to the story. The teacher models important skills or understandings that the students will explore and practice independently after the Interactive Read Aloud. |
| Independent Reading                  | Students spend time each day reading self-selected texts at an appropriate level. They are often asked to apply literacy concepts and skills as they read independently. To build motivation and comfort while reading, students select comfortable reading nooks where they complete independent reading and assigned activities.                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Skill groups/<br>intervention groups | Benchmark Assessments inform student grouping by target skill. Literacy groups meet weekly with the teacher to complete activities relating to phonics, comprehension, features of the text, and vocabulary study.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Mathematics Instructional Strategies |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Balanced Math                        | This approach to mathematics instruction focuses on understanding processes and strategies that lead to effective problem solving. Using our Eureka2 curriculum, students enjoy multiple opportunities to build and demonstrate mastery of Mathematical concepts and skills.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Guided Problem Solving               | Students work in groups with the teacher to practice specific mathematical concepts and processes.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Shared Problem Solving               | Students work together with peers to apply mathematics to solve challenging real-world problems. Collaboration with others and sharing multiple solutions allows students to build greater connections to mathematics.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Independent Math                     | Students have an opportunity to independently learn and apply math concepts to solve problems.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Math Games                           | Students build confidence and develop positive attitudes towards math as they apply math skills and processes to math games.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

| Instructional Strategies for All Content Areas |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Direct Instruction                             | The teacher teaches, models, or demonstrates a concept or process to be explored and implemented by students.                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Interdisciplinary Projects                     | In order to be most engaging and ultimately useful for students, instruction must be connected to everyday problems and challenges that they encounter in the real world. ACS students apply skills and concepts from many content areas as they work on our interdisciplinary projects. |
| Use of Manipulatives                           | Dr. Maria Montessori affirms that "What the hand does the mind remembers." We incorporate hands-on learning opportunities in all content areas through the use of natural objects, math manipulatives, Montessori literacy materials, and science experiments.                           |
| Total Physical Response                        | TPR is an instructional strategy recommended for language teaching where vocabulary is integrated with a physical movement. At ACS we implement TPR to boost academic and social language learning in English and Spanish in all content areas.                                          |

### Language Teaching and Learning

As a dual language school our diverse student population includes a balance of native English speakers, Spanish speakers, and other global language speakers who simultaneously develop fluency in both languages across the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In Kindergarten most instructional delivery occurs in Spanish, with increasing use of English across grade levels, reaching 50% Spanish and 50% English by third grade. Instruction continues in 50% English and 50% Spanish throughout middle school (grades 5-8).

This is an immersion approach, where students are not only learning a global language, they are learning academic content *in* the global language, which assigns greater meaning and relevance to the language and is recommended by research evaluating different approaches to bilingual education. Approximate percentage of each day spent learning in Spanish and the distribution of content by language of instruction at each grade level can be found in the following table.

ACS Dual Language Model

| Grade | % in Spanish | Subjects taught in Spanish                                   | Subjects taught in English           |
|-------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| K     | 80%          | Spanish Literacy, Math, Social Studies, Science, STEM, Music | English Literacy, P.E., Art          |
| 1     | 70%          | Spanish Literacy, Math, Social Studies, Science, STEM, Music | English Literacy, P.E., Art          |
| 2     | 60%          | Spanish Literacy, Math, Social Studies, STEM, Music          | English Literacy, Science, P.E., Art |

|   |     |                                                     |                                                     |
|---|-----|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| 3 | 50% | Spanish Literacy, Math, Science, STEM, Music        | English Literacy, Math, Social Studies, P.E., Art   |
| 4 | 50% | Spanish Literacy, Math, Social Studies, STEM, Music | English Literacy, Math, Science, P.E., Art          |
| 5 | 50% | Spanish Literacy, Math, Science, Art, Music         | English Literacy, Math, Social Studies, P.E., Music |
| 6 | 50% | Spanish Literacy, Math, Social Studies, Art, Music  | English Literacy, Math, Science, P.E., Music        |
| 7 | 50% | Spanish Literacy, Math, Science, Music              | English Literacy, Math, Social Studies, P.E., Art   |
| 8 | 50% | Spanish Literacy, Math, Social Studies, Music       | English Literacy, Math, Science, P.E., Art          |

### Academic Grades and Report Cards

Report Cards are issued to parents at the end of each quarter. The purpose of the ACS report card is to communicate student achievement in relation to standards-based academic goals for the marking period, as well as reading level in English and Spanish, global competence, and social emotional learning. Report cards provide a comprehensive picture of student progress in becoming lifelong learners and contributing members of the ACS learning community.

