

***“Real-life experiential learning, supported by structured reflection, is the core of our programs.”***

***—AFS Vision 2020***

## AFS Educational Methodology Statement for Students

### How we help AFSers reach the AFS Educational Goals

AFS helps students, families, volunteers, staff and all people it touches develop the 21st century intercultural skills, knowledge and understanding needed to become active global citizens and create positive change for a more just and peaceful world.

### OUR APPROACH: LEARNING AS A JOURNEY OF CHANGE

AFS believes that intercultural challenges and learning moments are inevitable parts of our everyday lives, our classrooms and public spaces. To prepare students to engage effectively across cultural and other differences, *we take our young participants on a transformative learning journey*. Through our programs and other offerings, we help participants:

- Learn firsthand about the impact of culture on values and the decisions they make,
- Gain the ability to better see themselves through the eyes of others
- Challenge assumptions,
- Broaden their views on cultural stereotypes and global issues,
- Begin to understand how to shift perspectives effectively, appropriately and authentically.

### OUR APPROACH: A GOALS-BASED CURRICULUM AND METHODS

The *AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum* focuses on students' specific needs as emerging leaders and considers the practical application of 16 *AFS Educational Goals* for personal, academic, civic and future professional use. The AFS experience is a critical milestone for our students in their journey to becoming interculturally competent, responsible global citizens and agents of positive social change.

Focused on different aspects of personal, interpersonal, cultural and global awareness and development, the 16 *AFS Educational Goals* serve as the backbone of the *AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum* that shapes the student's AFS experience. The curriculum includes carefully chosen activities, facilitated conversations and other exercises that are directly tied to the 40 learning objectives that make up the *AFS Educational Goals*. This journey and curriculum have evolved out of AFS's commitment to leverage experience, research and best practices in the areas of student growth and intercultural development since our exchange program was launched in 1946.

## OUR APPROACH: COMBINING IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES WITH STRUCTURED LEARNING

At the core of AFS's intercultural learning opportunities for students are exchange and study abroad programs in which we place participants in a safe but culturally different environment. However, no matter how important the immersion experience is, simply living with a host family and attending a local school are not enough to develop the practical and highly coveted intercultural skills and understanding needed today. To become active global citizens, participants require support, encouragement and skills training to make their experiences meaningful intercultural learning opportunities. That's why AFS programs are designed to help and prepare participants to fully engage with their host families, get involved in school activities beyond the classroom, perhaps volunteer in their local community and begin creating lifelong friendships.

**Research demonstrates that these goals are much more likely to be achieved when students receive state-of-the-art pedagogically designed guidance before, during and after the exchange from specially trained AFS volunteers and staff.**

## OUR APPROACH: A COMPLEMENT TO CLASSROOM LEARNING

Most AFS student programs include a formal education component (with participants attending secondary school)—and all offer informal everyday situational learning. **The *AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum* enhances the exchange experience through a rigorous non-formal education program that is goal-based, developmentally designed and uses designated learning facilitators.**

