



Developing Active Global Citizens:

A Framework for Active Global Citizenship

Developed by AFS Intercultural Programs, 2024



Letter from the CEO & Chair

Strengthening AFS's Commitment to Develop Active Global Citizens

We are excited to present a new Framework for Active Global Citizenship, which marks AFS's strengthened commitment to fostering active global citizenship and driving positive change worldwide. This innovative framework is central to AFS's bold new Network Strategy, which focuses on developing active global citizens of all ages through our exchange programs, education initiatives, volunteerism and advocacy efforts.

The founders of AFS were volunteer ambulance drivers who served in the two World Wars. They understood the importance of bridging cultural divides to build a more just and peaceful world. Today, the need is greater than ever to help people develop the values and skills required to achieve a world that is not only more peaceful and just but also more equitable and sustainable.

Central to this strategy is the Framework for Active Global Citizenship developed by AFS. This unique and comprehensive definition and educational framework for active global citizenship were developed in collaboration with Harvard University's Dr. Veronica Boix-Mansilla, a renowned expert in global citizenship education, and a committee of educational experts.

This framework is more than a set of guidelines for AFS: It is also a tool that can be used by any organization dedicated to global citizenship education. It puts into action our mission to build a larger, more engaged community of interculturally competent active global citizens.

We invite you to explore this white paper, which outlines the principles, definitions and learning outcomes that underpin the Framework for Active Global Citizenship developed by AFS. Together, let's shape a future by developing more active global citizens who will make a positive impact on the world we share.

Amalie Ferdinand
Chair, Board of Trustees

Daniel Obst
President & CEO



Foreword by Veronica Boix-Mansilla

Introducing a New Educational Framework: Educating Active Global Citizens to Care for the World

We live in remarkable times. Over the last few decades, we have witnessed the expansion of our global imagination. Accelerated interactions, digital connectivity, travel, cooperation, and innovation worldwide have transformed our understanding of the world and those with whom we share our planet. Millions of people have moved in search of better and safer lives, creating new opportunities for mutual understanding across cultures.

However, the same forces that created these opportunities have also made the world more volatile, complex, and uncertain. Today, we face significant threats to environmental sustainability and rising inequality within and across nations. We also see growing xenophobia, exacerbated by the unprecedented spread of misinformation traveling on the very digital highways meant to connect us.

In this context, the world requires mindful, informed, compassionate, and ethical individuals who can understand themselves in changing environments and build relationships across cultures. We need to nurture the capacity to identify challenges facing humanity, the imagination to envision better futures, and the courage to make a difference within each person's sphere of influence.

Since its founding AFS has recognized that peace pivots on our ability to respect human dignity and understand each other across differences. This is why the AFS approach to nurturing global and intercultural citizenship is rooted in research, propelled by thoughtful innovation, and monitored through impact studies. The programs offered are designed to serve everyone—young people, families, and volunteers—in person and online. Whether AFS is supporting students and host families engaging in mobility programs or nurturing teachers and young adults through our virtual programs, AFS's dynamic international network of experts, professionals, youth and volunteers encourages people to bridge distances, deepen understanding, and work courageously for a world where people feel connected across cultures. Few missions are more consequential and urgent for our collective future.

This new framework serves as a resource to provide clarity and consistency on the importance and meaning of active global citizenship across AFS programs. Most importantly, through this framework, my colleagues, AFS and I seek to contribute to the field of education, and society, with a fresh platform for dialogue about the purpose of education for the 21st Century: an education that is not only about imparting knowledge, but about helping people develop a dependable sense of direction and equipping them with the capacities to care for and contribute to the world.

By Veronica Boix-Mansilla

AFS Education Committee Advisor

Principal Investigator at Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education



What It Means to Be an Active Global Citizen

Active global citizens are people whose informed, compassionate, and ethical compass drives them to lead lives and make decisions that contribute to a more just, equitable, peaceful and sustainable world.

Core Educational Principles for Active Global Citizenship

This Framework for Active Global Citizenship builds on the longstanding AFS educational approach. This approach informs core guiding principles in the development and implementation of global citizenship education programs and offers:

- **Whole-person approach:**

Active global citizenship intertwines socio-emotional, cognitive and ethical dimensions of a person's human development.

- **Applicable across learners of all ages:**

Active global citizens are more than just young people. They also include families, teachers, volunteers and young professionals.

