

# **Atlanta Charter Middle School Student and Family Handbook 2009 – 2010**



*A Member of the Coalition of Essential Schools*

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## ***Introduction***

Dear ACMS Parents, Families, and Students,

Welcome to the Atlanta Charter Middle School! This handbook, developed by parents, board members, and ACMS staff, serves as a general guide to your school. In it you will find not only important policies and procedures, but also background about the philosophies and people that make ACMS one of the most exciting and enriching middle schools around. Additionally, there is a school calendar that will undoubtedly come in handy for you over the course of the year. Please take time to review this handbook—all parents/guardians and students will be asked to sign a statement acknowledging that they have read, understood, and will abide by the information contained within.

At the Back to School Curriculum Night in September, a family directory with contact information will be given out to all families.

If you have any questions, please let us know. I look forward to working with you all this year!

Sincerely,

Matt Underwood  
ACMS Principal

## ***2009-2010 ACMS School Hours & Calendar***

### **School Hours**

School starts for students at 8:30 each morning and ends at 3:45, except for Wednesdays when regular classes end at 2:15 for faculty planning.

### **School Calendar**

#### *August*

7<sup>th</sup> – Orientation and Registration Day  
10<sup>th</sup> – First Day of Classes  
20<sup>th</sup> – ACMS Governing Board Meeting  
26<sup>th</sup> – PTCA Meeting 6:30 PM

#### *September*

7<sup>th</sup> – NO SCHOOL/Labor Day  
9<sup>th</sup> – PTCA Meeting (Back to School Curriculum Night) 6:30 PM  
12<sup>th</sup> – ACMS/NCS Low Country Boil  
17<sup>th</sup> – ACMS Governing Board Meeting

#### *October*

7<sup>th</sup> – PTCA Meeting 6:30 PM  
12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> – NO SCHOOL/Fall Break (Teacher Work Days)  
15<sup>th</sup> – ACMS Governing Board Meeting

#### *November*

3<sup>rd</sup> – NO SCHOOL/Teacher Work Day  
5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> – Coalition of Essential Schools Fall Forum “Changing Schools, Changing Lives” in New Orleans  
11<sup>th</sup> – PTCA Meeting 6:30 PM  
19<sup>th</sup> – ACMS Governing Board Meeting  
25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> – NO SCHOOL/Thanksgiving Holiday

#### *December*

9<sup>th</sup> – PTCA Meeting 6:30 PM  
17<sup>th</sup> – ACMS Governing Board Meeting  
21<sup>st</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> – NO SCHOOL/Winter Break

#### *January*

1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> – NO SCHOOL/Winter Break  
6<sup>th</sup> – Classes Resume  
18<sup>th</sup> – NO SCHOOL/Martin Luther King, Jr. Day  
21<sup>st</sup> – ACMS Governing Board Meeting

#### *February*

10<sup>th</sup> – PTCA Meeting 6:30 PM  
15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> – NO SCHOOL/Mid-Winter Break  
18<sup>th</sup> – ACMS Governing Board Meeting

*March*

10<sup>th</sup> – PTCA Meeting 6:30 PM  
12<sup>th</sup> – NOON DISMISSAL for students  
18<sup>th</sup> – ACMS Governing Board Meeting

*April*

5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> – NO SCHOOL/Spring Break  
15<sup>th</sup> – ACMS Governing Board Meeting

*May*

12<sup>th</sup> – PTCA Meeting 6:30 PM  
21<sup>st</sup> – ACMS Governing Board Meeting  
24<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Celebration  
25<sup>th</sup> – NOON DISMISSAL for students/Last Day of School

Academic Reporting Dates:

*Progress Reports:* Week of September 7<sup>th</sup>, October 5<sup>th</sup>, December 7<sup>th</sup>, January 25<sup>th</sup>, March 22<sup>nd</sup>,  
April 26<sup>th</sup>

*End of Term Reports:* Week of November 9<sup>th</sup>, March 1<sup>st</sup>, May 31<sup>st</sup>

*Teacher Conferences:* TBD (Fall and Spring)

## 2009-2010 Atlanta Charter Middle School Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>8:30-8:45</b>	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory/Morning Meeting
<b>8:50-9:45</b>	<b>Block 1.1</b> 6A:PA/Sp 6B:MST 6C:MST 7A: Math 7B: Sci 8A: FFL 8B: Exp	<b>Block 2.1</b> 6A: MST 6B:Hum 6C:PA/Sp 7A: LA 7B: SS 8A: Math 8B: Sci	6A/6C:Hum 6B: MST 7A: Sci 7B: Math 8A: LA 8B: SS	<b>Block 3.1</b> 6A:Hum 6B: PA/Sp 6C:Hum 7A: VA/Sp 7B: FFL 8A: LA 8B: SS	<b>Block 1.1</b> 6A:PA/Sp 6B:MST 6C:MST 7A: Math 7B: Sci 8A: FFL 8B: Exp
<b>9:50-10:45</b>	<b>Block 1.2</b> 6A: FFL 6B:MST 6C:MST 7A: Sci 7B: Math 8A: Exp 8B: FFL	<b>Block 2.2</b> 6A:MST 6B:Hum 6C: FFL 7A: SS 7B: LA 8A: Sci 8B: Math	6A/6C:Hum 6B: MST 7A: Math 7B: Sci 8A: SS 8B: LA	<b>Block 3.2</b> 6A:Hum 6B:FFL 6C:Hum 7A: FFL 7B: VA/Sp 8A: SS 8B: LA	<b>Block 1.2</b> 6A: FFL 6B:MST 6C:MST 7A: Sci 7B: Math 8A: Exp 8B: FFL
<b>10:45-10:50</b>	<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>
<b>10:50-11:45</b>	<b>Block 2.1</b> 6A:MST 6B:Hum 6C:PA/Sp 7A: LA 7B: SS 8A: Math 8B: Sci	<b>Block 3.1</b> 6A:Hum 6B: PA/Sp 6C:Hum 7A: VA/Sp 7B: FFL 8A: LA 8B: SS	6 <sup>th</sup> : <i>Lunch &amp; Support and Enrichment</i> 10:50-12:15  12:20-2:15 6A/6C:MST 6B: Hum	<b>Block 1.1</b> 6A:PA/Sp 6B:MST 6C:MST 7A: Math 7B: Sci 8A: FFL 8B: Exp	<b>Block 2.1</b> 6A:MST 6B:Hum 6C:PA/Sp 7A: LA 7B: SS 8A: Math 8B: Sci
<b>11:50-12:50 (two 30 min blocks)</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> : <i>Lunch/ Recess &amp; Reading/Work Time</i> 7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> : <i>Reading/Work Time &amp; Lunch/ Recess</i>	6 <sup>th</sup> : <i>Lunch/ Recess &amp; Reading/Work Time</i> 7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> : <i>Reading/Work Time &amp; Lunch/ Recess</i>		7A:SS 7B: LA 8A: Math 8B: Sci  12:50-2:15 7/8 <i>Lunch &amp; Support and Enrichment</i>	6 <sup>th</sup> : <i>Lunch/ Recess &amp; Reading/Work Time</i> 7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> : <i>Reading/Work Time &amp; Lunch/ Recess</i>
<b>12:50-1:45</b>	<b>Block 2.2</b> 6A:MST 6B:Hum 6C:FFL 7A: SS 7B: LA 8A: Sci 8B: Math	<b>Block 3.1</b> 6A:Hum 6B: PA/Sp 6C:Hum 7A: VA/Sp 7B: FFL 8A: LA 8B: SS		<b>Block 1.2</b> 6A: FFL 6B:MST 6C:MST 7A: Sci 7B: Math 8A: Exp 8B: FFL	<b>Block 2.2</b> 6A:MST 6B:Hum 6C:FFL 7A: SS 7B: LA 8A: Sci 8B: Math
<b>1:50-2:45</b>	<b>Block 3.1</b> 6A:Hum 6B: PA/Sp 6C:Hum 7A: VA/Sp 7B: FFL 8A: LA 8B: SS	<b>Block 1.1</b> 6A:PA/Sp 6B:MST 6C:MST 7A: Math 7B: Sci 8A: FFL 8B: Exp		<b>Block 2.1</b> 6A:MST 6B: Hum 6C:PA/Sp 7A: LA 7B: SS 8A: Math 8B: Sci	<b>Block 3.1</b> 6A:Hum 6B: PA/Sp 6C:Hum 7A: VA/Sp 7B: FFL 8A: LA 8B: SS
<b>2:50-3:45</b>	<b>Block 3.2</b> 6A:Hum 6B:FFL 6C:Hum 7A: FFL 7B: VA/Sp 8A: SS 8B: LA	<b>Block 1.2</b> 6A: FFL 6B:MST 6C:MST 7A: Sci 7B: Math 8A: Exp 8B: FFL	Dismissal at 2:15  Faculty Planning 2:45-4:45	<b>Block 2.2</b> 6A:MST 6B:Hum 6C:FFL 7A: SS 7B: LA 8A: Sci 8B: Math	<b>Block 3.2</b> 6A:Hum 6B:FFL 6C:Hum 7A: FFL 7B:VA/Sp 8A: SS 8B: LA

Sp: Spanish, MST: Math/Science/Technology, LA: Language Arts, FFL: Fit for Life, PA: Performing Arts VA: Visual Arts  
Exp: Exploratory (Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Spanish), Hum: Humanities, SS: Social Studies

