

**ASPEN COMMUNITY SCHOOL FOUR-TIME WINNER OF STATE'S HIGHEST ACADEMIC HONOR
Colorado Recognizes ACS with 2012 John C. Irwin Award for Academic Excellence**

December 18, 2012 (Woody Creek, Colorado) – The Aspen Community School again earned Colorado's highest academic honors. The school was recognized with both the John C. Irwin Award for Academic Excellence and as one of Colorado's Top Performing Schools for 2012. Aspen Community School (ACS) is a K-8 public charter school of the Aspen School District.

"We're very proud of our students demonstrating their skills as lifelong learners," said Aspen Community School principal Jim Gilchrist. "Success is all about effective instruction, hard working students and supportive parents."

The John C. Irwin Award for Academic Excellence is awarded annually by the State of Colorado's Department of Education. The awards are given to the top 8% of public schools in Colorado that demonstrate excellent academic achievement. On the state's School Performance Framework, these schools "exceed" expectations on academic achievement and "meet or exceed" expectations on academic growth gaps. Aspen Community School also won this award in 2005, 2007, and 2008.

This year, Aspen Community School was the only middle school in its region to receive 100% of the available points in academic achievement, growth, growth gaps and postsecondary readiness. The next closest school received 87.8%. ACS's middle school students also exceeded state averages this year: by 24 percentage points in reading, 28 in math and 35 in writing.

These accomplishments have earned ACS recognition as one of Colorado's Top Performing Schools, a distinction the school has received five times (2001, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012). The finding, based on three years of sustained academic growth, maintains the public charter school's standing in the top 5% of middle schools in the state.

Founded in 1970, Aspen Community School is an award-winning, K-8 public charter school located in Woody Creek, Colorado. For more than 40 years, the Community School has demonstrated its belief in:

- Academic excellence
- Powerful learning relationships
- Small class sizes + individualized instruction
- Relevant curriculum
- Strong visual + performing arts
- Outdoor + experiential education
- Lifelong learning, community, responsibility + social justice

More information is available at 970.923.4080 and www.IBelieveACS.org.