### Homework Policy

Age- appropriate homework may be assigned on a weekly basis. In the lower school we do not anticipate assigning frequent homework or at-home projects. Students will be clearly notified when they are expected to return homework assignments. All students are expected to read “just right” books for an appropriate amount of time in English and/or Spanish given their grade level. In addition to reading, students may be assigned specific homework tasks. Practicing skills and researching topics introduced in class, preparing for upcoming lessons or tests, applying or extending concepts already learned, are among the purposes for homework at ACS. Homework always builds on concepts introduced in class and helps students develop independent study habits and learn how to manage their time. We expect homework to be a reflection of the child’s effort and abilities with minimal adult assistance.

### Make-Up Work

If a student misses a day or block of the day, graded work must be made up at another time. Students will have one week from the date of any missed work to submit makeup work.

### Academic Dishonesty

Acts of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, stealing tests, copying themes or tests from other students or using notes or tapes are considered serious offenses. Students are expected to use good digital citizenship when using technology. A student charged with academic dishonesty is subject to probationary status, suspension and/or expulsion. A student contributing to another student's act of dishonesty is considered to be equally at fault. Progressive discipline will be used. Please discuss with the School Director if you observe a student engaging in academic dishonesty.

### Special Education

All ACS students with disabilities are provided services and programs as prescribed by their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). All services and placement decisions are made by the IEP team based on the individual needs of the student. ACS employs an inclusion model to the fullest extent possible to provide students with appropriate educational services in the least restrictive environment, so most ACS students with an IEP or Individual Learning Plan (ILP) will receive services within the context of the general education classroom to the fullest extent possible with targeted interventions by specialists. An inclusion model allows students to receive individualized and small group instruction within the general education classroom setting, and provides significant academic and social benefits to both students with IEPs and their typically developing peers.

Our dual language school model is intentionally designed to meet the needs of English Learners, and our Project Based Learning approach and daily school schedule are optimally designed to provide students with equitable academic support, interventions, and enrichment to meet their individual needs. We reject the myth of the "average student" and are dedicated to providing a learning program that allows all students to experience success and growth as learners and members of the ACS community. Adaptation and modifications of assignments, assessments, and the classroom environment are provided as indicated by the student's IEP or ILP. Special assessment accommodations will be given during state/district assessments.

## SECTION 3: CULTURE AT AVENTURA

### Our Approach to Culture and Behavior

At Aventura Community School, we believe that behavior is part of learning. Just as we teach academic skills, we explicitly teach the social, emotional, and behavioral skills students need to participate successfully in our community.

We believe every student is capable of growth and deserves belonging, safety, and meaningful relationships. When students struggle to meet expectations, we seek to understand what their behavior may be communicating, what skills or supports they may need, and what conditions may be affecting their success.

Our approach combines clear expectations, empathy, accountability, and support. Students need both clear boundaries and strong relationships, accountability and belonging, support and high expectations.

### Our School Commitments

Our commitments describe the community we are building and guide how we teach, interact, and respond when things do not go as planned:

- I commit to cultivating joy.
- I commit to being kind and curious.
- I commit to walking my talk.
- I commit to recognizing potential in myself and others.
- I commit to attending to my relationships.
- I commit to celebrating our differences.

Students will not always meet these commitments perfectly. Growth means learning to recognize when our actions are out of alignment with our commitments, take responsibility, and practice a different way forward.

### Proactive Approach

Expectations are not simply assumed. We explicitly teach, model, practice, and reinforce the skills and behaviors students need to be successful in classrooms and shared spaces such as hallways, cafeterias, playgrounds, bathrooms, and buses.

We recognize that students develop these skills at different rates and may need different levels of support. Creating engaging learning environments, predictable routines, meaningful relationships, and a strong sense of belonging is an important part of our responsibility as educators.

