



Elementary FAMILY HANDBOOK 2010 - 2011

Mr. Larry McIlvain, Superintendent
Ms. Diana Quillin O'Leary

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WELCOME TO ACS!

Dear Families and Students:

Welcome to the elementary school at the American Community School of Amman (ACS). At ACS our goal is to provide a safe, nurturing environment where children can reach their full potential. Parents are our partners in this endeavor and we hope that you find this handbook useful in understanding the educational program and routines of the elementary school. We ask that you review the handbook before school begins and share relevant information with your child.

At ACS we believe in setting high expectations for the members of our learning community. In addition to maximizing intellectual growth, we believe all members of the community should uphold the principles of respect and integrity. These concepts are modeled through our daily interactions and explicitly taught in the character education program. Additional details about the character education program can be found in this handbook.

Our academic program is based on U.S. curriculum and students receive a solid foundation in the basic skills of reading, writing, mathematics, social studies and science. In addition, specialty classes enrich our core curriculum. These classes are music, physical education, visual arts, technology and Arabic. After the school day ends, there are opportunities for activities. Information about activities will be sent out at a later date.

The best way for ACS and parents to work together is to maintain clear and consistent communication. One of the ways you'll be hearing from me is through weekly notes published in our school newsletter, *What's Going On*. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's academic or social progress, please contact the teacher right away to arrange a time to sit down and discuss your concerns. In addition, my door is always open.

We look forward to sharing this year with you and your child!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diana Quillin O'Leary". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Diana Quillin O'Leary
Elementary Principal, doleary@acsamman.edu.jo



ACS MISSION STATEMENT

The American Community School of Amman instills within every student a continuing commitment to integrity, respect, and intellectual growth.

ACS VISION STATEMENT

The American Community School of Amman brings out the best in everyone. Our students make a positive difference in the world.

ACS BELIEF STATEMENTS

- We believe in establishing high expectations for each member of the learning community.
- We believe all members of the school community have the responsibility to help students reach their full potential.
- We believe all members of the school community have the responsibility to model and uphold principles of integrity, respect and intellectual growth.

Integrity:

- We believe that integrity is based on responsibility and personal honesty.
- We believe integrity includes learning and choosing to do what is right even when it is not easy.
- We believe in building a community where all members can rely on one another.

Respect:

- We believe that we are global citizens who strive to understand and appreciate others and ourselves.
- We believe in showing respect for ourselves, others, those in authority, property and the environment.

Intellectual Growth:

- We believe in fostering a life long love of learning.
- We believe in establishing a physically, emotionally and socially safe environment for learning.
- We believe all students should be engaged in a challenging American curriculum as a path to reaching their full academic potential.



GENERAL INFORMATION

School Phone: (9626) 581-3944

School Fax: (9626) 582-3357

Address: AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL
P.O. BOX 310
Dahiat Al-Amir Rashed
Amman 11831 Jordan

School Website: www.acsamman.edu.jo

Elementary School Hours

The school day begins at 8:00 am. School buses begin arriving on campus at 7:45 am. Students play on the playground until the teacher on duty rings the bell. If you drive your child to school, please do not drop them off earlier than 7:40 am since there is no adult supervision until that time. This is for your child's safety. Students may play on the "big toy," or on the field after dismissal **but only with a parent or guardian there to supervise them.**

PK I	8:00 am - 1:00 pm
PK 2 & Kindergarten	8:00 am - 2:00 pm
Grades 1-5	8:00 am - 3:00 pm

Daily Breaks

Grades 1 - 5 Snack Time	9:40 am – 9:55 am
Grades 1 - 5 Lunch	12:10 pm - 12:50 pm

Office hours during school days 7:40 am - 4:00 pm

School Colors and Mascot

Gold and black are the school's colors. Our mascot is the scorpion.

Professional Development Days

Children do not attend school on these days. This time is set aside for staff to partake in professional growth activities and workshops.



