Acera Program Overview
2023 - 2024

Mission and Major Program Components

The Acera school day program provides gifted students with unbounded access to learning, offering them opportunity according to their ability not age. We envision a world in which schools engage students in meaningful learning, in which teachers are freed as entrepreneurs in their classrooms, and in which students can become the best version of themselves, given each students' unique capacities, needs, and passions.

The Acera community, across all its programs and partnerships, learns, discovers, and explores at a pace appropriate to each child's unique motivation and potential. Our culture is not about pressure; it is about freedom. We keep students' innate curiosity and love of learning alive. We also partner with organizations beyond our walls, creating programs rich in sciences, technology, engineering, creativity and arts. We operate both as a lab school and a microcosm of what is possible for other schools. We seek to grow students' emotional intelligence and enable them to become the best version of themselves.
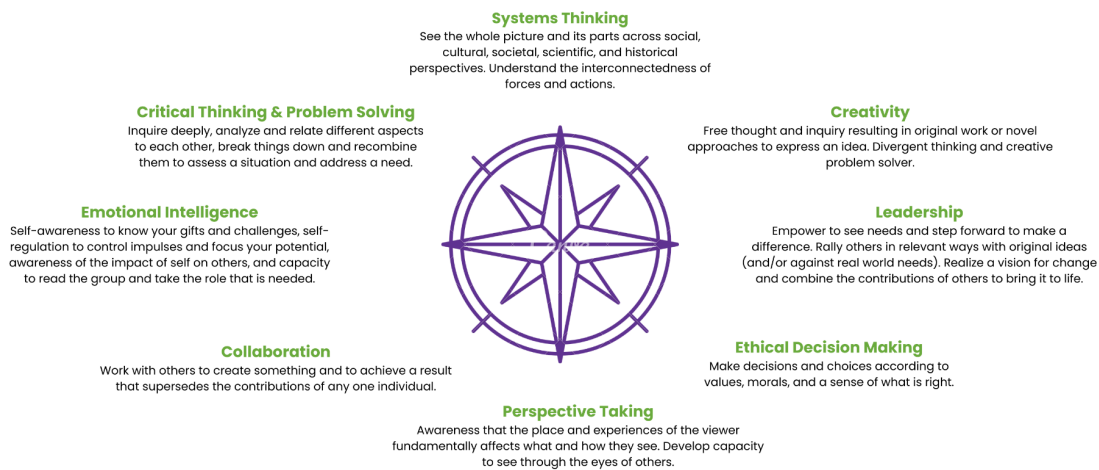
Our mission, across our core school day program, enrichment programs and partnerships, is to develop the next generation of innovators, leaders and creative thinkers who can make a positive impact in the world.

Core Capacities and Values We Foster at Acera
We facilitate students to develop their skills (e.g. writing, reading, math computation and problem solving, science), their knowledge (via a learn/teach-for-understanding philosophy, not just coverage of content), and, most importantly, the core capacities that demonstrate achievement and leadership in the world. We believe that these capacities will define them as adults and as contributors to society and are critical for success.
We also challenge our whole community to live and make decisions based upon our Core Values, and lean into them to guide our interactions.

Acera Core Capacities

Systems Thinking
See the whole picture and its parts across social, cultural, societal, scientific, and historical perspectives. Understand the interconnectedness of forces and actions.

Critical Thinking & Problem Solving
Inquire deeply, analyze and relate different aspects to each other, break things down and recombine them to assess a situation and address a need.

Creativity
Free thought and inquiry resulting in original work or novel approaches to express an idea. Divergent thinking and creative problem solver.

Emotional Intelligence
Self-awareness to know your gifts and challenges, self-regulation to control impulses and focus your potential, awareness of the impact of self on others, and capacity to read the group and take the role that is needed.

Leadership
Empower to see needs and step forward to make a difference. Rally others in relevant ways with original ideas (and/or against real world needs). Realize a vision for change and combine the contributions of others to bring it to life.

Collaboration
Work with others to create something and to achieve a result that supersedes the contributions of any one individual.

Ethical Decision Making
Make decisions and choices according to values, morals, and a sense of what is right.