## Building Community at Aventura

Aventura uses a variety of community-building practices to help students develop self-awareness, relationships, empathy, and a sense of belonging. ACS has adopted the Powered by Compass approach to social-emotional learning, developed by Valor Collegiate Academies.

**Compass Lessons and Badgework:** Students engage in daily social-emotional learning focused on relevant challenges and skills for holistic development. Students also complete self-directed experiential tasks, called Badgework, designed to support their growth.

**Compass Circle:** Students and staff participate in weekly class Circles focused on personal development and connection. Circle includes practices such as mindfulness, check-ins, appreciations, and closing rituals.

## ACS Behavioral Lenses

When behavior challenges our community, we use three complementary lenses to help us understand what is happening and determine how to respond.

**Trauma-Informed:** We recognize that students' experiences, environments, developmental needs, and nervous systems can influence how they respond and learn. We ask, *"What might this student be communicating or experiencing?"* while maintaining clear expectations and boundaries.

**Relational:** We believe strong relationships are essential to learning and belonging. We consider how connection, relationships, and a student's experience within the community may be influencing behavior and seek responses that strengthen relationships while maintaining clear expectations.

**Restorative:** We believe accountability and belonging can exist together. When harm occurs, we help students understand the impact of their choices, take responsibility, make amends when appropriate, and repair relationships. Restorative practices may include reflection, restorative conversations, and other opportunities to repair harm.

Restorative practices do not eliminate accountability or consequences. Responses may also include re-teaching, additional support, loss of privileges, or other consequences outlined in MNPS's discipline codes, depending on the behavior, its impact, the student's needs, and the safety of the community.

## Behavioral Consequences

When students make choices that do not align with our commitments, we view these moments as opportunities for learning and growth while taking the impact of behavior seriously.

Depending on the situation, adults may:

- reteach expectations or skills;
- provide opportunities for reflection and practice;
- provide additional individual or small-group support;
- facilitate a restorative conversation or repair process;
- communicate with the student's family;
- develop an individualized support plan; and/or
- use consequences outlined in MNPS's discipline codes.

Accountability at Aventura means helping students understand the impact of their actions, take responsibility, and make things right when possible. Accountability is not about shame; it is about learning, repair, and growth.

### Safety Comes First

While we approach behavior with curiosity, empathy, and a focus on restoration, the safety of students and staff is our highest priority. Behavior that threatens physical or emotional safety may require immediate adult intervention and consequences consistent with MNPS's discipline codes. Adults may take immediate steps to protect the community before engaging in reflection, restoration, or longer-term support.

### Partnering With Families

Families are essential partners in creating a strong school community. When concerns arise, we seek to understand the student's experience across settings and work with families to identify strategies that support their growth.

Families may be contacted when behavior causes significant harm or disruption, reflects a recurring pattern requiring additional support, results in a significant disciplinary response, or indicates that a collaborative support plan may be helpful. Families are also encouraged to share information that may help us better understand and support their child.

### Bullying and Peer Conflict

Aventura takes bullying seriously. We teach students what bullying is, how to respond when they experience or witness it, and how to seek help from trusted adults.

Bullying may be physical, verbal, or relational/social and may be direct or indirect. For behavior to meet our definition of bullying, it generally involves intentional, repeated behavior in which there is a real or perceived imbalance of power between individuals.

Not every hurtful interaction is bullying. Disagreements, exclusion, teasing, and other conflicts can be part of developing relationships and social skills, but they still deserve adult attention and support. When behavior meets our definition of bullying, we follow the procedures outlined in MNPS's discipline codes.

Students and families should report concerns about bullying to a teacher, school administrator, counselor, or another trusted adult. Aventura will respond according to school and district policies and procedures, considering the information available, the students involved, and the safety and well-being of the community.

### A Shared Commitment to Growth

Our goal is not to create a community where students never make mistakes. Our goal is to create a community where students feel known and valued, understand what is expected of them, receive the support they need to succeed, and learn how to respond when things go wrong.

At Aventura, we strive to build a community where students experience belonging and accountability, joy and responsibility, support and high expectations.