IMPORTANT DATES & EVENTS

September 4, 2011	New Family Registration
September 5, 2011	New Student Orientation
September 6, 2011	First day of school (KG – Grade 5)
September 8, 2011	First day of school for PK1 and PK2
October 2, 2011	ES After School Activities Begin
October 9, 2011	Columbus Day Holiday
October 10, 2011	Professional Development Day (no school)
November 6 – 8, 2011	Eid Al Adha Holiday*
November 23, 2011	Professional Development Day (no school)
November 24, 2011	Thanksgiving Holiday
December 21, 2011 – January 2, 2012	Winter Break
January 29, 2012	Professional Development Day (no school)
March 4, 2012	Professional Development Day (no school)
March 30 – April 7, 2012	Spring Break
April 8, 2012	Palm Sunday Holiday
April 15, 2012	Easter Holiday
May 1, 2012	Jordanian Labor Day
May 27, 2012	Memorial Day Holiday
May 28, 2012	Professional Development Day (no school)
June 20, 2012	Last day of school

**All Islamic holidays are subject to change according to the Lunar Calendar. Please check the school website for updates.*

Special School Events

September 12	GR 3 – 5 Parent Coffee, 8:15 - 9:00 a.m.
September 13	ECE Parent Coffee, 8:15 – 9:00 a.m.
September 14	GR 1 – 2 Parent Coffee, 8:15-9:00 a.m.
September 17	PTG Welcome Back Picnic for All ACS Families and Staff
September 26 - 29	PTG Book Fair
September 29	Coffee & Chat, 8:15 - 9:00 a.m.
	PTG Meeting, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
October 5	ES Back-to-School Night
October 27	Coffee & Chat, 8:15 - 9:00 a.m.
	PTG Meeting, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
October 28	Spooktacular – Halloween Event for All ACS Families
October 31	ES Halloween Parade
November 17	Coffee & Chat, 8:15 - 9:00 a.m.



	PTG Meeting, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
December 14	Elementary Music Concert
December 15	Coffee & Chat, 8:15 - 9:00 a.m.
December 15	PTG Holiday Bazaar
January 5	PTG Welcome New Parents
January 19	PTG Bingo Night
January 26	Coffee & Chat, 8:15 - 9:00 a.m.
	PTG Meeting, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
February 19 – 23	Young Writers Week
February 23	Coffee & Chat, 8:15 - 9:00 a.m.
	PTG Meeting, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
February 23	PTG Family Dance
February 29	ES Family Night
March 15	International Day
March 29	Coffee & Chat, 8:15 - 9:00 a.m.
	PTG Meeting, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
April 19	Bingo Night
April 22	Earth Day
April 22 – 26	Library Week
April 24	ACO Board Elections
April 26	Coffee & Chat, 8:15 - 9:00 a.m.
	PTG Meeting, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
May 4	Spring Fling
May 23	Elementary Spring Music Concert
May 31	ES Fly Up Day
May 31	Coffee & Chat, 8:15 - 9:00 a.m.
	PTG Meeting, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
June 11	ES Field Day (Gr KG -2)
June 12	ES Field Day (Gr 3 -5)
June 18	Gr 5 Transition Ceremony

Report Cards

1 st Quarter	November 27, 2011
2 nd Quarter	February 7, 2011
3 rd Quarter	April 24, 2011
4 th Quarter	June 20, 2011



COMMUNICATION

Communication with and within the school is important for you and your child. We want to keep you informed of your child's progress and what is going on at the school. It is crucial that we have up-to-date information regarding your telephone numbers and email addresses. Please communicate these changes through the elementary office.

At ACS we believe in open communication. When you have any concerns about your child, the best person to contact is the classroom teacher. Due to their busy schedules and their priority with children, please schedule an appointment at a mutually convenient time. Teachers will welcome the chance to meet with you. Problems of a personal nature or questions about the overall school program may be discussed with the ES Principal. Either way, direct communication is appreciated and the easiest way to clear up problems.