## 2009-2010 Atlanta Charter Middle School Schedule Notes

- ***Advisory***
  - Advisory sessions, facilitated by ACMS teacher/advisors, are scheduled Monday through Thursday from 8:30-8:45AM. Friday morning there is an all-school meeting from 8:30-8:45 AM. Also on Fridays a longer 30-minute advisory session takes place before (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade) or after (6<sup>th</sup> grade) lunch to allow for longer community conversations or activities.
  - Once each term there is an extended advisory day during which time advisory groups may take part in service projects, off-campus trips, team-building experiences, etc.
- ***Fit For Life***
  - 6<sup>th</sup> grade students each have Family Living & Sexuality Education once a week, Power Group once a week, and Sports twice a week during the Fit for Life block.
  - 7<sup>th</sup> grade students each have Family Living & Sexuality Education once a week, Power Group once a week, and Sports twice a week during the Fit for Life block.
- ***Reading/Work Time***
  - Flexible time for grade levels to determine best use (tutoring, small groups, quiet reading, conference with teacher, meetings with counselor)
- ***Arts/Spanish Block***
  - Each 6<sup>th</sup> grade student has two days a week of performing arts (M/Th or Tu/F) and two days a week of Spanish (M/Th or Tu/F) for the entire year
  - Each 7<sup>th</sup> grade student has two days a week of visual arts (M/Th or Tu/F) and two days a week of Spanish (M/Th or Tu/F) for the entire year
  - Each 8<sup>th</sup> grade student may choose to study advanced Spanish for the entire year or choose between different performing and visual arts classes each term
- ***Wednesday Support & Enrichment***
  - Rotations of smaller group options for academic support or enrichment activities run by various staff
  - Flexibility to have lunch with these groups for off-campus activities
- ***Additional Instructional Support***
  - Associate teachers working in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade math/science/technology and humanities (language arts and social studies) classes to provide additional instructional support
  - “As-needed” support/instruction available in all classes by special education coordinator and teacher, instructional technology specialist

**Atlanta Charter Middle School  
2009-2010 Staff Contact List**

<b>Name (alphabetical by last name)</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Email Address (all @atlantachartermiddle.com)</b>
Pascale Alcindor	Fit for Life Teacher/Carrera Program Coordinator	palcindor
	Academic Support/Special Education Coordinator	cbarnes
Laura Byard	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Humanities Associate Teacher/8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Spanish Teacher	lbyard
Marianela Belloso-Pinto	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Spanish Teacher	mbelloso
Susan Cannon	Math/Science/Technology Curriculum Coordinator/6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math/Science/Technology Teacher	scannon
Colleen Devine	Humanities Curriculum Coordinator/6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Humanities Teacher	cdevine
Jennifer Dickie	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math/Science/Technology Associate Teacher	jdickie
Colleen Devine	Humanities Curriculum Coordinator/6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Humanities Teacher	cdevine
Jacob Edmison	Visual Arts Teacher / Media Center Specialist	jedmison
Darnell Fine	7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies Teacher	dfine
Leslie Glowienka	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Humanities Teacher/7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Associate Teacher	lglowienka
Aaron Goodson	Performing Arts Teacher	agoodson
Pamela Jones	Fit for Life Teacher	pjones
Susan Knight	Business Manager	sknight
Maria Larson	Office/Operations Manager	mlarson
Kristin Lee	School Counselor	klee

<b>Name (alphabetical by last name)</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Email Address (all @atlantachartermiddle.com)</b>
Crystal McHardy	7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science Teacher	cmchardy
Alcine Mumby	Dean of Students	amumby
Leslie Quigless	7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Language Arts Teacher	lquigless
Somer Ramsey	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math/Science/Technology Teacher	sramsey
Natalie Riley	7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math Teacher	nriley
Alina Tillery	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Humanities Associate Teacher	atillery
Travis Torsch	Math/Science/Technology Teacher & Technology Specialist	ttorsch
Matt Underwood	Principal	munderwood
Monica Waldman	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Spanish Teacher & Academic Support	mwaldman
Jackie Wiafe	Fit for Life Teacher/School Counselor	jwiafe

**School Phone 678.904.0051**

**School Fax 678.904.0052**

## ***ACMS “Who to Go To When”***

In most cases, the primary point of contact with the school should be the student’s advisor (see the “Advisory” section later in the handbook). However, if there are questions or issues that cannot be addressed by the student’s advisor, please refer to the chart below for a list of who to go to for various issues.

### ***See this person...***

### ***...if you need information about...***

Matt Underwood – Principal

The ACMS Charter, curriculum questions, parent/family issues, standardized test questions

Alcine Mumby – Dean of Students

Student behavior, Student Support Team (SST), advisory program

Maria Larson – Office & Operations Manager

General school payments, student records, athletics program, grant opportunities

Susan Cannon – Math/Science/Technology Curriculum Coordinator

Math, science, and technology program

Colleen Devine – Humanities Curriculum Coordinator

Humanities (Reading/ELA and social studies) program

Constance Barnes – Academic Support Coordinator

Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), academic support for students

Susan Knight – Business Manager

Food service (including free and reduced price meals), meal payment and building maintenance

Kristin Lee & Jackie Wiafe – School Counselors

Concerns about student social-emotional wellness; high school transition (Kristin Lee only)

Pascale Alcindor – Carrera Program Coordinator

Children’s Aid Society Carrera Program

Travis Torsch – Instructional Technology Specialist

Computer or technology use

Jacob Edmison – Media Specialist

Media center questions or requests

## ***ACMS Governing Board – 2009-2010***

The ACMS Governing Board, a body composed of parents, community members, and faculty, guides decisions about school policy. The governing board meets collectively once a month, and sub-committees such as finance and parent/family involvement also convene regularly. Please refer to the School Calendar for the dates for all Governing Board meetings. Unless otherwise posted, all Governing Board meetings begin at 7:00 PM in the ACMS Media Center on the third Thursday of each month.

Michelle Blackmon	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Parent Representative & Board Chair
Gigi Conner	Former Board Chair, Ex-Officio
Matt Underwood	Principal, Ex-Officio
Colleen Devine	Staff Representative
Jacob Edmison	Staff Representative
Somer Ramsey	Staff Representative
Scott Smith	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Parent Representative & Parent, Teacher, Community Association (PTCA) President Buildings & Grounds Committee Chair & South Atlantans for Neighborhood Development (SAND) Representative 7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Parent Representative & Personnel Committee Chair
Jeff Larson	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Parent Representative Parent & Family Involvement Committee Chair
Ben Odias	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Parent Representative
Ramiro Garcia	Grant Park Neighborhood Association (GPNA) Representative
Myron Polster	East Atlanta Community Association (EACA) Representative
Bibbi Ransom	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Parent Representative & Fund Development Chair
Kari Lovell	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Parent Representative & Finance Committee Chair

## ***The Coalition of Essential Schools and the Ten Common Principles***

ACMS is a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES), a national organization of like-minded schools guided by 10 Common Principles. For over twenty years, CES has been at the forefront of creating and sustaining personalized, equitable, and intellectually challenging schools. For more information, please visit [www.essentialschools.org](http://www.essentialschools.org).

### **The 10 Common Principles of CES schools are:**

1. The school should focus on helping young people learn to use their minds well. Schools should not be comprehensive if such a claim is made at the expense of the school's central intellectual purpose.

2. The school's goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. While these skills and areas will, to varying degrees, reflect the traditional academic disciplines, the program's design should be shaped by the intellectual and imaginative powers and competencies that the students need, rather than by "subjects" as conventionally defined. The aphorism "less is more" should dominate: curricular decisions should be guided by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement rather than by an effort to merely cover content.

3. The school's goals should apply to all students, while the means to these goals will vary as those students themselves vary. School practice should be tailor-made to meet the needs of every group or class of students.

4. Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent. Efforts should be directed toward a goal that no teacher have direct responsibility for more than 80 students in the high school and middle school and no more than 20 in the elementary school. To capitalize on this personalization, decisions about the details of the course of study, the use of students' and teachers' time and the choice of teaching materials and specific pedagogies must be unreservedly placed in the hands of the principal and staff.

5. The governing practical metaphor of the school should be student-as-worker, rather than the more familiar metaphor of teacher-as-deliverer-of-instructional-services. Accordingly, a prominent pedagogy will be coaching, to provoke students to learn how to learn and thus to teach themselves.

6. Teaching and learning should be documented and assessed with tools based on student performance of real tasks. Students not yet at appropriate levels of competence should be provided intensive support and resources to assist them quickly to meet those standards.

Multiple forms of evidence, ranging from ongoing observation of the learner to completion of specific projects, should be used to better understand the learner's strengths and needs, and to plan for further assistance. Students should have opportunities to exhibit their expertise before family and community. The diploma should be awarded upon a successful final demonstration of mastery for graduation - an "Exhibition." As the diploma is awarded when earned, the school's program proceeds with no strict age grading and with no system of credits earned" by "time spent" in class. The emphasis is on the students' demonstration that they can do important things.

7. The tone of the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress values of unanxious expectation ("I won't threaten you but I expect much of you"), of trust (until abused) and of decency (the values of fairness, generosity and tolerance). Incentives appropriate to the school's particular students and teachers should be emphasized. Parents should be key collaborators and vital members of the school community.

8. The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first (teachers and scholars in general education) and specialists second (experts in but one particular discipline). Staff should expect multiple obligations (teacher-counselor-manager) and a sense of commitment to the entire school.

9. Ultimate administrative and budget targets should include, in addition to total student loads per teacher of 80 or fewer pupils on the high school and middle school levels and 20 or fewer on the elementary level, substantial time for collective planning by teachers, competitive salaries for staff, and an ultimate per pupil cost not to exceed that at traditional schools by more than 10 percent. To accomplish this, administrative plans may have to show the phased reduction or elimination of some services now provided students in many traditional schools.

10. The school should demonstrate non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies. It should model democratic practices that involve all who are directly affected by the school. The school should honor diversity and build on the strength of its communities, deliberately and explicitly challenging all forms of inequity.

The Atlanta Charter Middle School (ACMS) is a free public school of choice, open by lottery admissions to all students zoned for an Atlanta Public School in grades six through eight. Opened in the fall of 2005 by a group of area parents and educators, ACMS is committed to student-centered and project-based learning. ACMS is a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools ([www.essentialschools.org](http://www.essentialschools.org)) and follows the organization's principles of helping students to use their minds well, personalized instruction, and a democratic community. ACMS has recently purchased its building, establishing itself as a long-term resident of the Ormewood Park neighborhood in southeast Atlanta.

