

Academic, Career, and Essential Skills (ACES) Programs in NYCDOE community schools may be appropriate for some students with Intellectual Disability (ID) or Multiple Disabilities (MD). As a specialized program, ACES Programs are only available in some community schools, and it is critical to understand that a classification of ID or MD does not, in and of itself, indicate the need for a specialized program. This guide provides information to families who may be interested in ACES Programs.

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

ACES Programs are Special Class special education programs intended to support students with Intellectual Disability (ID) or Multiple Disabilities (MD) who participate in [New York State Alternate Assessment](#)<sup>1</sup> (NYSAA). ACES Programs provide an opportunity to learn academic, work, and independent living skills in a community school. Eligible students typically demonstrate the following characteristics:

### **ACES STUDENT PROFILE**

- **Classification:** students must be eligible for special education classifications of Intellectual Disability (ID) or Multiple Disabilities (MD) and be eligible to participate in alternate assessment, including New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA).
- **Cognition / Intelligence:** students present with mild to moderate intellectual disability (significantly below average intelligence on IQ tests). Typically, less than 2% of students fall within this range.
- **Achievement:** academic abilities and skills are below grade level expectations. 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 demonstrate mild to moderate behavior challenges, but no aggressive or self-injurious behaviors. Behavior challenges may interfere with learning and socialization opportunities. Before considering an ACES Program, it is important to understand a student's ability to carry out functional life skills such as grooming, dressing, eating, keeping safe, and socializing (known as adaptive behaviors). To assess adaptive behavior, students' IEP Team/CSEs usually administers the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales.
- **Independent living skills:** ACES Programs use the school and local community to support students in learning skills such as building relationships with peers and adults and skills needed for daily living (e.g., grocery shopping, learning how to use a bank, etc.).

### **ACES PROGRAM FEATURES**

- **Class structure:** students are served in a Special Class (SC) in a community school. Class sizes vary by grade and may include paraprofessionals, if recommended on the IEP. The number of students in ACES special classes typically increases as students move from elementary school, to middle school, to high school. In Kindergarten through eighth grade, most ACES Programs have up to 12 students and one special education teacher (12:1). Sometimes, a programmatic paraprofessional provides additional support in a 12:1:1 Special Class. In high school (grades 9-12), ACES Programs typically have up to 15 students and one special education teacher (15:1).
- **Staff:** teachers and support staff are trained in specialized instructional strategies, and assessments that support students in learning and applying work and independent living skills at home, in school, and in the community.

<sup>1</sup> See the NYCDOE's FAQ on New York State Alternate Assessment: [http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/CDF2FCD1-773B-4438-A3C3-0BB4FBAB51DA/175935/NYSAA\\_FAQ\\_Families\\_Jan2015\\_FINAL1.pdf](http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/CDF2FCD1-773B-4438-A3C3-0BB4FBAB51DA/175935/NYSAA_FAQ_Families_Jan2015_FINAL1.pdf)

- **Curriculum and instruction:** ACES Program classes follow the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). In ACES Programs, principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and essential skill building are also included.

## **ACES INQUIRY PROCESS**

Schools and families should understand the ACES student profile and ensure all special education testing is up-to-date and complete so the process goes smoothly. Here are the steps for determining if your child is eligible:

1. **Inquiry:** If you think the ACES Program may be appropriate for your child, send an e-mail to the Central ACES Programs Team at [SpecializedPrograms@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:SpecializedPrograms@schools.nyc.gov) with your child's name, date of birth, NYC ID number, current grade, and current school. Make sure to state that you are interested in the ACES program. Families can also ask their child's school or district CSE to help submit an inquiry.
  - Families and CSEs can contact the Central ACES Programs team at any time during the year to submit an inquiry or ask a question by emailing [SpecializedPrograms@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:SpecializedPrograms@schools.nyc.gov).
  - For children entering kindergarten in September 2015 ("Turning 5") it is recommended that families or CSEs contact the Central ACES Programs Team as soon as possible.
2. **Acknowledgment by Central ACES Programs Team:** If you e-mail the Central ACES Programs Team, you will receive an e-mail to let you know your inquiry has been received. If you fax or mail a letter to the Central ACES Programs Team, you will receive a letter to confirm receipt.
  - If you submit an inquiry for your child, the Central ACES Programs Team will notify your child's school or district CSE to let them know that you are interested in ACES.
  - If your child's school or district CSE submits an inquiry for your child, you will also receive notification to let you know that the Central ACES Programs Team has received the inquiry.
3. **Initial Review:** the Central ACES Programs Team reviews each student's special education file to determine whether assessments are up-to-date and provide enough information about the child's intellectual ability and social, language, behavior, academic, and adaptive skills. In addition, the file is reviewed to make sure students meet the criteria for ID or MD special education classifications. The timeline for this review may vary, depending on the volume of inquiries.
  - **Up-to-date assessments:** if more recent or additional assessments are needed, your child's CSE will be asked to conduct any needed assessments. You will receive a letter from the DOE asking for your consent to conduct additional assessments.
  - **Additional information:** families may also submit additional evaluation materials for review by the Central ACES Programs Team.
4. **Eligibility determination:** based on the information gathered from the evaluation, observations, and any additional testing, the Central ACES Programs Team and the student's CSE team, which includes the student's family, will determine if your child is eligible. Eligible students' IEPs are written with guidance from the Central ACES Programs Team.
5. **School Placement:** If your child is eligible for an ACES Program, you will receive a School Location Letter with a school that has a seat available for your child in the ACES Program. The ACES Program may be in a different school than your local neighborhood school or other NYCDOE community school to which your child has applied. If the school is not near your home, your child will receive busing to get to the school.