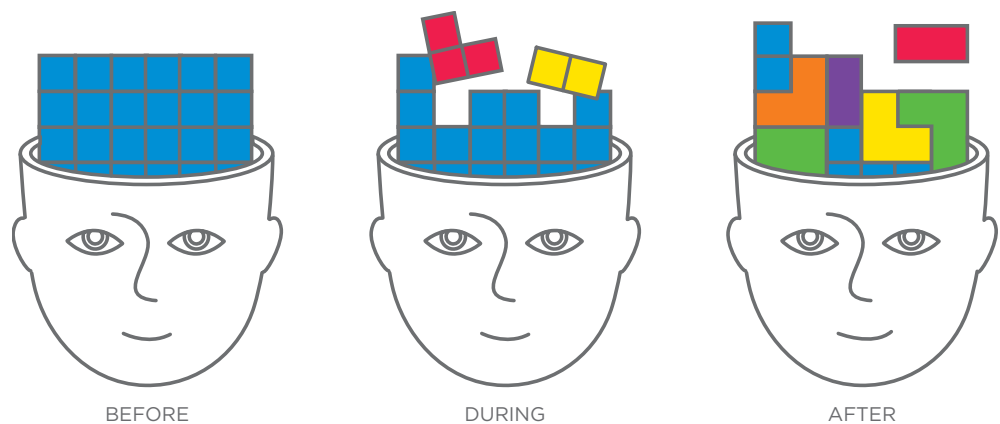
These lessons, discussions and activities take place outside of a classroom or traditional academic setting. Instead, trained AFS volunteers and staff work in partnership with host families, schools and the students to support progressive learning activities and discussions that encourage students to continually examine their own world views, explore alternative outlooks and adjust their perspectives, mindset and behaviors accordingly. AFS support volunteers and staff view themselves not only as guidance providers, but also as co-learners alongside the student in the AFS experience.

## OUR APPROACH: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING = ENHANCED LEARNING

**AFS believes in the strength of experiential learning.** We put students at the center of the developmental process, guiding and supporting them along the way. Students are taught how to learn from and “make meaning” of their new life using tools to help them reflect and analyze their experiences in a structured way. They are then encouraged to experiment and adjust their behaviors based on insights gained—and continue the cycle of learning.

## OUR APPROACH: LEARNING FOR LIFE AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Finally, **the AFS Student Learning Journey is a lifelong experience** with a defined starting point and regular milestones, but no true end date. Students—as well as our volunteers—are constantly learning, beginning with their first contact with the organization and continuing long after finishing their official program involvement. Many students continue their development by becoming active volunteers for the organization, host families and/or participants in other AFS programs. In all of these situations, we also offer *learning journeys* to deepen and strengthen insights and skills.



**AFS offers a transformative learning journey:** This illustration demonstrates how AFS students perceive and think about the world and how this perception evolves over time as they go through the different phases of the intercultural experience. Students start the journey with a specific set of values and beliefs (**BEFORE**), which expand as they face a new culture with its own particular set of values (**DURING**). The students' world views keep transforming when they return home (**AFTER**) and begin integrating what they've learned with what they already believed. This final process helps students develop a more complex and critical way of thinking and perceiving the world.

### OUR APPROACH IS THEN:

- Transformative
- Goal-based
- Combines immersive experiences with structured learning
- Non-formal (a complement to the classroom)
- Experiential
- Lifelong

These principles guide the *AFS Student Learning Journey* in which student participants work toward the *AFS Educational Goals* in a progressive, developmentally designed manner to become interculturally competent, responsible global citizens and agents of positive social change.

## INTEGRATING THE AFS STUDENT LEARNING JOURNEY CURRICULUM INTO THE AFS EXPERIENCE

**Five components are the hallmarks of the *AFS Student Learning Journey* methodology: immersion, orientation, support, tools and resources.** Together, they support the *AFS Student Learning Journey*, helping students work through the 16 *AFS Educational Goals* based curriculum in a progressive, developmentally designed manner. The innovative curriculum uses a variety of proven learning formats and resources to engage students. These range from educational newsletters and role-playing activities to language lessons and recommended social impact projects—all designed to help students process their personal, academic, civic and professional growth, and learn from their reactions to new, and sometimes difficult, situations.

The AFS intercultural learning experience is not confined to the time spent abroad. As mentioned earlier, the *AFS Student Learning Journey* starts before students leave their home country. From the moment they apply to an AFS program, students are asked to reflect on who they are, what strengths they bring to the experience and what challenges they might face when living in another country. Once they complete their exchange, AFS provides further opportunities for reflection and development through re-entry orientation sessions and materials, as well as an invitation to become involved in the organization as a volunteer—including participation in the AFS Intercultural Link Learning Program, our well-established adult training program for personal, professional and overall intercultural competence development. AFS student learning is immersive and more.