Perspective Taking
Awareness that the place and experiences of the viewer fundamentally affects what and how they see. Develop capacity to see through the eyes of others.

Acera Core Values

Community
Respect others. Support others to become the best version of themselves. Use talents to make a positive difference. Love children. See and leverage strength in diverse skills and varied ways of seeing the world. Understand where others are coming from and respect alternative points of view.

Curiosity & Innovation
Discover, innovate & learn with a voracious mind. Maintain a sense of wonder in our world. Enable freedom and joy in learning, with choices, control & sense of purpose in learning. Encourage others to think, engage, and come up with their own ideas. See challenges as opportunities. Uncover possibilities and pilot new approaches with courage. Encourage risk taking. See struggle and failure as part of learning. Iterate.

Openness
Have a humble heart and an open mind. Communicate with truth and compassion. Accept yourself and others. Communicate to share information, not just on a need to know basis. Have awareness about and tolerance of different styles.

Integrity
Be accountable: do what you say you will do, and do the right thing. Make decisions based upon your values. Honor yourself and your own personal potential by challenging yourself to do your best. Use your judgment and do what is right. Develop self-awareness and knowledge of boundaries.

Leadership
Model our beliefs within our actions. Allow others to take ownership; empower others to become their best selves. Inspire a shared vision about what is possible. Listen to others. Find your inner tenacity; be flexible and resilient. Face difficult situations and make tough decisions with integrity. Earn the trust of others.

Individualized Learning Plans ILPs
Acera tethers the Core Values and Capacities to the student's academic and social-emotional journey. At the beginning of the year you will have a Listening Conference with your child's core classroom teacher to hear parents' goals and concerns and answer any questions. The focus is on listening and building relationships between parents and teachers, hearing parents' hopes and goals for the year, and forming ideas around unique focus areas for that child's development and growth for the year. These conferences also cover the Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) the teacher creates for/with the student. The ILP serves as an outline of the unique goals for each student. It then links into and helps inform the Progress Reports and understanding of student's individual progress. Start of year and ongoing assessments enables teachers to constantly differentiate and individualize for all students so that every student will be able to read, write, and engage in mathematics at their level, promoting growth in these areas every year in a way which uniquely fits their capacity, needs, and potential.

Curriculum and Assessments

STEAM - Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math
Central to our academic learning, STEAM plays a focus. Scientific and engineering topics interrelate with great questions of humanity: "How do civilizations form?" "How can we be positive stewards of the earth?" "How can we recognize challenges and lead positive change that respects the perspectives of others?" Themes between years evolve and have included topics such as: ecosystems, climate change, design/redesign, biomimicry, flight and space, geology, Newton's Laws Of Motion, and evolution. From year- to-year, deeper investigations into particular engineering topics occur, including structural, frugal, sustainable, mechanical, electrical, and optical engineering.

Computer Science and Technology Education: Computer science and technology are woven into our program across all years, in a way that evolves as new computer science languages and tools emerge, and built around a students' interests and motivation. Over the years, programming languages which have shown up in our school include: Scratch, Processing, Python, Javascript, Twine, General Purpose (GP) and others. Students often start off in learning about computer science components through hands-on robotics tools. Many students gain skills in audio recording, for sounds and to mix music, and in filmmaking and video editing for films or stop animation movies. Students are encouraged to integrate technology and a wide array of self-expression tactics into their learning experience.

The Tech Hub: The Tech Hub is a zone in the central Commons area of the school, and enables access to PodCast, PhotoShop, fixes and troubleshooting, and an array of constantly growing new tools. Concurrently, student leadership in the Tech Hub area enables students to gain skills and become known in the community as resources to help others.

Engineering: The Maker Space and Woodshop are places where engineering comes alive in the form of projects. Students learn to use tools to build basic projects to start and, as their skills increase, have the autonomy for more complicated and creative projects. Woodshop tools and skills include, but are not limited to, hand tools, carving, wood burning, and some power tools. Maker Space projects take myriad forms which leverage a wide toolset and equipment including microcomputing, 3D printing, laser cutting, soldering and projects.

