



CIEN AGUAS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

2501 Buena Vista Drive SE
Albuquerque, NM 87106

Velia Cortalano, Executive Director

January 30th, 2025

Dear Cien Aguas families:

As the School Leader and a member of a diverse and vibrant school community, I want to take a moment to reaffirm our shared commitment to inclusion, safety, and respect for all. Our school has always been a place where every individual is valued and treated with dignity, and this will continue to be one of our guiding principles. The three pillars of Dual Language Education—**grade-level academic achievement, bilingualism and biliteracy, and sociocultural competence**—are at the heart of our mission to provide a truly inclusive education that prepares students not just for academic success but for meaningful participation in a diverse, global society.

Sociocultural competence, the third pillar, is not just an educational goal; it is a moral one. Our students need more than just academic skills or language proficiency; they need to be able to engage thoughtfully and respectfully with people of all backgrounds, experiences, and identities. We believe in cultivating **critical consciousness**, where students are not only aware of the world around them but are also empowered to challenge inequality and injustice wherever they see it. By valuing and understanding diverse cultures, perspectives, and histories, we are preparing our students to be both thoughtful global citizens and passionate advocates for a more just and inclusive society.

The School and I stand firmly in support of our immigrant families and the LGBTQ+ community. As an immigrant myself, I understand the unique challenges faced by individuals who come from different backgrounds, seeking safety, opportunity, and the chance to build a better future. I also understand the importance of creating a school environment where all students—regardless of their identity, culture, or background—feel welcome, seen, and celebrated. Our diversity is our strength, and it is a privilege to be a part of a community that brings together so many different perspectives, experiences, and voices. This diversity is not only something we honor but something we actively integrate into our educational practices, ensuring that our students learn from, with, and about each other.

To our immigrant families: I want to assure you that your children will always be embraced here. We recognize the courage it takes to leave behind what is familiar in search of a better life, and we are committed to supporting you and your children in every way possible. Your experiences and cultural knowledge enrich our school, and we will continue to create opportunities for students to connect with and learn from the diverse stories and backgrounds of their peers. I also want to assure you that the School has no record of, and keeps no record of, your immigration status. New Mexico and

federal laws both guarantee that all school-age persons residing in New Mexico have access to free public education.

To our LGBTQ+ students, families, and staff: I see you. Your identities are valid, your voices are heard, and your safety is paramount. We will continue to ensure that this school is a space where everyone—regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression—can learn, grow, and thrive without fear of discrimination or harm. We believe that fostering respect and kindness is not just about creating a safe space but also a space where all students can critically examine and challenge societal norms, helping to build a community rooted in empathy, justice, and acceptance.

As a school leader, immigrant, and human being, I recognize the importance of doing everything in my power to ensure that our school community feels safe, respected, and supported. I will continue to advocate for policies and practices that create an inclusive and equitable learning environment for all, where each student's cultural and personal identity is valued, and their critical thinking skills are nurtured. We are here to educate, to uplift, and to inspire each and every student to reach their fullest potential, not only academically but as people who can engage in the world with purpose and empathy.

We are stronger together, and I promise to remain steadfast in my efforts to create a school that reflects our shared values of compassion, fairness, and equality. This school will continue to be a place where each student, family, and staff member can thrive, not just academically but as a whole, critically engaged individuals who are prepared to contribute to a diverse and dynamic world.

Please know that my door is always open, and I encourage you to reach out if you have any concerns or need support. Together, we will continue to build a safe, welcoming, and empowering space where all can learn, grow, and challenge the world around them.

In solidarity and support,