Scheduled group orientation sessions before, during and after the AFS experience provide students with the knowledge, coping strategies and skills needed to have a meaningful intercultural experience. Guidelines for these orientations are included in the *AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum*, which replaces the *AFS Orientation Framework*. This curriculum is designed for use throughout the global AFS Network to ensure the quality and consistency of AFS exchange and study abroad programs that is delivered by multiple volunteers and staff in the sending and hosting countries. At the same time, AFS organizations are encouraged to adapt relevant portions of the curriculum to best suit their local realities.

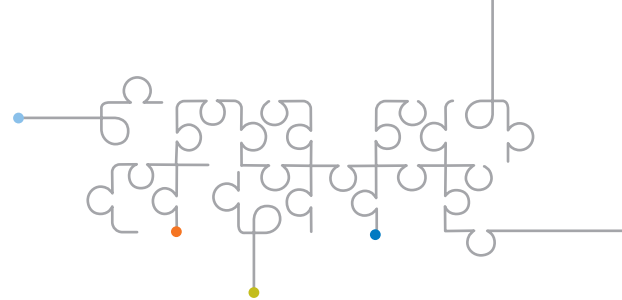
Students also receive individualized support with improved recommendations outlined in the new curriculum. At least once a month, students work with trained volunteers to discuss their experiences. These contacts are officially treated as *Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections*, helping students develop a deeper appreciation of cultural differences and the most effective and appropriate ways to deal with them, as well as how to apply this learning later in life. Also in 2016, AFS will release the *AFS Host Family Learning Journey*

*Curriculum* to support and enhance the experience of host families as co-participants in the AFS intercultural exchange programs.

By linking our “learning to live together” philosophy to the defining global issues facing humanity, the new *AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum* will continue to empower an inclusive community of global citizens determined to build bridges among cultures and tackle the world’s interconnected problems.



# AFS Educational Goals



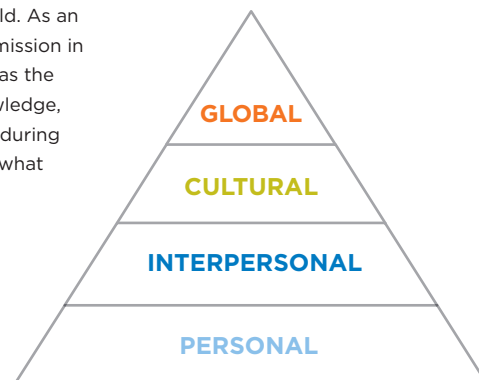
Intercultural competencies are key skills in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world. As an educational organization that provides intercultural learning opportunities, AFS supports its mission in many ways, including by promoting 16 Educational Goals for our students. These goals serve as the backbone for AFS exchange programs in which we support our students to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to become global citizens. Students attain some of these goals during or by the end of their AFS experience; others involve a life-time of reflection and building on what has been learned through AFS programs. These goals are divided in four realms:

**Personal values and skills:** As a result of their experiences, students learn to turn difficult situations into valuable opportunities for personal growth. They are challenged to reassess their values, stretch their capacities and practice new life skills while gaining awareness of previously hidden aspects of their own personalities.

**Interpersonal relationship-building:** AFS exchange students become fully involved in daily living and working arrangements with a variety of people in the new environment, which are transferable to many other settings during their lifetime.

**(Inter)cultural knowledge and sensitivity:** The AFS exchange experience deepens students' insights into their home culture as well as their knowledge of their host (or visiting) cultures—both strengths and weaknesses—from the perspective of an outsider.

**Global issues awareness:** AFS students become able to empathize with their hosts' perspective on multiple global issues, and thus to appreciate that workable solutions must be culturally sensitive, not merely chronologically feasible.



## PERSONAL

### 1 Self awareness

- To become more fully self-aware, willing and able to view themselves objectively and to see themselves as deeply influenced by their own culture.
- To learn how to manage their internal moods, emotions and impulses, and to use their inner resources to handle stress and ambiguity and to show patience with other people who are in learning situations.