Life Sciences Lab: All students have life sciences lab elective options over their years in the Upper School. This zone focuses on labs which link conceptual learning to real innovations and world needs– and is modeled as a space and place built around the way biotech scientists work. Topics have included: biochemistry, molecular biology, biotech, biology, chemistry and more, which enables students to learn science through doing and has a role for students to understand concepts by uncovering them through their experiences; iterative redesign of protocol and uncovering scientific principles enable deeper understanding as students see things come alive and make sense so they can construct their own understanding.

Instruction and Integration: Specialist teachers, who have deep training and work experience in the fields of engineering, biotechnology, computer science and beyond, enable learning and growth through collaborative, hands-on projects that weave throughout the curriculum. They use tools in technology and science to express ideas, tell stories, and create novel projects and electronic portfolios about the ongoing learning. There is always meaning in the work. Students use these tools to deepen learning and explore how things work and express their ideas; the tool is a means of expression.

Mathematics: At Acera, students learn math that is right for them. We have small math classes based on student readiness, interests and learning styles. Unlike other age-based programs, we put no limit on what a student can learn. Math classes delight and engage students while teaching them to think deeply, explore/discover, and build understanding of important math concepts. Our ability-based math groupings are created using the first week of school assessment and either input from the previous year's teacher or admissions information. In 2022-23, there were 16 groups for 143 students. All math groups meet at the same time across the whole school, which provides us great flexibility in how we place the students into mixed age, similar ability classes. We don't hold a child back because of their age, but instead find the appropriate peer group for them to learn with.

Because children learn when they are engaged, we base our math program on problem solving that promotes active participation in a way that works for the age and the style of the group; using puzzles, games, discussions, group problem solving, and more to create lessons that invite students to think deeply and be excited about math. Our program uses both the Common Core and MA State Standards as guideposts so our students are able to move into their next steps after Acera easily. Using guideposts are just that - general markers - but this is not limiting to our student's learning. The emphasis is on learning in-context and taking an investigative, hands-on approach.

*Please see the [Upper School Math Course Guide](#) for more information on the specific pathways and courses offered in Upper School math, including Pre-Algebra, Algebra, Discrete Math, Applied Algebra & Statistics,Geometry, Number Theory, Pre-Calculus / Linear Algebra, and, selectively as needed, academic student support program/ ILP offerings in calculus or beyond.

Creativity Stations: Every Wednesday for most of the day, students have their choice of creativity stations, with classes offered in art, music, theater, engineering, game design, and maker space, to name a few. ([List of past creativity class choices](#))These stations are led by specialist teachers for whom these disciplines are their area of expertise. Through this choice and variety, students get exposure to a variety of artistic fields and engage in skill-building through projects. Students focus on selecting project based experiences that are both areas of strength and things they would like to explore to broaden their horizons. Periodically, students share their work at a culminating "Museum Walk'' event. These dates are noted on the School Calendar; parents should plan to join us, in person, for these exciting gatherings!

Assessment, Individualized Learning Plan, Conferences and Narrative Progress Reports
Assessment

Assessment	Commentary
Start of year assessments	- Developmentally appropriate as determined by Core teachers: - Running Records Reading assessment (Fountas & Pinnell) in decoding and understanding up through Grade 8 level of reader. - Initial writing sample - Math Assessment / Placement with support from math specialists depending upon students skills / capacity (written and/or verbal)/ag - Others as determined by the teacher (e.g. spelling, etc.)