## SECTION 4: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### Acceptable Use of Technology

Internet access is available to all ACS students and staff. Access for students is for educational purposes only. Technology is integrated into the curriculum and daily lives of students to enhance learning. Students have computers and tablets available in their classrooms and we will have a 1-1 device structure for grades 3 and beyond.

The main objectives of our technology integration program and the technology curriculum are to foster confidence and skills in the use of the computer and computer applications, to develop student's critical and creative thinking, to stimulate and foster an interest in and understanding of the use of technology for communication and research purposes, and to encourage students to work with a computer either independently or in cooperative situations.

Unauthorized use or improper storage of a device will result in confiscation until such time as it may be released to the student's parents or guardian. A student in violation of this policy is subject to disciplinary action.

### Phones

Students should not use mobile phones or smart watches at any point during the school day. Students who bring devices to school must leave them turned off in a backpack while at school. Students using devices during the school day will have them confiscated to be picked up at the end of the day by a parent.

#### AI Policy

ACS will follow our local district's AI policy. For details please visit <https://www.mnps.org/ai>

#### Attendance Policy

ACS has an average daily attendance goal of at least 95% of students in attendance. ACS is aligned with the MNPS attendance policy and we expect all students to attend school each day. We accept the following reasons for an excused absence:

- Child's illness
- Serious illness in the family
- Head lice, maximum of three days
- Death in the family
- Religious holiday

Special circumstances may be approved as excused at the discretion of school leadership who will work with families to problem-solve and prevent future absences. Examples include housing difficulties, transportation difficulties, or required family travel. Parents should email [attendance@aventuranashville.org](mailto:attendance@aventuranashville.org), or send a written note to the ACS front office detailing the reason for the absence. Parents must justify an absence in writing within five days of the absence for it to be excused by the school.

School attendance is a strong predictor of a wide range of outcomes including academic performance, reading level, and likelihood of graduating, so ACS makes a great effort to hold students and families accountable for ensuring students are at school each day. To reduce the number of students who are chronically absent (defined as missing 10% of school days) or who are at risk of becoming chronically absent, ACS implements a number of interventions:

| Absence Threshold                    | Actions/ Interventions                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Daily absence not excused in advance | Contact guardians- call or text                                                                        |
| 3 unexcused absences                 | Attendance notification                                                                                |
| 5 unexcused absences                 | Attendance meeting between school representative and guardian<br>Attendance Improvement plan developed |

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                       | and shared with stakeholders<br>Truancy letter sent home                                                                                                                             |
| 7 unexcused absences  | Attendance meeting between school representative and guardian<br>Attendance Improvement plan reviewed and updated<br>Truancy next steps shared with families                         |
| 10 unexcused absences | ACS is mandated by Compulsory School Attendance Law (TCA § 49-6-3001) to report a truancy concern to the Juvenile Courts. School director communicates this requirement to families. |

### Classroom Placement

ACS places students in heterogeneous classrooms at each grade level. Classroom placements are determined by the school leadership team. Families may make requests, but ultimately it is the decision of the Directors on classroom placement for students. In rare cases classroom assignments may change during the school year based on meeting the needs of the students and the school community.

### Communication

Parents must be informed of the current curriculum, major assignments, projects, upcoming classroom/school events, extension activities to further the learning process at home and other pertinent information. The following guidelines inform communication during the year:

- Teachers will keep in close contact with parents by email, phone, or through notes home especially when there are areas of concern and when there is good news to share.
- Teachers have up to 48 hours during the workweek to respond to parent questions or requests.
- Weekly classroom or grade level communication will be shared with families via email, a class blog, or other format as determined by teaching teams.
- ACS leadership will offer special parent information sessions during the year

It is each family's responsibility to update our main office with any changes to phone numbers, addresses or emergency contacts. This will ensure families receive important updates such as the Kaleidoscope (principal update), grade-level newsletters, and additional announcements. Email and Talking Points are the main streams of communication from the school. Note that WhatsApp groups are not official forms of school communication.

## Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a key factor in building strong, positive relationships with our students. In order for students to feel comfortable and safe enough to talk about the delicate subjects that concern them (e.g. feelings, friendships, difficult situations at home and in school, etc.), they must trust that the teacher, counselor, administrator, or staff member that they confide in will respect their concerns by honoring their rights of confidentiality. Maintaining confidentiality, being honest, and treating students with respect are what create the relationships and bonds that allow us to have a positive impact and help our students manage difficult situations.

As professional educators, we have an ethical and legal obligation to break confidentiality as needed in order to ensure the physical and emotional safety of our students. If during the course of consultation or conversation there is any reason to suspect that the student is at risk in any way, if he or she is considering self-injury, or is a danger to others, we are required to seek additional support and report the situation to a higher official.

## Dress Code

ACS expects that all students will dress in a way that is appropriate for the school day or for any school sponsored event. Student dress choices should respect the school's intent to sustain a community that is inclusive of a diverse range of identities. The primary responsibility for a student's attire resides with the student and their parent(s) or guardian(s). The school is responsible for seeing that student attire does not interfere with the health or safety of any student, that student attire does not contribute to a hostile or intimidating atmosphere for any student, and that dress code enforcement does not reinforce or increase marginalization or oppression of any group based on race, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, cultural observance, household income, or body type/size.

1. Basic Principle: Certain body parts must be covered for all students at all times. Clothes must be worn in a way such that a student's private parts are fully covered with non-see through fabric. All items listed in the "must wear" and "may wear" categories below must meet this basic principle.

2. Students Must Wear<sup>1</sup>, while following the basic principle of Section 1 above :

- A Shirt (with fabric at least covering the area of a typical tank top), AND
- Pants/jeans or the equivalent (for example, a skirt, sweatpants, leggings, a dress or shorts), AND
- Shoes suitable for play and physical activity

3. Students May Wear, as long as these items do not violate section 1 above or section 3 below:

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<sup>1</sup> Activity-specific shoes requirements are permitted (for example, athletic shoes for PE).

- Religious headwear
- Hoodie sweatshirts
- Fitted pants, including non-see through leggings, yoga pants, and “skinny jeans”
- Athletic attire
- ACS school spirit swag

#### 4. Students Cannot Wear:

- Anything that covers the ears or face, save for religious headwear.
- Pajamas
- Violent language or images.
- Images or language that creates a hostile or intimidating environment based on any protected class or consistently marginalized groups.
- Accessories that could be considered dangerous or could be used as a weapon.

#### Emergency Drills

ACS considers the safety of students our top priority. ACS is vigilant in its communication with all stakeholders within the school. ACS has its exterior doors locked at all times. To enter the school, visitors must enter through a security buzzer equipped with a camera in the front office during school hours. Throughout the school year, teachers, students and staff participate in the following drills:

- Secure: Is when there is a threat in the area that is not school specific but could affect the school in which no one is allowed to transition in or out of the building. In these situations, the Metro Nashville Police Department in partnership with ACS maintains ongoing communication regarding the nature of the incident.
- Lockdown: This is when there is a threat of any nature that requires that all classrooms and exterior doors remain locked and no student movement within the building as the school implements its crisis response plan.
- Shelter in Place: This is a weather-related response in which students are kept inside the school in safe areas of the building when there is a risk of inclement weather. Students will remain in their shelter in place locations until the danger has passed.
- Fire Drills: ACS is required to conduct at least one fire drill monthly. Fire drills require full evacuation from the school.
- Tornado Drills: ACS is required to conduct tornado/severe storm drills twice a year. ACS has developed procedures to minimize risks to students, staff and visitors in the event of tornadoes and severe storms.

#### FERPA

ACS is required to provide annual notice of The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the rights it provides parents and students. The FERPA gives parents, students

over 18 years of age and others certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the school receives a request for access. Parents of eligible students should submit to the school principal (or appropriate school official) a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The school official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.
2. The right to request an amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate or misleading. Parents or eligible students may ask the school to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate or misleading. They should write to the school principal (or appropriate official), clearly identify the part of the record they want changed and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.
3. The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the school as an administrator, supervisor, instructor or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the ACS board of directors; a person or company with whom the school has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant or therapist); a parent or student on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official performing his or her tasks; or an attorney from the Department of Law with a legitimate educational interest. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his/her professional responsibility. Upon request, the school can disclose education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll. (Note: FERPA requires a school district to make a reasonable attempt to notify the parent or eligible student of the records request unless it states in its annual notification that it intends to forward records on request.)
4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the school to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the office that administers FERPA are:
  - a. Family Policy Compliance Office U.S. Department of Education; 400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202-4605

Student directory information is restricted in accordance with FERPA guidelines. If you do not want ACS to disclose the types of information designated below as directory information from your student's education records without your prior written consent, you must notify ACS either in writing, or by indicating your choice on the media release form shared at the start of school.