How We Communicate

Weekly School Newsletter – A weekly electronic newsletter from the Superintendent's office will be e-mailed to each family. This is an important way to ensure communication between school and home. It is called the "What's Going On?" (WGO) and will include upcoming dates, student activities, and general school information. Classroom newsletters will go home at least every two weeks, either in paper or electronic form.

Telephone - Teachers are encouraged to get in touch with you regarding any important issue that involves your child. Again, it is very important that you keep us updated with current phone numbers and e-mail addresses.

E-Mail – Each staff member at ACS has an e-mail account. It is an easy and effective way for us to communicate. There is a directory in the Community Portal section of the school's website.

Student Agendas (Grades 3-5) or Take Home Folders - Students in grades 3-5 have a school agenda. This is a place for them to write down their homework assignments as well as a way for you to communicate with the teacher. Younger children have a "take home folder".

Quarterly Report Cards - Report cards go home at the end of each quarter. Each report will give provide details about your child's progress, both socially and academically. All financial obligations must be met for the report cards go home.



Parent/Teacher Conferences - At the end of the first and third quarters you will have a scheduled conference with your child's teacher. You are welcome to meet with any teacher at any time of the year.

Back to School Night – At the beginning of the school year we will invite you to a Back-to-School Night. This will be an opportunity for you to familiarize yourself with your child's school day and to hear from your child's teacher and specialists. Faculty will present a brief overview of the curriculum and acquaint you with information relevant to their classrooms. *Please note that Back to School Night is for parents only, not students.*

Monthly Coffee and Chats - Each month the administrative team invites parents to the school for a Coffee and Chat. Each coffee focuses on a theme or topic. These meetings will always be noted in the weekly WGO e-newsletter. A PTG meeting usually follows them.

ACS Website - The ACS website will provide you with curricular and program information, school events, school-supply lists, the school calendar, and more. <http://www.acsamman.edu.jo>

SMS Messaging System – The school places parents' mobile numbers into its SMS system. In the event of a school closure or emergency we will text you. Messages will be followed up by a phone call. This is just one more reason that the school needs accurate and updated student contact information.



ACADEMIC POLICIES

Attendance - ACS is committed to the view that consistent school attendance is vital to the long-term academic and personal success of each student. While students can make up some class work, tests and homework missed as a result of absence, nothing can make up for the time missed from a classroom environment that involves discussions, hands-on learning and other enriching activities.

We believe that regular school attendance helps students develop invaluable personal habits and supports them in gaining as much as possible from their academic program. Furthermore, we value the contributions each student makes every day and absence detracts from the quality of all of our classes. In order to express our commitment to reliable attendance, the following are ACS guidelines:

Children should not be taken out of school unless there is no alternative. If for any reason you must take your child out of school, please notify the teacher and the office a few days in advance so that bus drivers can be informed. Class work may be assigned before or after the absence, as children will be expected to make up any missed work. Teachers need advance notice if homework is to be prepared. Parents are required to send a note stating the reason for any student absence or to bring the child back personally following an absence.

There are times when students need to go off campus before the end of the day. Students may be picked up from their classroom. Parents will need to stop by the elementary office to get a pass in order to leave the building.

English as a Second Language - The elementary has an ESL (English as a Second Language) program designed for students who have little or no English background and for students whose English is not proficient enough to enable them to function within a regular classroom. Students with little or no English can be admitted with the Principal's approval.

Field Trips – Each grade level takes at least two field trips a year. Permission slips must be signed by the parents to allow the students to participate. The school provides the transportation and any entrance fees or other costs are the responsibility of the families.