NWEA MAP Math and Reading Standardized, Adaptive Assessment	NWEA MAP assessment tool is an adaptive, computer based, on-line assessment that is administered at least once yearly. The focus is on skills in language arts and math. It is a nationally normed assessment against the Common Core. A report is given out to parents. (This assessment emphasizes basic skills - not development of capacities we value the most – critical thinking and problem solving, creativity, collaboration skills, systems thinking and perspective taking, emotional intelligence, etc). Typically, a reading NWEA Assessment happens in the Fall, and math happens in Spring.
Digital and/or Physical Portfolios	Students regularly reflect on their work, particularly through the lens of Acera Core Capacities. Through regular capture of student work and a corresponding reflection, each year, students compile a digital and/or physical portfolio that focuses on showing process, progress, and student reflection about their work. Parents are invited to look at portfolios at any point. Twice yearly, students share their portfolios with their families through a structured portfolio share meeting organized by Core classroom teachers. Ideally, students choose and include pieces in their portfolios from math, creativity stations, passion projects, Core classroom themes, and other work which shows their development academically, creatively, and socially.
Ongoing formative and summative assessment Narrative Progress Reports & Culminating Events	Throughout the year, students and teachers discuss their progress through conversations, feedback, and performances of understanding. Our teachers have an exceptionally strong understanding of where students' strengths and growth areas are, based on daily observations and analysis of work. Formative assessments are done as individuals and groups of teachers reflect on student progress. Through our project-based model, students have summative assessment moments (sometimes formatted as culminating events - open houses, performances, etc.) throughout the year to demonstrate their growth. Twice yearly, teachers reflect on and write up students' growth within their ILP goals, Core capacities, social and emotional growth and wellbeing, and key academic areas, producing narrative progress reports which are shared with parents ahead of twice yearly parent conferences, in December and May.
Screenings	Teachers can often be the first to identify potential areas to further explore and faculty members may encourage parents to follow up with their pediatrician or a specialist to seek additional screenings. Additionally, we do offer individual preliminary screenings for dyslexia if the teacher or family raises a concern.
Team Meetings	Any parent or teacher or staff member can request a team meeting about a student to step back and talk about needs being observed, and together galvanize a plan to more formally evaluate and support students needs in academic, emotional, and social realms. These meetings can reveal new needs, new awareness of history, and actively galvanize enhanced parent/school partnership and communication.

Conferences, Reporting, and Individual Goal Creation

Welcome Back to School Night	An opportunity for parents to meet their child's Core teacher and hear about the school. It's expected that all parents attend this event and is listed on the School Calendar.

Listening Conferences	An initial parent meeting to hear parents' goals and concerns and answer any parent questions. The focus is on listening and building relationships between parents and teachers, hearing parents' hopes and goals for the year, and forming ideas around unique focus areas for that child's development and growth for the year. These conferences also cover the Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) the teacher creates for/with the student.
Individualized Learning Plan (ILP)	To be published after listening conferences, the Individualized Learning Plan serves as an outline of the unique goals for each student. It then links into and helps inform the Progress Reports and understanding of student's individual progress. The ILP does not include all components of how the program is customized to each students' abilities and needs; start of year and ongoing assessment enables teachers to constantly differentiate and individualize for all students so that every student will be able to read, write, and engage in mathematics at their level, promoting growth in these areas every year in a way which uniquely fit their capacity, needs, and potential.
Narrative Progress Report	Published in December and May, the Narrative Progress Report is descriptive and not built around grades or common objective standards of performance. It includes paragraphs about the focus of the past term to both serve as a document of what students have covered and to comment on each individual student's progress, strengths, and growth areas. The Intent is a substantive and authentic report for parents about their child's strengths, focus areas for development, and next steps for continued growth.
Parent Conferences: December & March	With the narrative progress report shared in advance of the conference day, it is encouraged that parents plan ahead to be available to meet during the day on the conference days as published on the school calendar. Ideally, Core teachers will offer up appointment times at least a month in advance of the conference date. At the conference, parents have the opportunity to ask questions about their student's narrative progress reports, and to discuss areas of strength, growth, concerns and hopes along with next steps for their child.

Whole School Overview

Acera has one continuous program that looks at the developmental needs of students which affects the schedules of students. All classroom groups are divided into mixed-age groups. Each year, the classroom configurations shift to optimize for students' learning profiles and needs and to optimize for student inclusion in our program. In 2023/24 our classrooms are combinations of K/1, 2/3, 3/4, 4/5, 6, 7/8, 8-12. Lower School consists of grades Kindergarten through grade 4/5 with Upper School consisting of grades 6 through 12. Our families, staff and students are overseen by the Lower or Upper School Directors accordingly.