- **A compass for decision-making:**

This metaphor suggests an internalized mindset that guides a person's decision-making in daily life pointing to a more just, equitable, peaceful and sustainable life on the planet for all.

- **An emphasis on “becoming” and life-long personal transformation:**
Developing such a compass is about becoming a kind of person able to make “good” decisions, keeping others and the planet in mind.

- **Rooted in experiential learning and leaving one's comfort zone:**
The mindsets and dispositions for active global citizenship are typically developed through experiences characteristic of in-depth and extensive engagement with differences or a given issue - in a new culture or context, for example. These experiences often involve leaving one's comfort zone in a structured and guided manner, encouraging experimentation and practice.

- **Aimed at action:**

A view of learners as able to contribute purposefully to the relevant issues of our time. In the current version of the framework, the UN SDGs offer a backdrop for capturing the most important local, global and intercultural issues currently deserving of active global citizens' attention.

A Framework for Active Global Citizenship

Becoming an active global citizen takes a lifetime of practice. Global citizenship education programs and offers are about helping individuals to gain or increase their ability in four areas of development crucial for active global citizenship:

VALUE & BELONG
to a common and
diverse world

TAKE ACTION
toward collective
wellbeing



INQUIRE CRITICALLY
about the world
beyond immediate
environments

UNDERSTAND & RELATE
to others across
differences



Four Dimensions of Active Global Citizenship

Value & belong to a common and diverse world:

Active global citizens know themselves and see themselves as belonging to a common and diverse world for which they care, responsibly committing to uphold values of human dignity and diversity. For example, they are able to:

1. Value and appreciate our common humanity.
2. Value and appreciate our planet.
3. Understand the self and their own identities.
4. Understand how they themselves are influenced by multiple relationships and cultures.
5. Value human dignity.
6. Value difference and diversity.
7. Understand the complex relationship between diversity and commonality.

Inquire critically about the world beyond immediate environments:

Active global citizens inquire critically about local, global and intercultural issues beyond their immediate environments, showing curiosity to manage information from reliable sources and being critical of how information is used. For example, they are able to:

8. Ask relevant questions to understand the world, including local and global issues.
9. Recognize the interconnectedness of local, national and global issues, structures and processes.
10. Find and analyze information from across broad sources.
11. Reason with evidence.
12. Commit to seeking well-founded insights.
13. Demonstrate critical media literacy, being alert to fake news and misuse of Odigital tools.
14. Recognize that knowledge is provisional and subject to bias.

Understand and relate to others across differences:

Active global citizens engage in understanding and relating to others across differences, being able to take perspective with empathy and compassion, and committing to dialogue and respect. For example, they are able to:

- 15.** Recognize how beliefs, values, life experiences, conditions of inequality and discrimination influence people's views.
- 16.** Seek to understand others' perspectives across differences and respond to others with care and solidarity.
- 17.** Build relationships based on respect and civil dialogue, irrespective of cultural differences.
- 18.** Recognize others' emotional states.
- 19.** Understand socially appropriate verbal and non-verbal communicative norms.
- 20.** Understand the effects that different communication styles can have on other people.
- 21.** Understand how every language expresses culturally shared meanings in unique ways.

Take action toward collective well-being:

Active global citizens are committed to taking action, considering local and global challenges, and oftentimes working with others, to put into practice informed, ethical, and reflective actions (from small personal ones to collective community-level ones) that contribute toward a more just, equitable, peaceful and sustainable world. For example, they are able to:

- 22.** Believe in their own ability to make a difference in the world to advance the UN Sustainable Development Goals agenda.
- 23.** Be sensitive to opportunities for engagement as citizens to contribute at local, national, and global levels.
- 24.** Seek to understand and find inspiration in actions taken by others in the past.
- 25.** Cooperate with others in actions to achieve collective goals.
- 26.** Show resilience and care for self and others to overcome obstacles in the face of challenges in the process of taking action.
- 27.** Seek different approaches to achieve particular goals – for example, using voice and influence to raise awareness, change practices, change cultural norms, and change policy.
- 28.** Commit to values of peace, justice, equity, and sustainability in any action taken.

