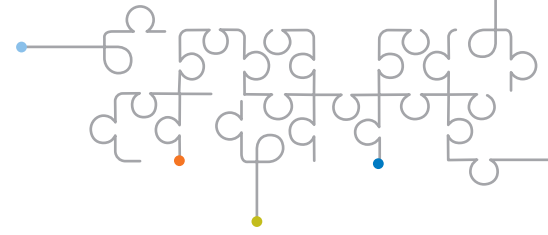




AFS Educational Goals



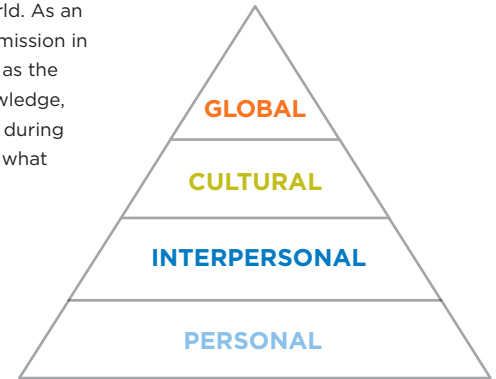
Intercultural competencies are key skills in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world. As an educational organization that provides intercultural learning opportunities, AFS supports its mission in many ways, including by promoting 16 Educational Goals for our students. These goals serve as 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

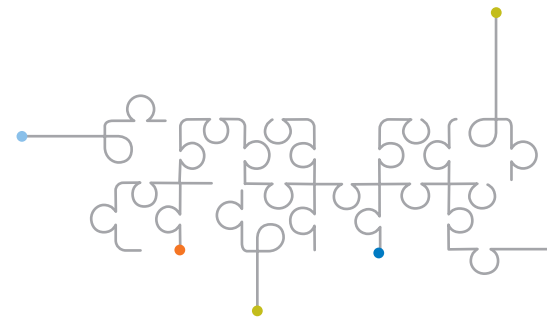
- To develop an increased curiosity and concern about world affairs, to develop a sustained commitment to obtaining information from many sources and seek out perspectives from other cultures in understanding world situations and problems.
- To have an increasing knowledge of a range of world issues 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.