### 2 Creative thinking

- To view ordinary things, events, and values from a fresh perspective so they are able to generate innovative ideas and solutions.

### 3 Critical thinking

- To look beyond superficial appearances and to be skeptical of stereotypes.
- To form their own opinions based on recognizing that there are different ways to view things, more than one source of information, and more than one solution to a problem.

### 4 Motivation and self-confidence

- To be comfortable and eager to pursue new learning situations.
- To be comfortable seeking support and receiving constructive criticism.
- To feel confident in their own abilities, to have a strong sense of self-worth and to be self-reliant

### 5 Defining self in terms of ideals and values

- To develop personal goals in terms of academic knowledge and skills, character building, family interaction, etc.
- To define and value themselves in terms of ideals and goals rather than material worth and to resist peer pressure that belittles the value of other individuals or groups.



## INTERPERSONAL

### 6 Empathy

- To listen and be mindful of the needs of other people and to use different perspectives in approaching problems and everyday situations.
- To have a deeper concern for and sensitivity to others and expand their capacity to perceive and respond to the values, feelings, and realities of others.
- To be able to manage disagreements with others effectively and respectfully.

### 7 Flexibility and Social skills

- To be comfortable handling a wide range of social situations and to adapt to new environments by applying appropriate behaviors in diverse contexts.
- To enjoy themselves in the company of others and to be less preoccupied with their own needs or how others view them.
- To adjust to changing social circumstances and show greater flexibility in adjusting to new people, social situations and cultural norms.

### 8 Communication skills

- To develop skills in listening actively and thoughtfully and to respond with respect for the other person.
- To express themselves easily both verbally and non-verbally.
- To converse actively with a wide range of people.
- To speak with confidence in front of large groups

### 9 Commitment to others and contributing to the group

- To engage with others in a spirit of cooperation, with respect and appreciation for their goals and decisions.
- To contribute actively and positively in school, community and family life.
- To be worthy of and to inspire trust.



## CULTURAL

### 10 Building intercultural friendships

- To interact with people and communities that are different from their own and to develop and maintain meaningful and long-term relationships across cultures and backgrounds.
- To actively seek out and form new relationships with people from different cultures or backgrounds.

### 11 Cultural knowledge and awareness

- To become more aware of their own culture and recognize its influence on their behavior and attitudes
- To learn about and understand the institutions, customs, traditions, practices and current issues in the host country, and to understand the values, attitudes and behaviors in.
- To describe the complexity and richness of both their home and host cultures and be able to discuss cultures without stereotyping or making judgmental statements.
- To understand the concepts of “culture” and intercultural adaptation.

### 12 Foreign language skills and non-verbal communication

- To communicate effectively in multicultural environments: to speak, read and write in the language of the host culture and come to understand its jokes and humor, and to recognize, use and react appropriately to non-verbal signals of the host country.
- To appreciate the value of learning and using other languages.

### 13 Intercultural effectiveness

- To recognize cultural differences and to adapt their behavior and perception according to the cultural context.
- To appreciate diversity and display tolerance and respect for people from with diverse backgrounds, attitudes, opinions, lifestyles and values.
- To reduce intercultural anxiety concerning exposure to new people, social situations and cultural norms.



## GLOBAL

### 14 Global concern: interest in and concern about world affairs and awareness of one's choices on others

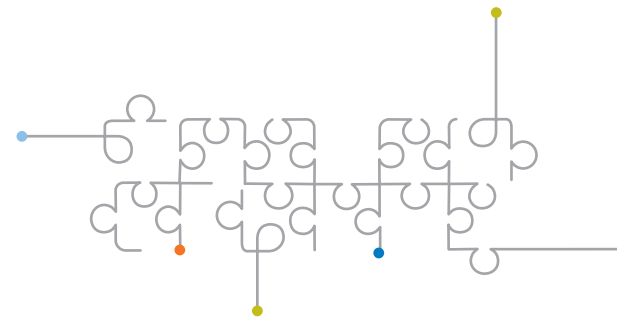
- To develop an increased curiosity and concern about world affairs, to develop a sustained commitment to obtaining information from many sources and seek out perspectives from other cultures in understanding world situations and problems.
- To have an increasing knowledge of a range of world issues that affect people and divide us, such as human rights, environmental issues, and poverty.