### ***What makes ACMS such a unique place?***

- ❖ Student-centered, project-based learning that asks students to investigate deep and interesting questions in order to develop essential skills and habits
- ❖ Each student is known well because of a low student-to-teacher ratio and the mentorship of a faculty advisor
- ❖ A democratic community that involves students, families, and teachers in collective decision-making on important issues
- ❖ An emphasis on the “whole child” through exploration of the arts, technology, Spanish, and physical and social-emotional wellness
- ❖ A diverse student body that exposes students to ideas and experiences different from their own

### ***The ACMS Guiding Principles***

The following principles were developed as a way to guide the way in which we work both individually and together at our school:

- ❖ We respect each other, our surroundings and ourselves.
- ❖ We come to school prepared to learn and do our best.
- ❖ We work to resolve conflicts in a peaceful, thoughtful, meaningful way.
- ❖ We take responsibility for our actions and learning.
- ❖ We celebrate our individual and collective successes.

*We are the Atlanta Charter Middle School Wolves. Our school colors are blue, gray and white.*

## ***Frequently Asked Questions***

### ***What is a charter school?***

Georgia law grants groups the right (or “charter”) to start new public schools that report to the state Department of Education and to their own independent governing boards. By freeing charter schools from the constraints of district supervision, charter school law aims to promote innovative educational ideas. Charter schools, including ACMS, follow all state and federal regulations, including those regarding standardized testing and non-discrimination. ACMS operates under a charter granted by the Atlanta Board of Education, and as such, serves students who are zoned for an Atlanta Public School. The school is required to submit an annual report to the Georgia Department of Education, and every five years, ACMS undergoes a rigorous school quality review by state and local officials as part of the renewal of its charter.

A copy of the school’s charter can be found in the media center or on our website at [www.atlantachartermiddleschool.com](http://www.atlantachartermiddleschool.com).

### ***What is an Essential School?***

Established in 1984 by TheodoreSizer at Brown University, the Coalition of Essential Schools is a national network of over 800 schools focused on restructuring and redesigning schools to promote student learning and more meaningful educational experiences. Essential Schools are united in a belief in a set of ideas known as the “10 Common Principles” that call for schools to set clear and simple goals about the intellectual skills and content to be mastered by students; to lower the student-to-teacher ratio; to personalize teaching and curriculum; to make student work the center of classroom activity; to create an atmosphere of trust and respect; and to model democratic practices and honor diversity.

### ***What is advisory?***

The advisory program exists to allow advisors and students to know each other well so that students can make the most out of their ACMS experience. Advisors serve as the primary connection between home, the student, and school. Each student at ACMS is a member of an advisory group. Advisory groups are small groups of students (10-14) from the same grade level that meet every day from 8:30-8:45, once a week for 30 minutes at lunch time, and once a term for an extended advisory session for service projects or off-campus trips. Each advisory has an advisor that comes from the teaching faculty. Each advisory has a representative to the ACMS student government.

Advisory encompasses several functions, all of which fall under one of four main goals:

- 1) To learn to understand and appreciate people who are different from us.
- 2) To participate in activities that build group spirit and cohesiveness.
- 3) To support and be supported by other advisory members in discussing and facing common issues of growing up.
- 4) To work together on common projects that benefit others.

### ***What is the Courier?***

The ACMS Courier is the weekly communication between the school and ACMS community sent out each Thursday. The Courier contains important information about events and activities at ACMS, so please be sure to make a point to read it each week.

In an effort to conserve, the Courier will be distributed mainly electronically. It will be sent out to the email address on file with the school and posted on the ACMS website each week. If you

do not have internet access, please feel free to use the computers in the ACMS media center. A few paper copies will be available in the main office each week as well.

To submit ACMS-related information to the Courier or to add your name to the email distribution list, please send an email to [info@atlantachartermiddle.com](mailto:info@atlantachartermiddle.com).

*How can families and students complete their volunteer hours commitments?*

The parents who founded ACMS intended it to be more than a place of academics. ACMS is a school community where we welcome and actively seek the involvement and input of members to provide the best possible environment academically and socially for our children. Research has shown that children who see their parents engaged in their school perform better in school. This is why parent involvement is a critical element of ACMS.

Upon enrolling a child at ACMS, each family signs a Family Contract. This contract outlines the responsibilities of parents/guardians at ACMS, details specifics about volunteering at school and signifies an understanding of the commitment made as a family. Each family, as part of enrollment in the school, agrees to give 15 hours (for a two parent/guardian household) or 10 hours (for a single parent/guardian household) of service to the school each year. Students are required to complete 10 hours of service on their own each year.

Outlined below are some of the many ways parents can be involved. If there are other ways that you would like to be involved please contact the office, your student's advisor, the PTCA President, or the Parent and Family Involvement Committee Chair and share your ideas.

1. Involvement in Classrooms

- a. Volunteer to help in the classroom as a substitute teacher.
- b. Share your knowledge and expertise on topics being taught in class.
- c. Help to organize and chaperone field trips.
- d. Serve as a student tutor.

2. Involvement outside Classroom

- a. Volunteer in main office. Help make copies, filing, answering phones etc.
- b. Volunteer in the Media Center.
- c. Help publicize the school during registration or for other events.
- d. Take classroom projects home.
- e. Volunteer for Building and Grounds workdays.
- f. Assist with childcare for workdays and school events.
- g. Coach a school athletic team.
- h. Assist with After School clubs.
- i. Assist with School and PTCA Fundraisers.
- j. Volunteer for taskforces or for short term needs (grant writing, event planning)

3. Serve on a Committee

All families are encouraged to actively participate on at least one committee.

The Governing Board Committees include:

- a. Finance
- b. Parent and Family Involvement [PFI]
- c. Personnel
- d. Fund Development

The PTCA Committees include:

- a. Diversity Awareness

- b. Health & Safety
- c. Buildings & Grounds
- d. Fine Arts

4. Serve on Governing Board  
Serve on the Governing Board.  
Serve as Board Chair.

#### Student Volunteer Opportunities

- a. Volunteer on weekend for cleanup of grounds of ACMS.
- b. Assist with childcare for workdays and or school events.
- c. Assist with cleanup of school after school events.
- d. Volunteer at a community service program.
- e. Help with an advisory service project.

#### \*Tracking Volunteer Hours

Please remember to track your hours and record them. Sign up sheets will be available at all ACMS volunteer opportunities, and the school is in the process of making available an online volunteer hours tracking system. In the meantime, a volunteer log maintained by the Parent & Family Involvement Committee is located in the main office. Student volunteer hours will be recorded through the student's advisor. The advisor keeps a folder for each of his/her advisees with a log of service hours completed. Any service hours completed by a student outside of school must be documented in writing and signed by an adult sponsor/supervisor, and this documentation must be given to the student's advisor.

Parents and students should continue to track and record hours even if they have fulfilled their obligatory hours. These statistics are beneficial data in securing grants and reporting to outside organizations about our family involvement. For more information, please contact the Parent and Family Involvement Committee Chair, Jeff Larson.

#### What is the Parent, Teacher, Community Association (PTCA)?

ACMS is able to provide an incredible environment for our children, in part, due to its many active, engaged families. Our PTCA is the primary way families can become involved and support our school community. It is expected that all families will join the PTCA. It is the PTCA and its members who plan, fund and provide the enrichment opportunities so critical to the school's instructional program. The PTCA funds teacher and staff appreciation projects and provides need-based scholarships for extracurricular programs. The PTCA meets monthly during school sessions; these meetings include curriculum showcases, informational speakers, the annual board election, plus numerous social events throughout the year.

ACMS parents, guardians, and caregivers are encouraged to visit the parent and family resource area in the school's main office which has a host of information on supporting students, parenting advice, high school transition information, and more. As well, parents, guardians, and caregivers should consult the PTCA news section of each week's Courier newsletter for important news, information, and advice.

The PTCA works closely with the Parent and Family Committee of the board to ensure that all families, students, staff and teachers have a role and a voice within the ACMS community. For more information about the PTCA, please contact the PTCA President, .

## **Teaching & Learning at ACMS**

The development of curriculum and the teaching practices at the Atlanta Charter Middle School (ACMS) are guided by the common principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) that place students at the center of their learning in a hands-on way, actively engaged in exploring questions and coached by their teachers towards the demonstration of mastery of higher-order concepts and skills. The curriculum at ACMS does not rely on textbooks; rather, it is driven by rich and interesting projects and learning experiences that help students to show understanding. Teachers develop the curriculum to reflect both the Georgia Performance Standards for each grade level and the standards of national discipline-specific organizations. The Understanding by Design framework is used for planning curriculum. As well, experiences that take students away from the school on field trips to support their learning occur on a regular basis.

Following the advisory session that begins each day, students at ACMS have a daily schedule that rotates through three different blocks of approximately 2 hours each: one block of math/science/technology, one block of humanities (language arts and social studies), and one block of the arts, Spanish, and/or Fit for Life. Additionally, there is a daily support, enrichment, and reading instruction block for students. Classes at ACMS are heterogeneously grouped, with students of the same grade level in classes together.

Students practice and develop their strength in different essential skills over the course of their time at ACMS in math/science/technology, humanities, Spanish, Fit for Life, and arts classes. While the content strands and level of skills are different at each grade level, the skill areas themselves remain the same at each grade level as these skills represent what is important for students not just during their time at ACMS but in the wider world as well.

### **Curriculum**

The content focus and skill areas for each of the classes are described below by grade level:

#### *Humanities*

Students in the humanities (a two hour language arts and social studies block) develop skills in Reading/English/Language Arts and Social Studies. Students develop their skills comprehending, analyzing, and producing in a variety of different genres (persuasive, analytical, creative, narrative, poetry). In the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, the content focuses on the culture, literature, and history of the western hemisphere: the Americas, Europe, and Oceania. In the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, the content focuses on Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, while in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the emphasis is on Georgia history in the context of the history of the United States.

The skill areas assessed in Humanities are...

