

LEAVING es

Sofia Padilla, elementary school student



Being in Elementary was one of the experiences that I will never forget. I got to know people from different regions of the world, great friendships were made, and my teachers were from many countries all over the world. My favourite area is the green area. There I can play games with my friends. One of the field trips that I remember was going to Trompo Mágico in pre-first. There I learned about nature, science, culture and art.

When I was in first grade we went to the zoo. There I got to see unusual animals like lions, tigers, zebras and more. This was a wonderful day trip. Here I learned about a diversity of animals that I don't see everyday.

In second grade I liked doing "El Festival del Maíz", planting my corn seeds, going to the factory where I learned lots of things, and going to the ranch where I ate distinct types of food made out of corn. I loved when we explained to our parents what we had learned and we tasted lots of food made out of corn. I also liked the Dinosaur Project we did in second grade. It was fun doing the dinosaur, investigating about them, and painting my dinosaur on a t-shirt.

Mazamitla was one of the experiences that I liked, like doing s'mores, and being with my friends at night. Chatting was awesome! Also, going to the town was cool. Mazamitla is one of the trips that will always stay in my mind.

Now Folklorama is going to be one of the experiences that I'm looking forward to!



Lucha Gámez

Tina Carstensen, Early Childhood Principal
Traducción: Patricia Gutiérrez, early childhood teacher

Lucha se jubila este año después de trabajar 7 años enseñando alumnos y familias en preescolar y es ese tipo de persona especial cuya simple presencia es motivadora y relajante. No únicamente ama a los niños y cree en su inherente bondad y potencial, sino que aparte inspira a sus colegas a ver su trabajo como una oportunidad de cambiar el mundo.

Cuando Lucha me saluda cada mañana con un abrazo, sus ojos brillantes y sonrisa sincera, sé que está lista para dar el 100 por ciento de su atención a los niños, padres y maestros que encuentre. Reflexionar en su fortaleza y presencia, me motiva a dar lo mejor de mí misma.

Hace algunos años, Lucha y su familia enfrentaron una gran tragedia, cuando 6 miembros de su familia fueron secuestrados en Michoacán. Nuestro personal le ofreció el apoyo que pudo mientras ella mantenía a sus hermanas y sus familias unidas, cuidaba de sus papás e insistía ante las autoridades tratando de averiguar lo que le había sucedido a sus hermanos y sobrinos. En una de nuestras juntas, Lucha nos compartió cómo esto le estaba afectando a ella, a su familia y al país, pero también expresó lo agradecida que estaba de tener un trabajo en el cual podía hacer un cambio real por México. Esa tarde nos dijo que el amor que le damos a los niños hará una diferencia en el mundo.

Cuando le pregunté acerca de sus años en el ASFG, Lucha me dijo que estaba agradecida por haber tenido las sonrisas, el amor y la confianza de los niños cuando pasaba por momentos difíciles. "Al saber que estás rodeada de gente amorosa y empática y que más que una institución somos una comunidad, es más fácil poder sacar lo mejor de uno para enfrentar esos momentos de aprendizaje difíciles que la vida te presenta."

Somos muy afortunados de haber tenido la oportunidad de que Lucha compartiera su fortaleza y su fe con nosotros durante estos años. La vamos a extrañar inmensamente y le deseamos a ella y a sus hermanas lo mejor con su asociación civil "6 + 2" ayudando a personas con familiares secuestrados.

Lolita Noriega

Lolita has helped our school as an assistant librarian for the past 46 years. Congratulations on her retirement and a big THANK YOU from our community.



¡Gracias! ASFG

Norma Guinto, Directora Programa Mexicano



En noviembre de 1996 inicié mi historia en ASFG. Casi 21 años después termina este capítulo en el que caben un sin número de experiencias, miles de momentos llenos de alegría, cientos de exalumnos, aprendizajes continuos, buenísimos amigos y por supuesto dos hijos y un marido.

A ASFG le debo mucho, ya que al pasar por cinco puestos diferentes en tres áreas del colegio he acumulado aprendizajes que al irse acomodando en mí me han hecho el personaje que ahora soy, a veces arquetipo, otras estereotipo, quizá plano o tal vez redondo pero siempre uno dinámico. En la oficina de admisiones, la sección de preescolar y la dirección del Programa Mexicano fui creciendo como educadora y como ser humano. A cada una de las personas que me han acompañado en este camino no tengo más que agradecerles por todo lo que me han enseñado, por su apoyo, por creer en mí y por estar siempre que los he necesitado.