### 15 Global understanding: appreciation of cultural interdependence

- To understand the interdependence of the global community and have an increased awareness of the larger impact that their personal choices and actions have in other parts of the world.
- To gain in competence in understanding the causes of conflict between cultures.

### 16 Commitment to contributing to the world community

- To be willing and ready to work with others to help build peace, to improve world conditions and to commit to actions that will bring about a just and peaceful world.
- To engage in voluntary service toward the improvement of the local and global communities.



## Educational Goals Background

AFS was founded with the understanding that there is a pressing need for cultures to overcome conflicts and to build a more just and peaceful world. Today, the need to achieve peaceful solutions to conflicts between cultures is still an urgent matter and AFS is part of the solution. With peace as a starting point, our programs educate individuals about cultural differences and help them overcome judgmental, polarized reactions to other cultures.























































































































Intercultural sensitivity and competency is critical to overcoming conflict. At the same time, a real understanding of other cultures is important, and it is much more than just co-existing without conflict. It involves an acceptance of, adaptation to, appreciation of and engagement with the other culture. Intercultural competency

means building relationships of trust, respect and affection with people from other cultures.

In 1984, in response to new information from a large-scale study of the impact of the AFS experience and a number of other research projects on the nature of the AFS experience, a group of intercultural visionaries and creative thinkers from around the world met near Montréal, Canada to develop a worldwide set of educational objectives and standards for the AFS programs. While the core learning objectives developed by this group still form the base of our educational practices, we make sure to revise and improve them regularly to keep them relevant and on-point for the needs of modern generations.



## Distribution of 16 AFS Educational Goals Among the AFS Student Learning Journey Touch Points

<div></div>		BEFORE						DURING						AFTER			
		Recruitment 	Application Process 	Selection Process 	Acceptance Messaging 	Welcome Messaging 	Pre-Departure Orientation 	Monthly Learning Reflections 	Arrival Orientation 	Post-Arrival Orientation 	Mid-Stay Orientation 	End-Of-Stay Orientation 	Welcome Back Messaging 	Re-Entry Messaging 	Re-Entry Orientation 	Volunteer Recruitment 	
 <b>PERSONAL</b>																	
<b>1</b> Self-awareness																	
<b>2</b> Creative thinking																	
<b>3</b> Critical thinking																	
<b>4</b> Motivation and self-confidence																	
<b>5</b> Defining self in terms of ideals and values																	
 <b>INTERPERSONAL</b>																	
<b>6</b> Empathy																	
<b>7</b> Flexibility and Social skills																	
<b>8</b> Communication skills																	
<b>9</b> Commitment to others and contributing to the group																	
 <b>CULTURAL</b>																	
<b>10</b> Building intercultural friendships																	
<b>11</b> Cultural knowledge and awareness																	
<b>12</b> Foreign language skills and non-verbal communication																	
<b>13</b> Intercultural effectiveness																	
 <b>GLOBAL</b>																	
<b>14</b> Global concern																	
<b>15</b> Global understanding																	
<b>16</b> Commitment to contributing to the world community																	
 <b>LANGUAGE LEARNING*</b>																	

\*Language learning is encouraged throughout the AFS experience.

The table shows the distribution of the 16 AFS Educational Goals among the 16 touch points of the AFS Student Learning Journey making it easier to understand what the focus for each one of those moments is. The combination of the AFS Educational Goals and the AFS Student Learning Journey constitutes the backbone of this curriculum.