- Reading
- Writing
- Communication
- Research
- Cultural & Historical Awareness

### *Performing & Visual Arts*

Classes in the arts are designed to provide students with skills and ideas in a variety of artistic media and an appreciation for different styles of artistic expression. Students in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade have performing arts as their artistic concentration. Performing arts classes introduce students to basic theatre concepts and immerse students in different types of acting (monologue, plays, improvisation) as well as to various aspects of stage production. In the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, students have a visual arts concentration. These classes introduce students to techniques in drawing, collage, and other forms of expression.

8<sup>th</sup> grade students choose between different elective course options in the arts each term or elect to take a yearlong course in Spanish. These classes build upon the foundational skills developed in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades by giving students the opportunity to explore more sophisticated concepts and techniques. In visual arts, this includes two- and three-dimensional art making methods and mixed media. The performing arts classes range in focus from scene study to play production.

The skill area assessed in arts classes is...

- Artistic Expression

### *Math, Science & Technology*

The integrated math, science, and technology curriculum centers on essential skills and concepts to bridge students from the basic numeracy of elementary school to the more advanced thinking and problem solving necessary for success in high school. The content strands focus on foundations in algebra and geometry, number sense, probability, data analysis and measurement in math across all grade levels. In science, the earth sciences (oceanography, astronomy, geology, and ecology) are the focus in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, while in 7<sup>th</sup> grade students explore content in the life sciences with an emphasis on biology, and in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, science content focuses on physical science, with strands in the nature of matter, laws of energy, matter, motion and forces, and energy transformation. Throughout their time at ACMS students use technology as a tool to explore math and science with a focus on developing foundational computing skills and greater ease with different types of technology and their use, including web design and animation.

The skill areas assessed in Math/Science/Technology are...

- Mathematical Thinking & Problem Solving
- Scientific Thinking & Investigation
- Technology

### *Spanish*

6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students have Spanish class for one hour twice a week for the entire school year. In this class, Spanish language and grammar is taught through the context of cultural units to strengthen students' skills in speaking, listening, writing, and reading the language with a progression from basic to more intermediate and advanced Spanish. 8<sup>th</sup> grade students elect to take a yearlong course in Spanish or may choose between different elective course options in the arts each term.

The skill areas assessed in Spanish are...

- Speaking
- Listening
- Writing
- Reading
- Culture

### *Fit for Life*

In Fit for Life, students develop their physical, mental, and social-emotional skills. Recently, ACMS partnered with the Children's Aid Society to integrate components of their model into the ACMS Fit for Life Program. The curriculum—focused on sports and self-expression activities, family life and sexuality education, social-emotional skills, an exploration of the world of work and careers, enhanced support for learning, and comprehensive medical/dental services—is based upon the scientifically proven program developed by Dr. Michael A. Carrera and the Children's Aid Society which uses a holistic approach to empower youth by providing opportunities for young people to discover interests and develop talents.

The skill areas assessed in Fit for Life are...

- Physical Education
- Health Education
- Character/Social Education

### **Guiding Principles**

All classes at ACMS help students to practice the school's Guiding Principles by developing habits that allow them to become better students and community members. Students receive feedback on their ability to “live out” the Guiding Principles through regular reporting. The ACMS Guiding Principles are:

- We respect each other, our surroundings and ourselves.
- We come to school prepared to learn and do our best.
- We work to resolve conflicts in a peaceful, thoughtful, meaningful way.
- We take responsibility for our actions and learning.
- We celebrate our individual and collective successes.

## **ACMS Portfolio Assessment System**

As a way to gather a wider array of information about student performance throughout the school year, the ACMS faculty has developed a student portfolio-based assessment system that was piloted in 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes (excluding Spanish and Fit for Life) during the 2008-2009 school year. Drawing on research documenting the importance of a coherent *internal* system of assessment and accountability to student achievement (as opposed to relying solely on *external* instruments, like the standardized tests), the ACMS Portfolio Assessment System seeks to create a process through which students will demonstrate their mastery of essential skills in each of the major academic domains. The skills are Reading, Writing, Research, Communication, Artistic Expression, Cultural/Historical Awareness, Mathematical Thinking & Problem Solving, Technology, Scientific Thinking & Investigation, and Spanish (in Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking, and Culture). The criteria for each of these skills were designed to align with the Georgia Performance Standards, as well as standards from national discipline-specific organizations, such as the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE).

The portfolio assessment will expand to the 7<sup>th</sup> grade this year, also adding Spanish. Specific skill criteria in Fit for Life will be developed over the course of this school year for use during the 2010-2011 school year.

### ***Assessment of Skills***

Each of the academic skill areas listed above has a set of standards, or “rubric”, associated with it (see the final section of this document for the standards for each skill). These rubrics, developed by ACMS teachers, describe what good work looks like for that particular skill. Teachers use these rubrics to assess students’ work in each skill area, though students have the opportunity to learn and practice each skill before they are assessed on it. So, for example, while a student tries out and gets feedback on different creative writing techniques in writing workshop, he is assessed in writing on his final piece. Students complete projects in each skill area several times during the year, and some projects are assessed in more than one skill area. For instance, a student might design a small race car using measurements and scale, and then she runs the car in a series of time trials to determine how its speed was impacted by the design. Though one project, the design of the car, is assessed for Mathematical Thinking & Problem Solving, the testing of the car and analysis of the results are assessed for Scientific Thinking & Investigation.

When a student receives an assessment in a skill area, they are given both written feedback on the student’s strengths and areas of improvement and a grade based on the standards for the skill. Both of these forms of feedback are related to the rubric for that skill. A student receives an “A” if his/her work meets the standards for that skill, a “B” if the work approaches the standards, a “C” if the work is just beginning towards the standards, and a “Needs Improvement” if the work is in need of significant improvement or is incomplete. If allowed by the teacher, a student may revise his or her work so that it is closer to meeting the standards.

Students work with their teachers to maintain their portfolio of work for that class. When a student receives an assessment back, he completes a simple cover sheet and reflection about the project and assessment and puts the work and any process steps into his portfolio, and the portfolio is kept at school.

Three times a year, at the end of each academic term, students receive end of term reports from teachers that describe each student's progress in each of the skill areas (see "End of Term Reports"). If student's work has shown that it "needs improvement" in more than one of the skill areas during the school year, then he/she may be recommended for academic support during the school year and/or over the summer until he/she makes progress towards meeting the standards.

### ***Who Assesses Student's Skills?***

The teacher who assigns the work in his/her class will assess student work. Typically, the math/science/technology teachers will assign and assess work in Mathematical Thinking & Problem Solving Scientific Thinking & Investigation, and Technology; the humanities teachers in Reading, Writing, Research, Cultural & Historical Awareness, and Communication; the arts teachers in Artistic Expression; the Spanish teachers in Spanish skill areas.

In order to ensure alignment of standards across the grade level and content area, teachers will come together frequently to assess a piece of student work collaboratively.

### ***Exhibition of Student Work***

Public exhibition of student work is intended not only to give each student a goal to reach for during the school year, it is also a way to engage the wider community in the learning process at ACMS. Public exhibition is a way to build awareness of the value of each student's efforts and academic accomplishments and the principles that guided the student work. Students will present their work to the ACMS and larger communities at various points throughout the year, and students will have a portfolio exhibition near the end of the school year.

### **Grading Scale**

The following grading scale is used in addition to written feedback on individual projects, progress reports, and end of term reports by teachers in all content areas and in all grade levels. This grading scale gives an indication of a student's progress towards meeting or exceeding the standards for each skill area:

Over 100: Exceeding the Standard (A+)

90 to 100: Meeting the Standard (A)

80 to 90: Approaching the Standard (B)

70 to 80: Just Beginning to work towards the Standard (C)

Below 70: Needs Improvement/Incomplete

### **Support & Enrichment**

*Student Support Team (SST)*

ACMS provides a number of supports to students with exhibited learning needs, including using a student support team (SST) to identify struggling learners and assess the effectiveness of various instructional interventions for students. Teachers or parents may refer a student to SST, and the team works in consultation with parents, guardians, and/or caregivers to develop individual plans for students.

### *Special Education*

For students with identified learning disabilities, the special education program at ACMS works with students and families to meet students' individual needs by accommodating and/or modifying the curriculum. As much as is appropriate, students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or 504 plans are in classes with their peers, and teachers and the special education coordinator work with students in their classes and/or in smaller settings.

### *Counseling and Psychological Support*

ACMS employs the services of two school counselors and school psychologist to work with students both in one-on-one and group settings to address social and emotional issues. Parents/guardians of students are notified before any consultations occur.

### *Support and Enrichment Times*

To create flexibility in the schedule to better assist students in their learning, each day a block of time is devoted to support and enrichment. On all days except Wednesday, a half-hour block of time is available for individual conferencing or tutoring, student work time, reading, and other focused activities. On Wednesday, there is an extended support and enrichment block. This time is spent by students in a focused support or enrichment class that they can choose from each term.

Additionally, each teacher offers at least one voluntary tutorial session for students in his/her classes each week, before or after school.

## **Reporting of Student Progress**

In addition to frequent informal feedback students and families receive about individual student progress, ACMS is committed to providing regular reports on student performance relative to standards and in the habits of learning. These reports take one of two forms:

### *Monthly Progress Reports*

Once a month, students and families receive a progress report. These reports give feedback on a student's development of his/her habits of learning and provide a current class average so that support and attention may be enhanced, maintained, or altered to help the student achieve maximum growth and learning moving forward. These monthly reports are *not* part of a student's permanent academic record. The monthly progress reports go out at the following times:

- Week of September 7<sup>th</sup>, October 5<sup>th</sup>, December 7<sup>th</sup>, January 25<sup>th</sup>, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, April 26<sup>th</sup>

### *End of Term Reports*

Three times a year, students and families receive end of term reports. Like monthly progress reports, the end of term report provides academic and related information on a student so that support and attention may be enhanced, maintained, or altered to help the student achieve maximum growth and learning. End of term reports differ, however, from progress reports in that they give a more detailed picture of a student's performance in each class by featuring his/her cumulative class average, progress in his/her habits of learning, and a narrative that describes the student's skills relative to the standards for the course. The final end of term report of the year becomes part of a student's permanent academic record. End of term reports go out at the following times:

- Week of November 9<sup>th</sup>, March 1<sup>st</sup>, May 31<sup>st</sup>

### *Teacher-Student-Family Conferences*

Conferences to discuss student progress take place twice a year in the fall and spring. Once set, the dates and times for these conferences will be communicated to students and families.