Our Lower and Upper School Programs have aligned philosophies and many common components, like Core Classroom community and theme time with literature and writing development support, Ability Based Math Block, Creativity Stations, and across-the-school lunch and recess time mid day.

Classroom Theme Time: A mix of humanities-rich and project-based learning, this is a time when students discuss anchor texts and literature, engage in discussions, dialogue and debate, engage in different projects and experiences which help bring alive the theme. They receive coaching on writing skills, learn new cultural and historic concepts, develop self-awareness and perspective-taking through experiential exercises and grow in their systems and interdisciplinary thinking. At the start of the year, these times are also used to scaffold executive functioning skills, teach writing frameworks proactively, and form, as a classroom, around communications norms, technology use, culture, and relationship development. Some years, the entire school selects the same theme as a jumping off point and particular questions or focus areas come alive across multiple classrooms in a given year, optimizing the opportunities for relationship-building between students, as well as collaboration and resource-sharing between teachers.

*Please seek out the [Core and Specialist Themes Catalog](#) to read examples of classroom themes at Acera.

Collaboration: Collaboration is the pulse of our community and each year at the beginning and end of the school year for a week each and professional development days in January and March, Core and Specialist teachers plan themes and essential questions to be explored with students. This collaboration defines an interdisciplinary map of essential questions, themes, and projects which deepens inquiry within themes. Specialists and Core teachers meet to further define how each specialty area will integrate with the themes and projects identified, and new ideas and projects emerge.

As a whole school and as individual teachers, we link up with organizations and great thinkers, customizing experiences that enrich student experiences and expand teachers' knowledge base. Direct Exposures to scientific thinking, passion, and cutting-edge materials are a hallmark of this unique aspect of our school. We continue to build on existing and create new curriculum collaboration partnerships with individual innovators and organizations.

> Examples from our past include:
> - Eric Alm (MIT Professor in Microbial Evolution)
> - Angela Belcher (MIT Professor of Materials Science and Bioengineering)
> - Peter Blake, (BU Social Learning Lab)
> - Mark Daly (MGH & HMS Professor in Genetics)
> - Tami Lieberman (MIT Skin Microbiome Lab)
> - Calum MacRae (MD / PhD Brigham & Women's in Cardiology & ZebraFish research)
> - Thomas Vandervelde (Tufts Professor of Engineering)
> - Olin College of Engineering
> - One Brave Idea (Acera is their school partner)
> - Tufts Center for Engineering Education Outreach
> - Kevin Dunn (Tufts Professor in Literature)

Health & Wellness: Along with external support for more sophisticated health topics for our upper school students (Educa Health: a science-based, student-centered health education), social and emotional learning and self awareness, as well as explicit instruction in yoga and mindfulness is often brought into classrooms and woven together within learning programs. Topic areas include positive self-image and relationships, social emotional learning (SEL) exercises, understanding bias and prejudice, self-regulation strategies, mindfulness and yoga, healthy habits for digital and social media, etc. Our sexuality education programming is led by Educa Health and includes topics each upper school core teacher has decided are pertinent for that group, that year. Topics can include sex education, impact of substance use on brain development, and building healthy relationships.

Social Emotional Development: The entire Acera experience is a platform for the development of students' social and emotional skills. Drawing from the work of Daniel Goldman, and others in the field of emotional intelligence, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programming is a process for learning life skills, including self-awareness and self-management, understanding of bias and the impact on one's actions, social and interpersonal skills, self-management of frustration tolerance, decision-making, and communication. Acera students engage in a series of stories, games, and cooperative activities while reflecting on the group process intermittently and as-needed in morning meetings, during group projects, in transition and recess times, and proactively in intentional lessons integrated into the classroom experience. These skills are paramount to learning how to deal with oneself and others, sustaining relationships, and working in an effective manner together. Core teachers and emotional intelligence recess coaches – who have backgrounds as counselors, mindfulness/yoga, arts, coaching, and beyond – support student development at all times.