- Student's name
- Address
- Photograph
- Date and place of birth
- Major field of study
- Dates of attendance
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Weight and height of members of athletic teams
- Degrees, honors and awards received
- The most recent educational agency or institution attended

### Harassment

Misconduct that may be perceived or described as bullying, cyber-bullying, discrimination, intimidation, or hazing may constitute prohibited harassment under this policy when the conduct (1) is based on a student's real or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, handicap/disability, sexual orientation, ancestry, or sex, including gender identity, gender expression, and appearance; and (2) creates a hostile environment.

Harassment may take many forms and is not limited to conduct that constitutes bullying. Harassing conduct may include verbal acts and name-calling; graphic and written statements, which may include use of cell phones or the internet; or other conduct that may be physically threatening, harmful, or humiliating if such conduct is based on a student's real or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, handicap/disability, sexual orientation, ancestry, or sex, gender identity, gender expression, and appearance. Harassment does not have to include intent to harm, be directed at a specific target, or involve repeated incidents. Harassment creates a hostile environment when the conduct is sufficiently serious (severe, pervasive, or persistent) and objectively offensive so as to deny or interfere with or limit a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the programs, services, activities, or opportunities offered by ACS

Sexual harassment means any unwelcomed sexual advance or request for sexual favors or conduct of a sexual nature:

- when submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's participation in an education program or activity;
- when submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis of any educational or service decision affecting the individual; and/or,

- when such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from an education program or activity or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work or learning environment.

Sex-based harassment includes sexual harassment and non-sexual harassment based on gender identity, transgender status, gender expression or appearance, stereotypical notions of what is female/feminine v. male/masculine, or a failure to conform to those gender stereotypes.

Behaviors that constitute sexual harassment may include, but are not limited to sexually suggestive or offensive remarks; sexually suggestive pictures, sexually suggestive gesturing, verbal harassment or abuse of a sexual nature, harassing, abusive or sexually suggestive or offensive messages sent by e-mail or other electronic medium, subtle or direct propositions for sexual favors, and touching, patting, or pinching. Sexual harassment may be directed against a particular person or persons, or a group, whether of the opposite sex or the same sex.

### Language Policy

The ACS Language Policy is guided by the following beliefs:

- Language development is the foundation that allows students to fully access and engage with learning activities.
- All teachers are language teachers, and all subject-area classes must include explicit language instruction.
- Languages are learned best when taught in authentic, meaningful contexts.
- Well-developed language skills support open, clear communication and the creation of meaningful relationships.
- Language provides a direct link to understanding a person's culture and identity.
- Multilingualism is essential in the modern globally-interconnected society.
- A variety of assessment tools must be used to best assess language learning and content mastery in language immersion classrooms.
- All school faculty must attend regular professional development to stay current on best practices and strategies for promoting language learning.
- Families play a crucial role in language learning, both in promoting learning and maintenance of the child's mother tongue, and in supporting the child's developing multilingualism.

ACS has a culturally and linguistically diverse school community, with many families speaking more than one language in the home. Our teaching staff consists of individuals who are native speakers of English or Spanish, including teachers who are bilingual or proficient in two or more languages. Although English and Spanish are the most commonly used languages in the school, we encourage the use of other languages as appropriate, such as informal conversations between families with a common mother tongue.

Official publications and communications, such as the school Handbook, weekly class newsletters, and extracurricular offerings are made available in English and Spanish with additional translations possible based on need. At the beginning of each school year parents indicate their preference for written and verbal communication from the school. At official school functions parents and ACS teaching staff may choose to communicate in the language that is most comfortable for both parties.