## **ACMS Skill Criteria in *Reading***

### Comprehension:

- You can identify the form and genre of a text
- You identify messages and themes from books in all subject areas
- You relate messages and themes from one subject area to those another area
- You read from a variety of subject disciplines.
- You establish a context for information acquired by reading across subject areas.

### Interpretation:

- You apply knowledge of the concept that theme refers to the message about life and the world that the author wants us to understand whether implied or stated
- You define and explain how tone is conveyed in literature through word choice, sentence structure, punctuation, rhythm, repetition, and rhyme
- You can compare and contrast different genres (literature, non-fiction, mythology, etc.)
- You can identify and analyze similarities and differences in texts from different cultures

### Process:

- You determine the meaning of unfamiliar words by using word, sentence, and paragraph clues
- You use letter-sound knowledge to decode written English and use a range of cueing systems (e.g., phonics and context clues) to determine pronunciation and meaning
- You read with a rhythm, flow, and meter that sounds like everyday speech
- You apply knowledge of common textual features (e.g., paragraphs, topic sentences, concluding sentences, glossary, index)
- You apply knowledge of common graphic features (i.e., graphic organizers, diagrams, captions, illustrations, charts, tables, graphs).
- You apply knowledge of common organizational structures and patterns (e.g., transitions, logical order, cause and effect, classification schemes)
- You determine strategies for finding content and contextual meaning for unfamiliar words or concepts

## **ACMS Skill Criteria in *Writing***

### Process

- You complete all five stages of the writing process and have evidence of each stage
- You get feedback from a variety of readers during the writing process and upon completion of your final draft
- You reflect on your process and your work

### Purpose

- You write for a specific audience and for a specific purpose
- The form you choose for a piece fits the purpose of the piece

### Content/Organization

- You narrow your topic into one that is manageable for your piece
- You capture the reader's attention from the beginning.
- You put your ideas into a logical order or one that moves the piece forward
- You support your ideas with enough details, evidence and/or description
- You use transitions to connect ideas
- You bring the piece to an effective close.

### Style/Voice

- Your tone suits your purpose
- The techniques you use in your piece suit your purpose
- You “show” rather than tell.
- You choose clear, precise and descriptive words
- You vary the length of your sentences to suit your purpose and to keep your reader engaged
- You omit needless words

### Conventions

- You use correct spelling, capitalization and punctuation.
- Your grammar and sentence structure follows the rules of standardized English.

## **ACMS Skill Criteria in *Artistic Expression***

### **Preparation**

- You develop your own message. (Note: The message could be the medium.)
- You use visual art, drama, or music to communicate your message.
- You research your message and art form and apply it to your process.

### **Presentation**

- Your artwork has an impact on its audience.
- You use the techniques of your art form effectively.
- You can answer questions about your artwork and process.

### **Process**

- You plan and manage your time effectively.
- You receive feedback from others and revise your work as needed.
- You show written evidence of reflecting upon your artwork, process, and presentation.

## **ACMS Skill Criteria in *Research***

### Preparing

- You brainstorm research topic ideas and organize them (in lists, outlines, webs, idea maps).
- You develop appropriate research questions and narrow them to a manageable size.
- You identify what you already know about your topic and decide what you still need to know.

### Searching

- You identify and use a variety of sources to search for information.
- You use sources that give you a significant amount of information.

### Note-Taking

- You take detailed and accurate notes.
- You indicate when any direct quotations from a source are used in your notes.
- You effectively organize and label the information in your notes.
- You evaluate the nature and reliability of your sources (primary or secondary; fact or opinion; point of view; timeliness)
- You document your sources and create a bibliography using the correct format.

### Interpreting

- You fully answer your research questions and/or identify difficulties in answering your research questions.
- You connect new information with what you already know.
- You discuss the strengths and weakness of evidence and recognize alternate points of view.
- You form an opinion based on your research and support your opinion with evidence.
- You cite your sources when appropriate.

### Process

- You plan and manage your research time effectively.
- You ask for help and/or seek clarification when needed.
- You revise your research questions if needed.
- You reflect on your research process and work.

## **ACMS Skill Criteria in *Cultural/Historical Awareness***

Content Strands: The Americas, Europe, & Oceania (6<sup>th</sup>); Africa, Asia, and the Middle East (7<sup>th</sup>); Georgia & United States History (8<sup>th</sup>)

### Understanding

- You identify the important issues in a country or region over a period of time.
- You accurately identify different geographic features of a country or region (location, climate, physical characteristics, natural resources, population size).
- You identify the cultural characteristics of a country or region (language, religion, ethnicities, customs, lifestyles).
- You understand the government and economic system of a country or region.

### Analysis

- You describe and examine important issues in a country or region over a period of time.
- You explain the relationship between the geographic features and cultural characteristics of a country or region and its history and people.
- You explain the significance of the government and economic system of a country or region on its history and people.
- You compare and contrast the history, geography, culture, government, and economy of different countries or regions.

## **ACMS Skill Criteria in *Communication***

### **Listening**

- You show attentiveness to the speaker through appropriate body language, remaining quiet and asking clarifying questions if necessary.
- You listen in a way that suits the material (taking notes, asking questions, engaging in dialogue).
- You can summarize or restate the main ideas of what you hear.
- You analyze the purpose of what you hear and the evidence offered in their support and can determine fact from opinion.
- You make connection between what you hear and your own experiences
- You take a point of view about what you hear and support it with evidence.

### **Presenting**

- You communicate a clear message, your information is substantive and accurate.
- Any presentations aids (visual, aural, etc) are substantive, relevant, and used effectively.
- You know your audience, engage them in appropriate ways from the beginning to the end of presentation.
- You speak correctly and audibly and pronounce words correctly.
- You speak at appropriate pace and vary your voice and language for expressive purposes.
- You avoid “filler” words (“um,” ”Uh,” ”like,” ”You know”).
- You adjust to audience reactions
- You are well prepared for the presentation
- You reflect on your process and your work.

## **ACMS Skill Criteria in *Scientific Thinking & Investigation***

Content Strands: Earth Science (6<sup>th</sup>), Life Science (7<sup>th</sup>), Physical Science (8<sup>th</sup>)

### Framing The Question

- You understand or come up with the question to investigate
- You collect information and ideas about your question
- You identify the variables or special factors that may affect your investigation

### Approach: How You Conduct the Investigation

- You come up with a hypothesis
- You can make a plan for testing the hypothesis
- You identify and use appropriate scientific equipment
- You make and record physical observations

### Reasoning: How You Evaluate What You Find

- You consider alternative explanations
- You use evidence to draw a logical conclusion
- You identify possible sources of error and bias in the investigation
- You verify the results of the investigation
- You revise your explanation if necessary

### Communicating What You Find

- You explain your ideas and procedures to others in a form they can understand
- You use correct mathematical and scientific vocabulary, equations, or notations to explain your ideas
- You use graphs, tables, charts, models, diagrams, or drawings to represent your findings

### So What?: Outcomes of Your Investigation

- You connect your ideas to other ideas you know about, or to a “real world” use
- You use data to respond to questions or comments from others
- You reflect on your own scientific process and thinking

## **ACMS Skill Criteria in *Mathematical Thinking & Problem Solving***

Content Strands: Number Sense & Operations, Geometry, Data Analysis & Probability, Patterns & Algebra

### Framing the Question

- You identify key concepts and questions.
- You identify what information is provided and what information is needed.

### Approach

- You devise a step-by-step method to solve problem.
- You look for patterns.

### Reasoning: How You Evaluate What You Find

- You complete a planned process to solve problem.
- You document the use of tools and skills in the problem solving process.

### Communicating What You Find

- You use appropriate mathematical language to communicate your solutions.
- You use graphs, tables, charts, and drawings to support findings.
- You are able to explain the problem so that others can understand.

### So What?: Outcomes of Your Investigation

- You are able to defend conclusions with sound reasoning.
- You explain any difficulties or triumphs experienced in the process.
- You identify any connections to other content areas or real world applications.

## **ACMS Skill Criteria in *Technology***

- You can touch-type on a standard keyboard, completing a minimum 15 words per minute.
- You can use a word processing program to produce a written document.
- You can use and create a computer spreadsheet, incorporating and/or creating graphs, charts, or other visual aids.
- You have gained knowledge of proper public speaking procedures and can accompany those with a fact-specific power point presentation.
- You can acquire information for specific purposes using on-line sources such as the World Wide Web via keyword searches.
- You can exchange information on the Internet using electronic mail.
- You can use manuals and on-screen help to learn how to use software programs.
- You can troubleshoot problems in operating computer equipment and software.

## **ACMS Skill Criteria in *Speaking (Spanish)***

### **Grammar**

- Your language shows number and gender agreement.
- Your language shows subject and verb agreement.
- You use verb tenses appropriately.
- You use appropriate word order.

### **Content**

- You speak about academic and non-academic topics.
- You express your opinions on a topic.
- You use vocabulary appropriate to the topic.
- You support your ideas using details and examples.

### **Pronunciation**

- You pronounce all vowels and consonants in a way that a native speaker would understand.
- You speak clearly and audibly.
- You stress words appropriately.

### **Fluency**

- You express your thoughts without pausing excessively to think.

### **Process**

- You practice speaking.
- You show awareness of your own grammar.
- You reflect on your process and your work.
- You are prepared and you have all your materials.

## **ACMS Skill Criteria in *Writing (Spanish)***

### **Grammar**

- Your writing shows number and gender agreement.
- Your writing shows subject and verb agreement.
- You use verb tenses appropriately.
- You use appropriate word order.
- You use correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and accents.