De todo lo vivido aquí, sin duda fue cuando tuve el accidente en carretera el momento que más me enseñó lo afortunada que soy por pertenecer al ASFG. Recibí tantas muestras de cariño que siempre he creído que gracias a ello, esa experiencia quedó solo en eso. Me dieron la fuerza para luchar por mi salud y recuperarme rápidamente - después de un mes de vacaciones en el hospital. Profesionalmente puedo decir que todo el crecimiento alcanzado, en gran parte, ha sido gracias a las oportunidades que aquí me brindaron. Ahora, siento que me estoy acercando al día de mi graduación en el que me verán volar con las alas que ustedes me dieron para seguir en la noble profesión de educar y salir al mundo a demostrar orgullosamente que soy MADE in ASFG.

ONCE A WARRIOR, ALWAYS A WARRIOR.

Fernanda Lopez and Andrea González graduating Warriors!

Graduating from high school feels like life giving you a bag full of emotions. One day you may be feeling extremely complacent about leaving for college and starting over in a new place with a new you, and another day you may be feeling a pinch of sadness when realizing that you're leaving all your friends behind. Graduating from high school is tough. But leaving ASFG High School is a whole different thing.

The thing that nobody tells you about leaving this school is that you will be fine. We, the class of 2017, can promise you that. All your concerns, all your angst, all your doubts will make you a person who is ready for the outside world. You won't grow up all at once. Don't think that Senior Year will be an intense adventure full of innumerable, extravagant changes. You're still going to feel like a little kid at times, and it's completely okay. We do too. Facing the fact that we are leaving the tiresome but secretly highly enjoyable assemblies, the "juegos amarillos," Juanita from the fruit cart, the uncomfortable chairs of the library, and the table under the toldo in the high school cafeteria makes us understand that everything we once took for granted is coming to an end. We have come to the realization that the specific feeling of arriving at a new ASFG classroom every new school year won't happen anymore, as we have now learned in almost every classroom of the school.

We warn you about senioritis. We warn you that you won't care much about what other generations think of you, because you'll be too busy making memories with your own.

We wish you luck on the adventure that you are about to have. It will be a ride you will never forget.



Spring cleaning is a humbling task.

Juliet Evans, Director of Libraries



I spent spring break sorting through half a lifetime of stuff - papers, photos, the general detritus of life. I was confronted with the choices, decisions and unfulfilled good intentions that have brought me to where I am today, and with all the things I've chosen to surround myself with. It was daunting, yet I found it therapeutic. A cleanse for the closets of the soul as much as for the house itself.

As I plan to move back home to the UK this summer, I am finally downsizing- something I've been trying to achieve for many years. Having arrived in Guadalajara with no more than what I could fit in a backpack, it's mind blowing just how much stuff I've accumulated over the years. Modern society persuades us that the acquisition of possessions is what brings fulfillment, that defines who we are. Recently, I'm finding the opposite to be true. Getting rid of things is proving far more rewarding than shopping. And deciding what to keep makes me examine what it is I really value.

Letting go of possessions is the easy part. Letting go of a place and its people is so much harder. The American school and Guadalajara and Mexico have been part of my identity for half my life. And that's the part I take it with me, for I am not the same person now as when I arrived 23 years ago. Mexico has taught me the following: Family matters. You don't need much stuff to live well while you have sunshine. You grow the most when you step out of your comfort zone. There is an abundance of cultural and natural riches here that deserves everyone's appreciation.

Mexico has given me so much - family, friendship, a home and spectacular memories. It will always be a part of me. And I will return.

FINISH UP STRONG!

Barbara Linen, high school teacher

Is year-end lethargy in full effect? It is likely that many of us are struggling to give 100% effort as summer vacation approaches.

When I was a student, my high school's motto was, "Be Worthy of Your Heritage," but at this time of year, the faculty mantra was always, "Finish up strong!" At the time, it sounded like dedicated faculty members offering words of encouragement. Now that I'm a teacher, I realize that these were well-disguised pleas for students to fight off apathy and fatigue.

Looking back, I think it worked rather well. The repetition of these two phrases gave impetus to whole generations of students by appealing to one's sense of pride. "'Be Worthy of Your Heritage' and 'Finish up strong!'" Although we tried to laugh off the Headmaster's words after school meetings, we were affected by them. The implication was that anything less than our best effort would dishonor our families, and that we should be ashamed if we weren't exerting ourselves until the very end.

There was also extrinsic encouragement: tutoring, conferences, bribes, and threats. In the end, however, everyone knew that working hard was a decision that one must actively take. In hindsight, my school quite effectively eked out our last drops of intrinsic willpower and reduced the need for the extrinsic stimuli. Did this make for a better learning environment? Or were we merely shamed into working hard?

This brings us back to the underlying question. How do people maintain their motivation? The short answer is that they choose to. For students who don't make that choice on their own, others try to guide them down that path, but perhaps with only limited success.

What will keep YOU going? Answer this question, and we'll finish up strong!



Monica Caballero, Presidenta de la Asociación de padres.