Homework - Homework forms an important part of a student's education because it reinforces the work covered during class and provides a student with the opportunity to practice skills learned. It is recommended that parents remain aware of their children's homework and project commitments. Parents can help



their children establish good study habits by ensuring that time is set aside and by providing a quiet place to study. For ACS students, homework is an expectation, although the amount and nature will vary according to grade level. A rule of thumb is 10 minutes X the number of the grade; ie. 1st grade – 10 min., 2nd grade 20 min., etc. All students should read at least 15 minutes every night, with nonreaders sharing a book with their parents.

Learning Support - The Special Needs teacher helps students with mild learning needs succeed in the mainstream classroom. Learning support services are not intended to provide an alternate course of study; rather, they are intended to help a student be successful within the regular school curriculum. Classroom teachers and the learning support teacher work closely together in order to best meet students' needs. This support takes place during the Language Enrichment block of instruction. The services begin in first grade.

Library Media Resource Center - The ACS Media Center (library) provides an important resource center for all students in the school. The library houses a collection of reference, fiction, nonfiction, children's picture books, and magazines as well as non-print material located on CD ROMs, on-line databases, and DVDs. The Media Center is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily. Elementary children must be with an adult.

NetTrekker - ACS subscribes to the search engine, NetTrekker. It operates like Google, but its home page is separated into curricular and grade-level topics. What makes this service unique is that educators have evaluated and selected all of the articles and resources so staff and students can be assured of finding appropriate and quality materials. You can go on-line at home by opening the location:

<http://school.nettrekker.com/userinfo/keyword.epl>

You will register yourself as a parent (students, of course, register as students).
Keyword: veswiradr

Withdrawal - Students leaving school permanently during the school year must obtain clearance from their teachers, the librarian, accountant, nurse, Superintendent's office and registrar. Withdrawal forms are available in the Elementary School Office. Failure to complete clearance procedures will delay the sending of transcripts and records.



RULES AND EXPECTATIONS AT ACS

Code of Ethics - In the elementary grades, behavior issues are discussed through our code of ethics. It is:

**Hurt no one on the inside or outside
Respect your school and all its property
Special places require special behavior**

Bullying or excessive teasing is generally defined as the physical or psychological harassment on the part of one or more students toward another. Bullying can take different forms, including physical harm to another's body or property, emotional harm to another's self-worth, or social harm to another's group acceptance. All forms of bullying are strictly forbidden.

Students who observe or know of bullying, regardless of whether they encourage or condone the bullying, must be responsible for their actions. They are not allowed to act as bystanders and should never take part in the bullying in any way. Rather, they are expected to report the bullying to a responsible adult. Failure to do so makes the bystander responsible with the bully.

Bus Service Details - There is a bus fee for transportation to and from school. Bussing is not provided to all areas of Amman. Transportation is provided for those areas that are a reasonable distance from school and have enough passengers to be economically sound. Routes and availability of service may vary from year to year. Bussing for students who enroll after September will be provided if there is sufficient space on the busses. There is an activities bus for elementary students at 4:10 and they may **not** ride the high school late bus which departs later.

Just as in the classroom, there are rules for behavior on the buses. These rules are in place to assure the safety and comfort of all bus riders.

1. All school rules apply to bus riders.
2. Students are to follow the instructions and/or directions of the drivers.
3. Students are to treat drivers, bus monitors and fellow students in a courteous and respectful manner.
4. Students are to keep heads and limbs in the bus at all times.
5. Students are not allowed to sit or stand in the aisles, doorways or in the front passenger seat.
6. Students are to remain seated until the bus comes to a complete stop.
7. Students are to keep the busses free of litter and graffiti.



8. No objects of any kind should be thrown from the bus windows at any time.
9. Students may ride their assigned bus **only**, and to their own homes. When a student wishes to ride a different bus to a friend's house, **both students must have signed notes from their parents**. This is to insure that both parents know the whereabouts of their children, and is enforced for all ACS students.
10. Eating and drinking is prohibited on the bus at all times.



CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Arabic - The Arabic language program starts in kindergarten and continues through fifth grade. The Arabic classes are divided into two sections: Arabic as a Foreign Language (AFL) and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). AFL is for students for whom Arabic is not their first language and expect to live in Jordan for a short time. MSA is for the students for whom Arabic is their first language. AFL and MSA develop the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Technology – Students attend regularly scheduled technology classes once each week. They work in the computer lab to complete well-planned, integrated technology projects under the joint guidance of classroom teachers and the technology teacher. Teachers may take their classes to the lab for extended projects. These classes begin at the PK2 level.

Music - The music classes are designed to teach students to create, perform, and respond appropriately to music. As such, there will be opportunities for the students to listen to music from various world cultures as well as sing and play musical instruments. Music classes begin in PK1.

Physical Education – The Physical Education Program at ACS offers an exciting, safe and developmentally appropriate program. The program is designed to maximize each student’s potential by providing varied opportunities to acquire knowledge, skills and positive attitudes through enjoyable and structured activities. Students in the elementary school attend P.E. class twice weekly. PE classes begin in PK1 with just one class per week. Elementary students should dress in appropriate, comfortable clothes and tennis shoes on their P.E. days.

Visual Arts – Elementary students attend Visual Arts classes once a week year round. The program is presented through organized, sequential units of study in which art production is a primary focus. Art history, art criticism and aesthetics are additional components of the art program.

Reading - At ACS, Amman, one of our major objectives is that all students will show annual growth in reading. Offering a balanced literacy program, our teachers and teachers' assistants daily **read aloud to** students modeling for them the reading process, **read with** the students providing direct, explicit instruction in reading skills and strategies, and **guide students** through texts where they practice the skills and strategies they have learned.



Writing - At ACS we use Ruth Culham’s Writing Model to build a shared vocabulary for teaching and studying the writing process. We define and teach the traits of quality writing. The 6 + 1 traits are: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation.

Math – ACS uses the AERO Standards to guide our instruction and teach so that students develop a deep understanding of mathematical concepts.

Science/Social Studies - The topics for each discipline are not grade specific so it is possible your child may repeat a topic he/she has studied at another school. Contact your child’s teacher about grade specific benchmarks.



SCHOOL PROCEDURES & PRACTICES

Announcements - The bulletin board just outside the nurse's office is a community board for any announcements of interest. Any item to be posted must first have approval from the Administrative Assistant in the main office.

Bicycles and Motor Vehicles - The use of bicycles, skateboards, roller blades, shoes with wheels, and motor vehicles on the campus is not permitted.

Dress Code – There is not a formal dress code for elementary students. The rules of the season and good taste should prevail with regard to school dress. Clothing should reflect the core values of our school. (For example, T-shirts should have appropriate messages.) We ask that students do not wear Crocs as they are not safe for play on equipment or in running.

Drinking Water - A water purification system has been installed and will be monitored by school officials, but parents should use their own discretion as to the quality and the safety of the water. Students are encouraged to bring a water bottle to school in order to stay well hydrated during the school day.

Insurance - All enrolled pupils are covered against accidental injuries occurring on the school grounds under a policy, which covers medical costs to a maximum of JD 3,000. Any accident or injury should be reported immediately to the school nurse and the Superintendent.

Lost and Found - A box is kept in the hall near the elementary office. We encourage parents and children to check this box often for anything that has been misplaced. Students are strongly encouraged to have their clothing and items labeled so it can be returned quickly if misplaced.

Lunches - The weekly menu is published in the *What's Going On*, the school's newsletter. Students in grades PK1-KG must bring their snack and lunch daily. Students in grades 1 to 5 may purchase a lunch for 2.250 JD. Lunch coupons, not cash, are used and booklets are on sale in the ES Office. Coupon booklets are sold 10 coupons to a booklet at 22.50JD each. Students need to have a healthy lunch - which may include dessert. We ask that children do not bring candy to school. Soda pop and caffeine beverages are not permitted in the ES. This includes school parties and celebrations as well as lunch and snack.