### **Content**

- You write about academic and non-academic topics.
- You express in writing your opinions on a topic.
- You use vocabulary appropriate to the topic.
- You support your statements with details and examples.

### **Style**

- You create your own ways of writing what you mean.
- You find ways to communicate what you mean, even if you don't know the exact vocabulary.
- Your writing style suits your purpose.

### **Process**

- You engage in pre-writing activities.
- You review past grammar and vocabulary.
- You draft work, seek feedback, and incorporate that feedback into your writing.
- You reflect on your process and your work.
- You follow deadlines.

## **ACMS Skill Criteria in *Reading (Spanish)***

### Comprehension

- You restate or respond appropriately to the main ideas.
- You restate or respond to important details.
- You understand the vocabulary necessary to the text.
- You understand the grammar necessary to the text.

### Analysis

- You identify and consider alternative interpretations of the text.
- You identify and consider how the background of the author might influence his or her ideas.

### Process

- You engage in pre-reading activities to prepare for the text.
- You infer meaning using a variety of clues.
- You ask questions or use language resources to clarify what you do not understand.
- You identify new vocabulary and grammar from the text.
- You reflect on your process and your work.
- You follow deadlines.

## **ACMS Skill Criteria in *Listening (Spanish)***

### Comprehension

- You restate or respond appropriately to the main ideas.
- You restate or respond to the important details.
- You understand the vocabulary necessary to the message.
- You understand the grammar necessary to the message.

### Analysis

- You identify and consider alternative interpretations of the messages.
- You identify and consider how the background of the speaker might influence his or her ideas.

### Process

- You engage in listening activities.
- You infer meaning using a variety of clues.
- You ask for repetition or a slower pace when needed.
- You ask questions to clarify what you do not understand.
- You identify new vocabulary and grammar that you heard.
- You reflect on your process and your work.
- You follow deadlines.

## **ACMS Skill Criteria in *Culture (Spanish)***

### Knowledge

- You accurately identify key characteristics (geography, history, literature, arts, traditions, social norms) of the country or group you are studying.
- You demonstrate an understanding of the Spanish-speaking culture's norms.

### Reflection

- You make meaningful comparisons between the norms and characteristics of the country or group you are studying and your own experience.
- You identify ways that your own background and previous experience affect your understanding of Spanish-speaking cultures.
- You ask questions.
- You hypothesize answers.

### Application and Participation

- You act with sensitivity to the norms of the cultural setting around you.

## ***Extracurricular Activities***

### *Athletics*

ACMS participates in the LUKESPORT program, an inter-charter school league. This program includes co-educational flag football and soccer, girl's basketball and boy's basketball. We also have a cheerleading squad as part of the sports program. **Each sport is focused on a commitment to age-appropriate coaching and competition, individual and team goals, fair and healthy play, and respect for participants and the sport itself.**

Participating students must provide ACMS with a current copy of sports physical from their physician and pay an athletics fee prior to beginning practice. Students will remain eligible to participate in the sports and cheerleading activities providing they have no discipline infractions and have satisfactorily completed their academic work. In addition, students may be denied participation if there is any display of un-sportsmanlike behavior during practice and games. If a student misses school on the day of a game, he or she will not be able to play in the game. ACMS team uniforms will be provided at a nominal fee. Parents are required to pick up team and cheerleading members at the ACMS campus after each game. For more information, please contact Maria Larson, who coordinates the school's sports program.

### *Clubs & Before/After School Activities*

All students are encouraged to join the various clubs and activities offered in years past at ACMS. More information about these and other activities will appear throughout the year in the Courier. Some of the opportunities include:

- Math Club
- BEST Robotics Team
- Bridge Club
- ACMS Student Government
- Junior Thespians
- ACMS Newspaper
- Band

## ***ACMS Policies, Procedures, & Information***

### ***Rules & Norms***

The following Guiding Principles were developed as a way to guide the way in which we work both individually and together at our school:

- ❖ We respect each other, our surroundings and ourselves.
- ❖ We come to school prepared to learn and do our best.
- ❖ We work to resolve conflicts in a peaceful, thoughtful, meaningful way.
- ❖ We take responsibility for our actions and learning.
- ❖ We celebrate our individual and collective successes.

At ACMS we believe all children have dignity and worth. Our goal is to develop young people who make good choices, respect themselves, and show respect for others, and the ACMS Guiding Principles help to do just that. All school personnel help students to follow the guiding principles, and students are expected to observe these principles in class and outside of school when they are representing ACMS. Additionally, each teacher helps students to follow the expectations established for his/her classroom.

When a student does not follow the ACMS Guiding Principles, a series of interventions are used to support the student and parents/guardians in better understanding the expectations for a safe and positive learning environment at ACMS. The following interventions are commonly used individually or in combination at the discretion of school staff or the Guiding Principles Committee depending upon the nature of the incident (*note: incidents that jeopardize the safety, security, or well being of our students and school, may require acceleration of the intervention process at any time*):

- ❖ Official Warning by Teacher/Staff Member
- ❖ Parent/Guardian Notification
- ❖ Restricted Lunch
- ❖ Loss of School Privileges
- ❖ Referral to Principal and/or Counselor
- ❖ Student/Parent/Principal Conference
- ❖ In or Out of School Suspension
- ❖ Recommendation for Expulsion

*The following section outlines specific policies of the school established to set boundaries for behavior and to help maintain a safe and respectful school community.*

### **Restricted Lunch Policy**

Students are expected to follow the ACMS Guiding Principles. If a student violates one of these principles, they will receive a warning from a teacher. If the student continues to violate the principles, he/she will be given a restricted lunch. It is the student's responsibility to show up for the restricted lunch. A student will receive a note to take home and be signed by the parent/guardian when a restricted lunch is assigned explaining the reason for the restricted lunch.

If a student receives three restricted lunches, there will be a conference with the student, his or her parent/guardian, advisor, and the principal to develop a plan for improved behavior

following a day of in or out of school suspension. Continued violations of the guiding principles will result in further consequences up to and including suspension or expulsion from ACMS.

#### Tardy Policy

Punctual arrival to class is important to insure that each class can begin on time. It is the responsibility of each student to arrive to class on time. If a student is late to a class because he/she was with another teacher, then the student should have a pass. If a student arrives to class late three times without a pass, that student will have restricted lunch. If a student continues arriving to class late, that student will face further consequences, including loss of other school privileges, a parent/guardian conference, and/or in-school suspension.

#### Harassment/Bullying Policy

At ACMS, there is to be no mental, physical, and/or verbal form of abuse and harassment towards another person. If you observe an incident involving harassment, it is your responsibility to let a teacher, the counselor, or the Dean of Students/Principal know. Anyone reporting an incident of harassment has the right to have his/her identity remain anonymous.

It is the responsibility of all members of the ACMS community to ensure our school is free of harassment as we live and work with one another in our small community.

Harassment includes: any verbal or physical behavior directed toward someone that is experienced as unwanted, degrading, or provocative, and/or any conduct that negatively affects another person's academic status or progress and/or creates an environment that is intimidating, hostile, or offensive.

#### Wolf Bones

One of our main goals at the Atlanta Charter Middle School is to develop young people who make good choices, demonstrate respect for themselves and others and develop good habits. The "Wolf Bone" is a way to recognize a student for living out one of the ACMS Guiding Principles.

#### *How do you earn a Wolf Bone?*

A student can earn a Wolf Bone when a staff member recognizes the student for doing something that is a good example of one of the ACMS Guiding Principles. The staff member gives the student a note to take home (that's the Wolf Bone) and the copy of the note goes into a box. Why does it go into a box? Read on!

#### *So what happens when you earn a Wolf Bone?*

- 1) A positive note gets sent home
- 2) The names of wolf bone recipients are recognized around the school and in the weekly ACMS Courier
- 3) Every Friday morning, the name of one wolf bone recipient from each grade level will be randomly pulled from the box to be recognized and to perhaps receive a special treat like a gift card, a special lunch with friends, or tickets to a sporting event.
- 4) Once a month, advisors will decide on one student who consistently followed the principles and habits. In advisory groups, students will decide on a person in their grade level that is deserving of a wolf bone. Someone from this group will be randomly selected for a special treat.

- 5) Once a month a special wolf bone will be given out by the Principal to the grade level that the Principal feels has best been living out the Guiding Principles by taking good care of their spaces (cafeteria, bathrooms, hallways), being actively involved in classes and events, and doing the right thing. The grade level that earns the Principal's Wolf Bone will get something all for themselves, like more time at recess or a pizza party.

### ***Attendance***

School attendance is taken and reviewed daily. If a student is going to be absent due to illness or an unexpected situation, the parent/guardian should call the office by 9:00 am to report the absence (please leave a message in the general mailbox if there is no answer). Upon returning to school the student should bring a note explaining the absence. As well, if a student is going to be absent for medical appointments or family-related reasons the office should be notified prior to the absence and any prolonged absences should be communicated to office staff and/or the student's advisor.

Each day, the office staff will contact the parents/guardians of any student who does not arrive to school by 9:00 am when prior notification of an absence has not been given.

### ***Arrival & Dismissal***

Students may arrive at school no earlier than 8:00 am unless they are here for a club or teacher help session. The school is not responsible for students who are dropped off before 8:00 am. Students enter the building through the main entrance on Essie Avenue. Students who do not walk or ride their bikes to school should be picked up at dismissal time each day. Please notify the office if you anticipate being late for pick up.

Students who wish to ride their bikes may do so. A note stating that a student have permission to ride to school is to be filed in the office beforehand. Students must walk [not ride] bikes on and off school grounds. Also, any student who will be walking home from school must have a note on file in the office stating that it is permissible to do so.

### Dismissal Process

***Dismissal is at 3:45 every day except Wednesday, when dismissal happens at 2:15.***

At the end of the day, students will be dismissed according to the information parents/guardians have provided. Any change from normal pickup routine must be reported to office personnel. Car Riders will remain to wait for pickup. The car riders' line is on Essie Avenue. All cars picking up students must have a number in the front window. You will receive a number at orientation or can obtain one from the office. Written permission from the parent/guardian must be provided if a student is to leave school with someone whom they do not normally leave. Picture identification may be required for verification.