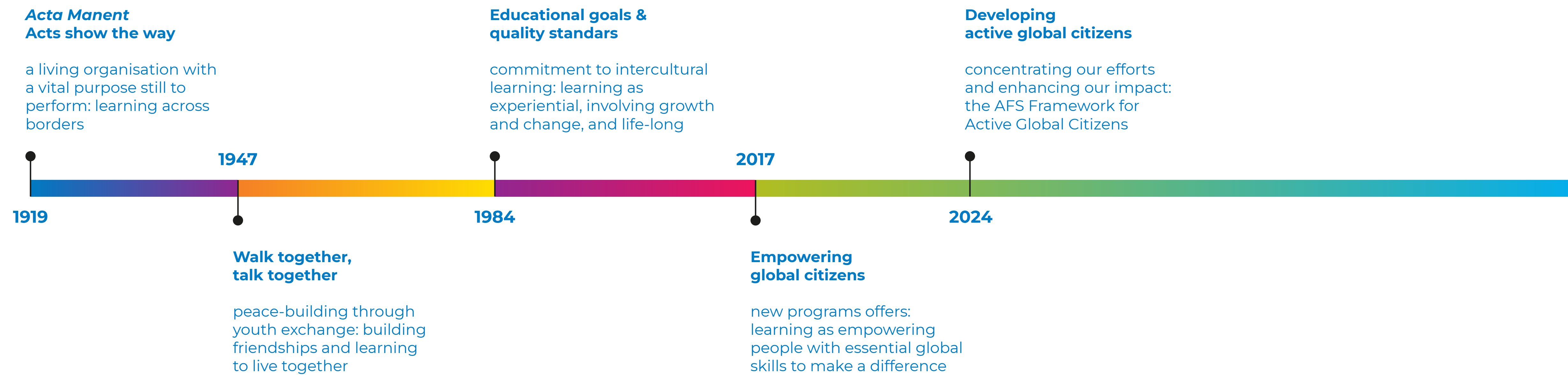


Active Global Citizenship in AFS

From Learning Across Borders to Active Global Citizenship

Beginning with a wartime humanitarian ambulance service that evolved into a youth exchange program, the intercultural learning opportunities provided by AFS have expanded to address and support people of all ages and embrace multiple means through new program formats and virtual education offers.

At their core, all AFS efforts today aim to nurture the values and capacities for intercultural dialogue and active global citizenship. The Framework for Active Global Citizenship developed by AFS reinforces our commitment to developing interculturally competent active global citizens. With it, AFS reaffirms our educational role in alignment with the core goals of education for the 21st Century. This Framework is also AFS’s contribution to the international education field and other educational organizations – both formal and non-formal – that seek to develop active global citizens.



About this Framework

The development of this framework was led by a group of education experts and practitioners from AFS and beyond who integrated the AFS Education Committee between 2022-2023:

Coordination and Oversight

Daniel Obst

President & CEO at AFS Intercultural Programs

Ana Carolina Cassiano

Global Head of Education Development
at AFS Intercultural Programs

Conceptual Leadership

Dr. Veronica Boix Mansilla

Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School
of Education, USA

AFS International Board of Trustees:

Eloise Dolan

Member, AFS International Board of Trustees

Gustavo Sénéchal

Member, AFS International Board of Trustees

Makiko Haraga

Member, AFS International Board of Trustees

Education Expert Advisors:

Dr. Roberto Ruffino

Fondazione Intercultura, Italy

Dr. Martyn Barrett

University of Surrey, UK

Dr. Ana María Velásquez

Universidad de los Andes, Colombia

Dr. Frédérique Brossard Børhaug

VID Specialized University, Norway

Mohamed Abdel-Kader

Radial Global Advisory, USA

Anggie Hall

Independent Cross-Cultural Trainer, UK
Education Expert Advisors:

AFS National Directors

Dr. Josephine Jim

National Director, AFS Hong Kong

Rodrigo Casarejos

National Director, AFS Chile

Rosario Gutierrez

National Director, AFS Colombia

Sherifa Fayed

National Director, AFS Egypt



AFS is an international, voluntary, non-governmental, nonprofit organization that provides intercultural learning opportunities to help people develop the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to create a more just and a peaceful world.

Support our mission at [afs.org/donate](https://www.afs.org/donate)

Connect with us:



5 Hanover Square, Suite 1402, 14th floor, New York, NY 10004, USA.

+1(212)209-0900 | info@afs.org.

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