Nuisance Items - Students should not bring “nuisance items” to school. These include such things as toys, knives, water pistols, sling shots, etc. Toys may be brought to school upon teacher request for class presentation. iPods and other electronics should stay at home. Mobile phones should be stored in the child’s backpacks and turned off during class time. Teachers are authorized to confiscate any such items and turn them in to the principal. Parents can collect the items from the elementary office.

Parent Teacher Group (PTG) – All parents are invited to attend and get involved with the ACS PTG. The main purpose of the PTG is to enrich the education of all students in the school. We encourage you to become an active member and to participate in our activities. Meetings are held monthly. There are many ways to get involved and participation in this group is an excellent way for parents new to the school to meet other members of the ACS community. Major events include October’s Spooktacular and a Christmas Bazaar in December.

School Closures – ACS will make every effort to contact families in case of school closures. Please make sure you communicate to the school any change of phone number or address.

School Nurse - The school nurse will administer basic first aid and attend to a child as specified on the **Emergency Information Card** on file in the nurse’s office. If a child becomes ill and/or has a temperature of 100° F (37.8° C) or over, he /she will be sent home. Parents should not send a child to school if they suspect he/she is ill or has a fever. If a child becomes ill with a communicable or infectious disease, the child should be kept at home and the school nurse should be notified as soon as possible.

School Pictures - A school photographer will be at ACS during the first semester to take student photos. More information will be forthcoming as exact dates are scheduled.

Telephones and Mobile Phones - Students are allowed to use the school office phones only in cases of emergency. Please take care of arranging play dates outside of the school day. If students have personal mobile phones, they must be switched off during school hours. Mobile phones are the responsibility of the owner. The school is not responsible for loss or theft of mobile phones.



Theft - Students are reminded not to leave anything of value in classrooms, halls, or study areas. Theft has not been an issue but the school cannot assume responsibility for personal items that are lost or stolen.

Tutoring - Professional tutoring is available in Amman. Some teachers at ACS offer this service. This is a private contract and is not part of the ACS school program.

Visitors on Campus - Students may have other students visit on campus for **one day only** with prior administrative approval. In order to have a visitor at ACS, the host student must obtain permission at least one (1) day prior to the visit. If the child's classroom size is a capacity, we will not be able to honor requests for guests. The host student assumes full responsibility for their visitor. The visitor must abide by all ACS rules and regulations and should be dressed appropriately for school. All visitors must sign in at the main gate, and obtain a visitor's badge that must be worn while visiting the school.



CHARACTER EDUCATION

Character Counts Program and Books - In order to build a shared vocabulary and to reinforce positive character traits, each school year the classroom teachers focus on 9 character traits. For each trait a picture book is read that best demonstrates that trait. Teachers read and discuss the book with their class the first week of the month. We encourage families to reinforce these traits at home. We have listed the months and the traits that will be emphasized:

September - Respect
October - Responsibility
November - Patience
December - Ingenuity
January - Forgiveness
February – Flexibility
March – Courage
April - Honesty
May & June – Gratitude

Acts of Kindness - Students who do “above and beyond” nice, kind, and/ or appropriate things will receive an Act of Kindness ticket from an adult who “catches them in the act”. The student then writes his/her name and class on the ticket and deposits it into the Act of Kindness Box in the office. Prior to the monthly assembly, names will be randomly pulled out the box. Those students are recognized with a certificate and pencil.



STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Assemblies – Once a month, the first through fifth graders and staff gather in the MPR (Multipurpose Room) for an assembly. During the course of the school year, students in each classroom are given opportunities for public performances or speaking.

After School Activities – Elementary students have the opportunity to enroll in a variety of after school activities. Parents will receive registration information in the fall and at the beginning of second semester. There are fees for each club, which pay for the coaches and instructors. Children must be picked up promptly at 4:00. An after school activities bus will be available for bus riders. It will leave school at 4:10 and is only available to those enrolled in elementary after school activities.