To make the dismissal process safe and efficient, please obey the following:

- Remain in your car in the car pool line.
- Please do not park on the left-hand side of Essie Avenue out of respect for our neighbors and so that students do not have to cross the street. If you need to come into the building, please park on Delaware Avenue or Emerson Avenue

### Late Arrival & Early Dismissal

If students arrive at school after 8:45 am prior to going to classes their parent/guardian shall escort them to the office and sign them in. If students are leaving school prior to dismissal time, their parent/guardian must come to the office to sign them out.

### ***Breakfast, Lunch, & Snacks***

ACMS serves breakfast and lunch each day at the school. All families are asked to complete a Federal Eligibility Application form at Orientation. Families that qualify will receive free/reduced pricing for one breakfast and one lunch per school day. Families that qualify will receive a free/reduced pricing for breakfast and lunch. (Note: If your child has been on free or reduced meal rates in the past, then they will continue to receive that rate while the applications are processed.) The full price for school breakfast is **\$2.25** and the price for lunch is **\$3.25** (prices are subject to change). Families may choose to have their children eat breakfast at home and/or send a bag lunch.

### **Breakfast / Lunch Process**

1. Business Manager will distribute Free & Reduced Lunch Forms at Orientation. Each household is expected to complete the form and return it to the school.
2. Business Manager will call or send notification to all families who participated in the Free & Reduced Lunch Program the previous school year, but have not turned in their paper work (Prior to temporary status expiring 30 days after the first day of school).
3. After the first month of school, Business Manager will review all outstanding balances. Identify which families have not made any payments and/or who owe over \$75. Contact each family and request payment in full or completion of a Free and Reduced Lunch form.

### **Breakfast / Lunch Policy**

1. Pre-payment for all meals is expected. Menus will be available on-line via the school's website and sent out in the Courier. Pre-ordering will not be required except for vegetarian and vegan meals. The school will keep an accurate count of the meals eaten and will mail an invoice to parents/guardians who have not pre-paid at the end of each month using home mailing addresses on file at the school. Parents/guardians will have 15 school days to pay the invoice. (Note: It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify the school of any change of address.)
2. If an individual student account becomes 45 days past due and/or has a balance of \$75 or more, the Business Manager will notify the parent/guardian that the account will be "frozen" and no meals or drinks will be able to be purchased by student until the balance is paid in full by parent/guardian. The Business Manager will also ask the parent/guardian to complete the Federal Eligibility application.
3. Report cards will be held for any students with an outstanding balance until the balance is paid in full.

For more information about food service at the school, please contact Susan Knight, ACMS Business Manager.

### **Snacks**

Students are encouraged to bring healthy snacks with them to school daily to eat during the all-school break.

### ***Computer and Internet Use***

The Atlanta Charter Middle School offers use of school computers to students and staff. Users of these computers are expected to exercise care and follow all operating instructions, safety standards and guidelines for their use. Any damage to or loss of a school computer caused by an individual user will be that user's responsibility to fix, including and up to paying for the replacement of the computer.

As well, The Atlanta Charter Middle School offers Internet access to its students and staff. The intent of this policy is to ensure that users utilize this access in a manner consistent with the purpose of providing this Internet service.

As a member of the Atlanta Charter Middle School community, all computer users will...

- Respect the privacy, safety and confidentiality of myself and others by neither disclosing nor disseminating personal information on the Internet. This shall include email, chat rooms, and all forms of direct Internet communications.
- Respect computer and network equipment. You will not alter or access computer or network configurations without the knowledge and consent of the Network Administrator(s).
- Not download or install software, music or other programs from the Internet onto a school computer.
- Understand that software piracy is a federal offense, and that ACMS's network may not be used for copying, downloading, distributing, or storing commercial software not licensed by the Atlanta Charter Middle School.
- Abide by copyright laws and not plagiarize the works of others.
- Understand that I am a representative of ACMS on the Internet and so will display the decorum, control, and respect necessary to maintain credibility and respectability for both the school and myself.
- Understand that I am responsible for all activity on my account, even if I am not the one behind the keyboard; and for this reason I will keep my account secure and not share my password with anyone else. I will not knowingly use someone else's computer account.
- Understand that ACMS is an educational community, and that as such our educational function is our paramount mission. Therefore I will defer my recreational activities to times outside academic hours and to any fellow students or staff needing access for academic work or projects.
- Understand that my actions on the Internet can have far-reaching consequences. I will therefore make deliberate decisions not to engage in behavior that might adversely affect the safety, security, or well-being of myself or be perceived as harassment by others.
- Abstain from accessing inappropriate web sites or computer games that include pornography, obscene images or language or are considered harmful to minors as defined by the Children's Internet Protection Act (aka CIPA).
- Ask questions regarding computer procedures when I do not know how to do something.

It should be further understood that users of ACMS computing and networking resources cannot assume absolute privacy. Users should expect that network connections will be monitored and computer files may be inspected.

CIPA requires that all computers in a school or library must install and use Internet filters to protect users against visual depictions that are harmful, as defined by the Act. Minors, defined as children under the age of 17, cannot for any reason, request that the filters be turned off.

The Atlanta Charter Middle School has installed filters to comply with this mandate. In addition, faculty members are expected monitor student use of the computers, and proactively guide students to make appropriate choices. ACMS, however, does not warrant the effectiveness of the Internet filter and cannot be held liable for damages.

Violations of this policy include but are not limited to:

- Deliberate access to inappropriate material on the Internet and World Wide Web
- Unauthorized online access including “hacking” and other unlawful activities
- Unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal information
- Persistent non-academic use of e-mail, chat rooms, and instant messengers

The Atlanta Charter Middle School reserves the right to deny, revoke or suspend specific user privileges and/or to take other disciplinary action for violations of this policy. The Atlanta Charter Middle School will advise appropriate law enforcement agencies of illegal activities conducted through the school’s Internet service. The Atlanta Charter Middle School also will cooperate fully with local, state and/or federal officials in any investigation related to any illegal activities conducted through the school’s Internet service.

As a parent/guardian, if you prefer that your student not be allowed internet access while at school and/or if you prefer that your student’s photograph or work not be published on the school’s website, please notify the school in writing of this request.

For more information about computer and internet use, please contact Travis Torsch, ACMS Instructional Technology Specialist.

### ***Dress Code***

The policy of The Atlanta Charter Middle School is that all students shall be neat, clean and dressed in comfortable but appropriate clothing. Students should appear at school in attire that is conducive to learning.

Students of ACMS are expected to dress according to the school’s dress code:

- a. Boys may wear pants or shorts of appropriate size and length. No cut-offs.
- b. Girls may wear pants, shorts, skirts, or dresses [fingertip length from knees, no shorter] No cut-offs.
- c. Shirts, blouses and sweaters must be long enough to cover the midriff. Tops with spaghetti straps, halter tops, strapless tops or tube tops are not allowed.
- d. Only tank tops that fit properly, with garments underneath will be allowed.
- e. No clothing with sayings or pictures that are product advertisement and/or offensive and disrupt the learning of others is permitted [I.e. tobacco ads, confederate flag and inappropriate language]. Clothing displaying lewd or derogatory remarks, pictures, diagrams, drawings, is not allowed.
- f. Net or see-through garments are not allowed.

- g. Hats may not be worn inside the school building at any time.
- h. Shoes with wheels are not permitted.
- i. Students should have sneakers for Fit for Life class.

While school staff will enforce the dress code, the ultimate responsibility will lie with the parents and students. If clothing is deemed inappropriate per the dress code, students will wait in the office and parents will be asked to come to school within one hour to provide appropriate clothing.

***Decision-Making at ACMS***

All communities need a framework for decision-making in order to operate effectively and in a way that makes clear what decisions get made by what people/groups and how those decisions get made. At ACMS, some decisions we will make all together, while others will be made by specific groups. This document lays out what the framework for decision-making at ACMS is as well as how someone can make a proposal about an issue to be decided.

<b>Decision Making Body</b>	<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Governing Board	State and federal law, the Charter, hiring, core program issues	Sets policies aimed at making sure school is compliance with laws and charter; approval of budget and staff hires; major changes to charter
Principal	Day-to-day “nitty gritty”, immediate discipline, state mandates, things that just need to get done	Oversight of staff, teaching/learning, and safety
Staff	Elements of the educational program that require professional design and affect the whole school	Creation of skill criteria for portfolios; academic norms and practices (revisions, late work...); organization of advisory program
Grade levels or content teams	Elements of the educational program that require professional design but do not have substantial impact on other grade levels or content teams	What “meeting standards” in a skill looks like; curriculum development
School community referendum (including students)	Big issues that affect core aspects of school life or school program—needs whole school community consensus	Changes to length of school day/year; classes offered; dress code

Representative body (could include students)	Whole school issues regarding norm setting—not big, core issues	Norms for morning meeting, lunch/recess
Committee with power (could include students)	Involves design after whole group instructions have been given	8 <sup>th</sup> grade celebration committee; Student gov't

**How a Proposal Becomes a Decision:**

1. Anyone in the community raises an issue in the form of a written proposal or simply a description of the problem. This written proposal is then given to the Principal.
2. The Principal, Governing Board Chair, and/or student government determines to which decision-making body or bodies the proposal should go.
3. The selected decision-making body discusses and decides, or it creates a process for a decision to be made, or it forms a committee to explore the proposal further.
4. If the committee then creates a proposal, it goes back to the Principal (step #2).
5. Whatever decision-making body gets selected, that body has full authority to make the decision unless otherwise specified.

\*\* Not all proposals will be approved but we will follow this process for deciding which ones will.  
 \*\* Decisions will stand for at least 3 months before changes can be proposed.