Core Schedules:
Lower School Weekly Schedule and Program Facets

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Welcome	Welcome	Welcome	Welcome	Welcome
Core 8:45 - 10:30	Core 8:45 - 10:30	Core 8:45 - 10:30	Core 8:45 - 10:30	Core 8:45 - 10:30
TFP	TFP	TFP	TFP	TFP
Math 11:00 - 12:00	Math 11:00 - 12:00	Creativity 11:00 - 12:00	Math 11:00 - 12:00	Math 11:00 - 12:00
Lunch 12:00 - 1:00	Lunch 12:00 - 1:00	Lunch 12:00 - 1:00	Lunch 12:00 - 1:00	Lunch 12:00 - 1:00
Core	Core	Core	Core	Core
Core/Specials 1:30 - 2:45	Core/Specials 1:30 - 2:45	Creativity 1:30 - 2:45	Core/Specials 1:30 - 2:45	Core/Specials 1:30 - 2:45
Stewardship	Stewardship	Stewardship	Stewardship	Stewardship
Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal

Facets of Lower School Program:

Literacy & Writing: Younger Lower School students experience a mix of direct instruction in clustered reading groups, which can link to a theme, be a mini-unit, or include literary book club groups. Whole class and small group language arts lessons are integrated as determined by the teacher. Often, an additional teacher is present in the room to help with writing, executive function, focus, and follow-through.

Afternoon Core/Theme activities, as determined by teacher, to complement other components of the week. Often there is a focus around hands-on and interdisciplinary learning mathematical projects that map to larger themes, questions, and learning being explored by the class. Specialized smaller group or individual projects can also be a focus orchestrated by the teacher to best meet each students' needs, learning style, and interests.

Specialists may be incorporated with the class group (arts, engineering,computer science, science lab, theatre, architecture, technology, mindfulness/yoga,health education, or special guests / curriculum collaborators as scheduled by teachers) Core Classroom teachers have between 2-5 Specialists/co-teachers whose talents and teaching skill get integrated into that classroom program. Depending upon the students' profiles and needs,

additional specialists can be present and co-teaching at other times or any time throughout the day to add extra support for mindfulness, executive function and writing, or general classroom support.

Upper School Weekly Schedule and Program Facets

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Welcome & Morning Meeting (8:30 - 9:00)				
IMP 9:00 - 10:45	Elective A 9:00 - 10:45	Core 9:00 - 10:45	IMP 9:00 - 10:45	Elective A 9:00 - 10:45
Math 10:45 - 12:00	Math 10:45 - 12:00	Creativity 10:45 - 12:00	Math 10:45 - 12:00	Math 10:45 - 12:00
Lunch 12:00 - 1:00				
Core 1:00 - 2:45	Elective B 1:00 - 2:45	Creativity 1:00 - 2:45	Core 1:00 - 2:45	Elective B 1:00 - 2:45
Stewardship & Dismissal (2:45 - 3:15)				

Facets of Upper School Program:
- Increased emphasis on accountability and follow-through for assignments as fits the middle-years' and high school age readiness.
- Increased focus on development of individual voice – in writing via one-on-one coaching, in arts and projects, and more opportunities for community-wide leadership.
- Access to hands-on science lab experiences in biology, chemistry, and biochemistry, with an approach inspired by how science is done in actual labs (a discovery-oriented approach with a role for creativity and problem-solving, not textbook based), through our elective program.
- Electives, Science Labs, IMP / Passion Projects are unique to upper school and are described below.

Electives: Electives Catalog Students choose electives for each trimester, and each course meets twice per week. Electives include offerings across humanities, sciences and arts topics, and many electives are interdisciplinary. Some offerings are offered yearly, and others evolve based upon current events and students' interests to assure a wide and deep set of offerings through a students' upper school experience, in a liberal arts type of approach. All students engage in a mix of sciences, hands-on and humanities-based electives. Each social sciences and humanities elective syllabus includes assignments with a focus on primary source materials and texts, and include a writing component, with writing and/or project deliverables. Though our school is not focused on "knowledge acquisition," afternoon social sciences and humanities electives keep in mind the kinds of historical and culturally relevant types of ideas and topics we want to make sure our students are exposed to over their US experience.