### Mandated Reporting

Under Tennessee state law, any person with reasonable cause to believe a child is being abused or neglected is a mandated reporter, meaning they must immediately report to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services or to local law enforcement. All ACS staff members are mandated reporters, under this law. ACS staff members are not required to discuss their suspicions with families prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior or condition prior to making a report. Under the law, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. As mandated reporters, staff members cannot be held liable for reports made to the Department of Children's Services which are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in "good faith." Causes for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect include, but are not limited to:

- Unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on the child's body
- Transporting a child without appropriate child restraints (e.g. car seats, seat belts, etc.)
- Dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol
- Leaving a child unattended for any amount of time
- Failure to attend to the special needs of a disabled child
- Children who exhibit behavior consistent with an abusive situation

If your child or family is in need of resources or support that are impacting your child's or family's well being, please reach out to any ACS teacher or staff member with whom you feel comfortable

### Medications and Student Illness

Students should never bring medication with them. Should a student need to take medication during school hours, the child's doctor must fill a form stating how the medication must be administered at school. Each prescription medication to be administered by school personnel must be accompanied by a signed statement from the physician/ parent detailing the dosage/ time for administration. All medications will be kept in a locked cabinet in the office. Calls to parents or guardians to verify the information in the request may be placed by school personnel. Medication will not be administered by school personnel until a completed medication form is on file.

If your child has a temperature equal or above 100.5 F, please do not bring him/her to school. Students must be fever-free without the use of medication for at least 24 hours before returning to school. If your child has vomited in the past 24 hours, do not bring them to school. If your child has or has recently had lice, they may not return to school until nits, eggs and lice are all completely gone.

If a child becomes ill during class appropriate first aid will be provided in consultation with the student's parents. A child will only be authorized to go home after parents' approval.

### Non-discrimination

ACS does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, creed, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, color, age and/or disability in admission to, access to or operation of its programs, services or activities. ACS does not discriminate in its hiring or employment practices.

### Parent-Teacher Conferences

Formal Parent Teacher Conference will be held twice during the year, in the fall and the spring. Additional conferences may be arranged at any other time during the year by parents, teachers, and/or the ACS directors. To protect the instructional time of our students, please call or email and arrange a convenient time to meet with your child's teacher. If you bring your child to school or pick them up, please do not have conferences at the door. Teachers are attending to the students, and it is better to make an appointment.

### Release of Students

Teachers will not release students to unauthorized persons. If a doubt arises regarding the relationship to the student, the teacher will check the student's file for authorized names. Teachers must be alert to changes in household personnel or cases of custody and divorce, and should inform the office if these occurrences indicate a revision of names on the authorized list.

### Room Parents

A room parent is appointed to represent each homeroom. The responsibilities of the room parent are primarily to serve as a liaison between the classroom teacher(s) and the parents of each classroom. Room parents may also coordinate classroom activities including celebrations. Parents are given the opportunity to volunteer by submitting their name for consideration at Open House. Room parents are selected from the list with priority being given to those

individuals who have not previously served as a room parent and/or are not currently serving as a room parent for another class.

### Toys and Lost & Found

Toys, games, music players, electronics, and other like items, should not be brought to school unless requested by a teacher for special purposes. Exceptions include balls or other recreational items to be used only during recess. If an item is brought without the teacher's permission, the item will be held at school until picked up by a parent. At the end of the school year, all unclaimed items will be discarded.

Misplaced toys or clothing will be taken to the Lost and Found located in the school office. If an item has been lost, families should submit a Lost Item form and the school will return the item if it has been found. At the end of each trimester, any remaining Lost and Found items will be placed in the cafeteria for families to claim. Unclaimed items will be donated or disposed of as appropriate.

### Volunteers and Visitors

All faculty and staff members will wear an identification badge at all times while on campus. Volunteers and visitors for school activities are welcome, and for safety reasons must sign in at the office before going to the classroom and must wear an identification badge when in the building. Visitors must also check out in the office when they leave for the day.

Complete the following acknowledgement form:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSftHf-VwNdNnm1TTurMLE3uZsX2tc37dzngUwZP-vxiVwWSNg/viewform?usp=header>