**What a Proposal Should Include:**

1. A description of the problem or issue.
2. The specifics of what is proposed to address problem or issue.
3. Possible advantages and disadvantages of the proposal.
4. Suggested decision-making body for the proposal

***Enrollment & Registration***

Registration and enrollment/re-enrollment for the new school year begins the middle of January, with dates approved by the Governing Board. The complete schedule is posted on the school’s website and in the Courier; parents/guardians may call the office for further information. All students who attend ACMS must be eligible to attend an Atlanta Public School in order to register at ACMS. More detailed enrollment and registration information can be found on the school’s website.

If the family of a current student does not turn in all required paperwork to re-enroll the student by the posted deadlines, that student’s place at ACMS will be considered “open” and given to any student on the waiting list. As well, if a student’s residency changes during the school year so that the student no longer meets the residency requirements, that student will need to be withdrawn from ACMS immediately and tuition money may be owed to the school.

***Field Trips***

Permission slips for field trips are required. If there is not a signed permission slip by parent/guardian in the office, that student will not accompany the class on field trips.

### ***Games, Gadgets, & Electronic Equipment***

Students are not permitted to bring any of the above to school except when requested by teachers for particular projects. Any such items will be taken up and returned to parents. A second infraction will result in confiscation and return of the item at the end of the school year.

### ***Health & Safety***

The health and safety of students is of utmost concern to ACMS staff. A Health & Safety Advisory Committee, facilitated by an ACMS staff member, brings together parents/guardians, students, and school staff to examine health, safety, and environmental issues within the ACMS community and to plan programming/special events and make recommendations to the staff and governing board that aim to promote a safer and healthier school community.

The following policies and procedures are followed by school staff in order to comply with legal requirements and to ensure the welfare of students at the school:

#### Neglect/Abuse

By law, information about child abuse and neglect must be communicated by school employees to the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) according to DFCS protocol. Any school employee who suspects a student is being neglected or abused should immediately communicate this information to a member of the ACMS Student Services team (primarily the Counselor and Principal) and the suspected neglect/abuse will be reported to DFCS.

Potential signs of neglect/abuse of a student can include:  
often left home alone overnight  
in the neighborhood for long periods without supervision  
frequently hungry  
dressed inadequately for the weather  
absent from school frequently  
bruised or have other marks of physical violence  
withdrawn or overly aggressive  
not receiving needed medical attention

#### Drugs/Weapons/Assaults (as per state and federal law)

According to state and federal regulations, possession of a firearm at school or at a school sponsored event will result in a mandatory one year expulsion which can be reviewed on a case by case basis by the Principal.

Any student who is found on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon, including, but not limited to, a gun or a knife; a controlled substance, including, but not limited to, marijuana, cocaine and heroin may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the principal.

Any student who assaults a principal, assistant principal, teacher, teacher aides or other educational staff on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the principal. Any student who is charged with a violation of either paragraph (a) or (b) shall be notified in writing of an opportunity for a hearing. The student may have representation, along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses at said hearing before the principal. After said hearing, the principal may use his/her discretion to decide to suspend rather than expel a student who has been determined by the principal to have violated either paragraph (a) or (b) provided however, that the principal who decides that said student should be suspended shall

state in writing to the governing board his reasons for choosing the suspension instead of the expulsion as the more appropriate remedy. In this statement, the principal shall represent that, in his opinion, the continued presence of this student in the school will not pose a threat to the safety, security and welfare of the other students and staff in the school.

Any student who has been expelled from a school district pursuant to these provisions shall have the right to appeal to the principal. The expelled student shall have ten (10) days from the date of the expulsion in which to notify the superintendent of his appeal. The student has the right to counsel at a hearing before the superintendent. The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the student has violated any provisions of this service.

When a student is expelled under the provisions of this section and applies for admission to another school for acceptance, the superintendent of the sending school shall notify the superintendent of the receiving school of the reasons for the pupil's expulsion.

In addition, any student who has been (or is) involved in the sale, use, possession, and/or distribution of drugs or has been (or is) involved in the expedition of the sale, use, possession, and/or distribution of drugs or has committed an assault of any type on another student, staff member, or administrator, or has been involved in a weapons violation will be subject to expulsion from school and exclusion from participation in school activities or events. Furthermore, any person, knowingly or intentionally present at a place where a controlled substance is being kept, or who is in the company of any person knowing said person is in possession of a controlled substance, unless such substance was obtained directly or pursuant to a valid prescription order from a practitioner while acting in the course of his professional practice, or whoever conspires with another person to violate any provision of the Controlled Substances Act, may also be subject to expulsion from school and exclusion from participation in school activities, school or events.

#### *Alcohol*

Any person, knowingly or intentionally present at a place where a controlled substance is being kept, or who is in the company of any person, knowing said person is in possession of a controlled substance, unless such substance was obtained directly or pursuant to a valid prescription or order from a practitioner while acting in the course of his professional practice, or whoever conspires with another person to violate any provision of The Controlled Substances Act, may be subject to suspension, arrest, and/or expulsion from school, participation in school activities or events. Alcohol violations could result in expulsion proceedings. The parent(s) or guardian(s) of students involved in such infractions will always be notified.

#### *Smoking/Possession of Tobacco Products*

Smoking or other use of tobacco products by any individual, student or employee, are prohibited in any school building or school facility, anywhere on school grounds and on any school bus. Non-school personnel must comply with this restriction. Smoking or any other use of tobacco products is also prohibited during all school activities off school property.

#### Student Revelations of Alcohol and/or Drug Use

The above section details disciplinary policies and procedures regarding infractions that involve use and possession of alcohol, drugs and drug paraphernalia on campus or at school events. Casual conversation at ACMS about the use of alcohol and drugs is to be discouraged. Personal revelations by students to staff regarding their own use of alcohol or drugs (including tobacco) or their first hand concerns about others' use shall result in action by an ACMS staff member. Upon hearing such information, the staff member will consult with the Counselor and/or

Principal. Together, based on their best judgment, they will decide which of the following is the best course of action:

- Staff member continues to talk with and monitor student for a limited period of time to more clearly determine the nature of the situation;
- Counselor makes an educational/therapeutic intervention by contacting student directly;
- Parents of student are contacted by most appropriate staff member;
- Student is referred to Principal's Office for possible disciplinary action.

No ACMS staff member should bear sole responsibility for the knowledge that a student is experimenting with, using or abusing alcohol or drugs. For the protection of the student and all concerned, a consultation between the staff member and either the Counselor or Principal must take place.

### Daily Health Issues

ACMS does not have a full-time nurse on staff. For any minor injuries, each room in the building has a kit containing band-aids, anti-bacterial wipes, and ice packs. If a student is, in the judgment of school staff, significantly injured (bleeding, concussion, sprain) at any point during the course of the day, the student will be taken to the office. The office staff, reporting teacher, or the student's advisor will contact the student's parent/guardian to inform them of the situation and determine what further medical attention is needed.

### Medication Administration Policy

Any medication, prescription or over-the-counter, that needs to be administered during school hours, must be done so with the authorization of the ACMS office staff. **No student may carry either prescription or over-the-counter medication including inhalers and Epi-pens, at school without the permission of the ACMS office staff.** Self-administration of inhalers and epi-pens are allowed when approved by the Student's Physician, Parents or Guardians, and ACMS office staff.

All medication must be brought to school by an adult, must be properly labeled, and in its original container. A doctor's order must accompany all medication brought to school. A parent/guardian must sign a Medication Permission Form filled out by the doctor with the following information:

- Name of student and date of birth
- Name of medication
- Reason for administration in school
- Dosage
- Dosage interval (i.e., every 4 hours)
- Duration of administration (i.e., one week)
- List of food or drug allergies
- Name of student's physician (or prescribing healthcare provider)
- Potential side effects (if any)
- Parent emergency telephone contact numbers.

With parental permission, the ACMS office staff can administer Acetaminophen (Tylenol) and Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) and Tums to students. Office staff will do a brief assessment to determine need. This will include observation for possible fever, pain from injury, orthopedic or orthodontic procedures, headache, etc. If you would like to grant permission for office staff to administer Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) to your student, please complete the form given out during orientation or obtain one from the main office.

### ***Inclement Weather***

The Atlanta Charter Middle School follows the same school closings as all other Atlanta Public Schools. Listen to the local news and follow what is reported for the Atlanta Public School System. For inclement weather that occurs during the school day, emergency procedures are followed to insure the safety of students. If an earlier dismissal is necessary due to inclement weather, information will be reported to families by phone, email, and on the school's website.

### ***Media Center***

Students may check out books, CDs and audiotapes for a period of two weeks from the ACMS Media Center. All material checked out must be returned or renewed within that period. If a media item is lost or destroyed students will be responsible for replacement. Students are expected to follow school rules when in the media center in addition to the center's rules, which will be posted in that area. For more information about the media center, please contact Jacob Edmison.

### ***Phones***

#### Student Cell Phone Use

Student cell phones are for emergency use only and must be off during school hours. Any infraction will result in confiscation and the phone returned to parents/guardians. Repeated violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

#### Student Use of School Phones

Students may only use the school phones in case of an emergency and only with permission of faculty and staff. Parents/guardians should not call school during the day with messages for students unless it is an emergency.

### ***Student Records***

School records include all materials directly related to a student that the school maintains. The Atlanta Charter Middle School will maintain student records in a confidential manner and comply with all state and federal laws regarding the privacy of these records. Parents/guardians of current students may review their children's records in the office, but files may not be removed from the office. All financial obligations must be met before a student's records will be transferred to another school.

#### The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.

Parents or eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records that they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.

Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):

- o School officials with legitimate educational interest;
- o Other schools to which a student is transferring;
- o Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
- o Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
- o Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
- o Accrediting organizations;
- o To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
- o Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
- o State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law

Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them. Schools must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under FERPA. The actual means of notification (special letter, inclusion in a PTA bulletin, student handbook, or newspaper article) is left to the discretion of each school.

### ***Visiting ACMS***

All visitors, including parents, must sign in at the office before going elsewhere in the building. Please contact individual teachers to schedule a visit to their classrooms.

During the school day, the front door will be the sole point of entry for students, families and visitors. Everyone will need to ring the security buzzer to enter the building. Everyone must sign in and out at the main office.