Me llena de emoción llegar a la conclusión de mi primer año en la presidencia de la Asociación de padres de familia. Cuando acepté esta labor me imaginé miles de retos pero jamás todas las experiencias tan privilegiadas y enriquecedoras que me tocarían vivir y que han hecho de este año uno muy especial en mi vida

Para empezar, he tenido suerte ya que en este año escolar tuvieron lugar las conferencias de la Tri-Association, aquí en Guadalajara (de las cuales el ASFG fue sede) y después, en abril, el proceso de reacreditación de AdvancED. Participar en el ciclo de conferencias codo con

codo con maestros, directivos, administradores y miembros del consejo en talleres y conferencias de actualización me dio otra perspectiva mucho más amplia y completa de lo que significa para el ASFG la palabra educar y ayudar a que ese proceso de amor y respeto, en cada uno de nuestros hijos, pueda alcanzar su total potencial. Por otro lado, también me siento muy honrada de haber colaborado y de ser testigo de un interesantísimo proceso de reflexión y autocritica que nos llevó a una nueva visión: "inspirar, educar y actuar para mejorar nuestro mundo" y que aunado a nuestra actual misión serán el faro que guíe todas las acciones de nuestra escuela por los próximos cinco años.

Agradezco la confianza que tanto los directivos como mi excelente equipo de trabajo han depositado en mí; creo que ha sido un primer año lleno de retos que nos han obligado a crecer como individuos y a comprendernos mejor. ¡Gracias equipo! Finalmente quiero decir que no podría sentirme más orgullosa de esta escuela, que me dio tanto cuando fui alumna y a la que ahora puedo devolver con gratitud un poco de lo que recibí de ella. ¡Gracias ASFG! Lista para el segundo año.

What Really Counts Cannot be Counted

Julie Villand, Instructional Program Director

In April, ASFG successfully completed its re-accreditation through the organization AdvancED. Our school and community members will benefit from the classification of "accredited" through 2022. The policies, processes, and practices at ASFG were scrutinized, scaled, and scored compared to a list of international expectations. The auditors reported that the school not only complied with the standards of the world's largest educational accrediting agency, but received grades that excelled. This achievement was due to our school's commitment to continuous improvement, as well as our highly prepared and skilled staff, who are dedicated to putting into practice the standards that create a great learning environment.

However, not everything that counts in a school environment can actually be quantified in an accreditation review. At times, what really counts cannot be counted. Neither ASFG nor our auditors can quantify the joy of play among our students, the beauty of reciting a poem, the important messages portrayed through drama, or the value of a leisurely discussion of an open-ended question to reach a depth of understanding from multiple perspectives.

ASFG's new vision statement, "Inspire, educate and act to better our world," states there are three important steps to transforming our world. By generating nothing but flawless processes and high-achieving practices that proclaim success, we will only accomplish partial progress towards that vision. To be more complete, we need to account for the human qualities that make spending time on our school campus worthwhile. We need to value,

foster, and celebrate the non-quantifiable characteristics of our community members such as wit, courage, creativity, and compassion.

We enjoy documenting whimsical insights into life from our youngest students, allowing students to plan and implement community events, celebrating different forms of expression, and giving value to the numerous perspectives on campus. These are examples of the human values that accreditation companies can neither quantify nor measure, but that help our community members progress towards our vision of shaping our society through continuous inspiration, education, and action.

Goodbye Middle School

Itziar Urrea, middle school student

I am about to close the chapter of Middle School forever. This will mark a profound change in my life and my classmates' lives. We will go from being the "big fish in a small pond" to being the "smallest fish in a big pond." The freedom of choosing classes sounds liberating yet intimidating. It sounds like the workload is heavy, and now our grades will determine our future more directly than ever before. Growing up is both adventurous and terrifying. As I close this chapter and begin a new one, I am thinking about what lessons I can take from one chapter into the next.

I have been "the new kid" a couple of times in my middle school journey, and it has taught me some valuable lessons. The first lesson is that a little confidence goes a long way. I didn't feel confident right away when I arrived here as the new girl, but I pushed myself to meet new people. Then before I knew it, my real confidence grew because I was making friends and doing well academically. Now that we'll be "the new kids" in high school, we have to take advantage of this opportunity to try on some confidence. It might take us a while to adjust to the new environment, but we can fake it until we make it!

Now here is a lesson that I am still learning. As young children, we are used to agreeing with our parents and doing everything that they desire. But as you grow up you start to develop your own voice. This is a time in our lives when we disagree with our parents more than ever. As I grow and change, I realize that I must respect my parents but I won't always agree with them. For example, my parents and I don't always agree on my ambitions for the future. I can easily get stressed out about this, but I also know that the best thing I can do right now is just worry about what is right in front of me. In the end, I know that my parents and I can have mutual respect throughout every chapter of my life. In a way, my parents are teaching me how to handle disagreements in life. It takes some bravery and honesty to develop your own true voice, and I hope to continue doing this in my next chapter of life.



