

## ACADEMIC, CAREER, AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS (ACES) PROGRAMS

ACES Program is a program designed to provide an appropriately rigorous academic education for eligible students with intellectual or multiple disabilities who participate in New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA). ACES programs are offered in grades kindergarten to 12 in District 1-32 schools.

The ACES program promotes and develops inclusive practices, offering meaningful opportunities for inclusion to all students and ensuring access to general education peers and curriculum throughout the school day. School leaders recognize that students learn best when they are fully participatory and welcome members of the school community. ACES program schools customize sets of supports by using research and evidence based, approved curriculums, specially designed instruction, appropriate assessments, and an array of resources to utilize all access points, maximizing student achievement. Eligible students often have the following characteristics:

### ACES STUDENT PROFILE

- **Classification:** Students must be eligible for educational disability classifications of Intellectual Disability (ID) or Multiple Disabilities (MD) and be eligible to participate in alternate assessments, including New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA).
- **Cognition/Intelligence:** Students present with mild to moderate intellectual disability.
- **Achievement:** Academic abilities and skills are significantly below grade level. Students may need additional support when working independently or in groups. Assistive technology devices may be used to support learning and interaction.
- **Behavior:** Students may have mild to moderate behavior challenges, but no aggressive or self-injurious behaviors. Behavior challenges may interfere with learning and social opportunities.
- **Adaptive Skills:** The student's ability to carry out functional life skills such as grooming, dressing, eating, keeping safe, and socializing, known as adaptive behaviors, are well below age expected levels. To assess independence and daily living skills, a student's IEP Team uses an adaptive behavior test. Students with low adaptive behavior scores are often considered for the ACES program.
- **Essential Living Skills:** ACES Programs use the school and local communities to support students in learning daily living skills such as building relationships with peers and adults, grocery shopping, learning how to use a bank, etc.
- **Work Readiness Skills:** Students will develop skills that will prepare them for current and future employment opportunities in an evolving job market. This includes building a strong work ethic, a positive attitude including time-management, effective communication and self-advocacy through simulated and real work-based learning.

## ACES PROGRAM FEATURES

- **Class Structure:** Students in the ACES program attend a District 1-32 school in a smaller class. The number of students in ACES special classes increase as students move from elementary school and middle school to high school. In Kindergarten through eighth grade, most ACES Programs have up to 12 students in a special class, one special education teacher, and a classroom paraprofessional (12:1+1). In high school (grades 9-12), ACES Programs have up to 15 students and one special education teacher (15:1). The program emphasizes inclusive opportunities for students to join the school community and engage with peers who do not have IEPs.
- **Staff:** Teachers and support staff are trained in specialized instructional strategies and assessments that support students in learning and applying work and independent/essential living skills at home, in school, and in the community.
- **Curriculum and Instruction:** ACES Program classes follow the New York State Learning Standards, with adaptations to instructional methodology and delivery of instruction as appropriate. Principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and essential skill building are a part of the program.

## ACES APPLICATION PROCESS

Here are the steps for determining if your child is eligible:

1. **Application:** If you think the ACES Program may be right for your child, work with your child's IEP Team to complete and submit an application at any time during the school year. All assessments must be completed within three years of the application in order for admissions to move forward. Newer assessments may be requested by the Central ACES Team.
  - Families and schools may contact the Central ACES Team at any time during the year to submit an application or ask a question by emailing [ACESPrograms@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:ACESPrograms@schools.nyc.gov).
  - For children entering kindergarten in September, families or schools should contact the Central ACES Team as soon as possible.
2. **Acknowledgment by Central ACES Team:** If you email the Central ACES Team, you will receive an email to let you know your application has been received. If you fax or mail an application to the Central ACES Team, you will receive a letter to confirm receipt.
  - If you submit an application for your child, without informing your child's IEP Team, the Central ACES Team will notify your child's IEP Team that you are interested in ACES.
  - If your child's IEP Team submits an application for your child, you will also receive notification to let you know that the Central ACES Team has received the application. Please ensure that the IEP Team has your email address.

- 3. Initial Review Eligibility for ACES:** The Central ACES Team reviews each student's special education record to determine assessments are up-to-date and provide enough information about your child's cognitive and academic ability, social, language, behavior, and adaptive skills. In addition, the record is reviewed to make sure students meet the criteria for ID or MD educational disability classifications.

  - **Up-to-Date Assessments** - If updated or additional tests are needed, your child's IEP Team will be asked to conduct them. You will receive a letter from the DOE asking for your consent to conduct additional tests.
  - **Additional Information** - Families may also submit additional evaluations for review by the Central ACES Team. Any evaluation shared with the Central ACES Team will be included in your child's special education record.
- 4. Eligibility Determination:** Based on the information from the evaluations, observations, and any additional information from the teachers, service providers, and the student's IEP Team, which includes the student's parent(s), the Central ACES Team will determine if your child is eligible for the ACES Program.
- 5. School Placement:** If your child is eligible for an ACES Program, you will receive a Prior Written Notice (PWN) and School Location Letter (SLL) providing an identified school with an available seat in the ACES Program. The ACES Program may be in a school other than your local district school. If the school is not near your home, your child can receive transportation to the school.
- 6. Visiting and Admission:** The School Location Letter (SLL) will contain the name of the contact person and the school's address. Please call the school to make an appointment for a visit. After visiting the school, contact the IEP Team to inform them whether you are accepting or declining the offer.
- 7. Registering at New School:** After accepting the ACES placement offer, please take the School Location Letter along with a copy of your child's birth certificate, and two proofs of your address to register your child at the new school. The registration process for high school students is coordinated between the Central ACES Team and the Family Welcome Center.