Closing Chapters

José Chacón, President of the Alumni Association

We have all heard that a journey of a thousand miles begins with only one step. Looking back, we can say that the distance our association has covered is large, and started with our issuing invitations to friends and fellow ASFG classmates to share professional experiences over breakfast. This simple step has allowed us to grow and fortify our association.

This year, we held four #AlumniTalks featuring trending topics which allowed us to network and share interesting points of view. In the fall, Dr. Inés Jiménez Palomar (2004) presented her company's 3D lab, inMateriis, whose goal is to make medical prosthesis more accessible for individuals in need. Mauricio Robles (1988), Regional Director of Monex Casa de Bolsa, addressed the economic and financial challenges Mexico faces this year in light of the results of the recent election in the United States. Noe Santillán, Director of Epoca Films, explained how he was able to produce and launch "Pura Sangre", his first film in Mexico, describing his ordeals as a film writer, producer, and director. Finally, at the end of May, Jorge Agraz (2001), diplomat in charge of scientific and academic cooperation at the Mexican Embassy in Berlin, pinpointed the realities faced by international migrants, including ideas on how to help with this humanitarian crisis.

In addition, the Alumni Association awarded two partial stipends for MUN students and organized the time capsule opening for our 2007 class. Contributing to the community, communicating effectively, and being critical, purposeful, and creative were skills present in all our speakers, skills we learned during our ASFG years, and that have remained present in our professional lives.

All this makes us reflect on how great goals are not accomplished by impulse but by a series of small actions brought together. With gratitude to all involved, I can say that 2016/17 was a successful year for our association. For next year, we have great plans to continue to grow and to continue serving as a professional resource to our members.

FOREVER CHANGED.



Ed and Sara Gehrke, elementary school teacher and early childhood teacher

John Burroughs once said, "Leap and the net will appear." Nineteen months ago this is exactly what we did. We leapt away from our house in the suburbs, the school community we had been a part of for 15 years, our language, our things, our friends, and our families. We packed our life into eight suitcases, grabbed hands, and leapt. The net did appear, and it was you. It was the ASFG community.

During our time at ASFG, we have been supported by so many people. The first people who met us at the airport made us feel immediately welcomed. Our grade level team members, our administrative teams, and our section peers helped guide us through our teaching days at ASFG. Our children's English, Spanish, and activity teachers have gone out of their way to make Edward and Keegan feel comfortable and supported. ASFG teaching families reached out to us and our children in our first months here and have continued to be an important part of our life in Guadalajara. Even the families of our students took extra care to welcome us and help us in any way they could.

We have not only fallen in love with ASFG, but we have fallen in love with Guadalajara. We have loved discovering the many historical and cultural sites in and around the city. Enjoying great food at the many open air restaurants, the nearly perfect climate, and the kindness of the city residents have been highlights of our time here. It has been a pleasure to travel to many other places in Mexico, such as Lake Chapala, Bucerías, Huatulco, Mexico City, and Palenque, just to name a few.

Leaving is bittersweet. We have loved our experience here. We have met some of the kindest, most passionate educators of our careers. We have learned so much from being a part of a culture that appreciates time with family and friends, holds great celebrations and allows students to act like children. As we prepare to make the leap back to life in California, we will take everything we have learned from ASFG and Mexico with us. We are forever changed.

Thank You ASFG!

Gabriel Lemmon, High School Principal

This is my final contribution to the Connexion Magazine as ASFG's high school principal. The Lemmon family is closing a six-year tenure in Mexico and returning to the U.S. at the end of this school year. I am filled with feelings of nostalgia, gratefulness, and pride. This has been an amazing experience that will stay with me forever.

I have more memories than I can count, but so many at the top of my list involve the community at ASFG, particularly our wonderful, thoughtful, caring, and exuberant students.

We have developed a positive and trusting relationship built on respect, support, and appreciation. I have watched you grow and develop each step of the way. I have seen you perform in our musicals, compete in sports, make the honor roll, conduct an experiment for the Science Fair, win awards, and complete an amazing Senior Project. It has been a gift to participate in the achievements of your life.

And beyond the successes, I am equally grateful for the opportunity to be there for you during the most difficult times. I got to hold you when you cried about a breakup, guided you through a class that you struggled to pass, supported you in defeat, and in the most tragic cases, I grieved with you at the funeral for a member of your family. We have shared all of these highs and lows together. You have grown--and so have I.

I have given this school my all, but I received so much more in return. I know that I am more empathetic, more compassionate, and more patient from my four years with you.

Thank you ASFG.