Science Lab: Each year our Science Lab teacher creates new biology, chemistry, and biochemistry related hands-on lab experiences with a constructivist approach to learning for Upper School classes. The Science Lab notebook and readings support learning and understanding. The intent is that the science learning experience mirrors the way scientists actually work in a lab, rather than following a textbook, recipe-based approach. New scientific learning topics and tools are piloted within each year, reflecting our commitment to partnerships beyond our walls. Students who are most interested in Science Lab types of learning can have additional lab time each week through IMP Project Times, if lab science is part of their IMP Project.

Inquiry, Maker, Passion Projects (IMP): IMPp Guide for Families. For two - four hour blocks each week, Upper School students work with the IMP Mentor Team and their Core Teacher to turn an interest into an IMP Project. Once paired with a mentor, students move through the IMP project flow chart. Typically, each student does a literature review, pitches their project concept to an audience for approval, and then works on their project (either on their own, with a partner, or with a small team they recruit) during IMP Project times. IMP Project topics are initiated by students, and are envisioned around a topic, question, need or interest they've chosen. Mentors with deep expertise in engineering, art, philosophy, electronic arts, maker space, lab science, computer science, game design, mathematics, woodshop, technology, music, journalism, creative writing, and marketing. For some students, smaller and shorter timeframes will make sense for their first IMP Project as they learn this approach. As students' interests, maturity, and organizational skills deepen, longer-term projects become more appropriate. IMP Project Mentors support authentic student engagement through their interests, their acquisition of project management and communication skills, work to develop their advocacy and communication skills to engage others in their project, and prepare for the twice-yearly "IMPosium'' Open House Events to share their projects with parents and others.

Student Support Program: Excerpts from Student Support Program (SSP) Approach are in the following section. Please follow the link to the full document.

Brief Overview of the Student Support Program (SSP)
Acera has different support programs for unique profiles of students to address areas of need beyond their giftedness. Based on students' needs and classroom configuration, support will be put into place for each child, woven into their experience throughout the school day, across the whole staff. We integrate individual SSP frameworks into classroom norms, math, specialists' offerings, and in snack/lunch/recess, with confidential internal documentation and staff professional development.
- In the admissions process, inclusion of an SSP framework may be part of the enrollment offer; this increases the cost of the year's tuition. At the end of each school year, a decision will be made about the next year's SSP framework; the intent is that over time, students develop new skills and support can be reduced or eliminated.
- In addition to regular parent/teacher conferences, the SSP includes school team meetings to customize and evolve the approach for each child to review needs, note strategies and progress within the SSP framework, and collaborate with external resources such as therapists, neuropsychologists, school districts for students with an IEP, etc. SSP frameworks are set up on an annualized basis to enable adequate time for team meetings, custom framework creation and maintenance, staffing arrangements, inclusion of external experts, etc.
- The goal of an SSP framework is to support students in the areas they need it most. The best outcome is for them to be successful in these areas and to no longer need the SSP; when growth and progress

happens, we do not discontinue the framework of support during the current school year, but rather phase it out over time and not renew it for the following year.

● SSP frameworks added during the school year will be prorated based upon days of school remaining. After the attached SSP contract is agreed upon, planning work begins and services/supports will start as soon as a framework creation/staffing is ready and payment is coordinated.

When is a Student Support Program Framework Needed?
I thought that Acera differentiated across every domain for all students. Which needs/supports require the SSP?
Acera is a school for gifted students. We excel in accommodating a wide array of levels and learning styles of gifted students. However, when students' needs veer into special needs categories that are distinct from the "gifted" facet of their profile, they will likely need support which is beyond what is affordable for us to implement well in our base program. Most independent schools do not knowingly accept students with profiles which include challenges related to distractibility, hyperactivity, impulsivity, executive functioning, dyslexia, or social cues, and may instead encourage outplacement of these students; they are simply not set up to manage a wide array of neurodivergent students. The goal of these support frameworks is to allow each student to access the curriculum and set them up for success in each of their learning opportunities, regardless of their profile.

The student supports that we are able to customize and implement through the Student Support Program enable us to admit and customize an approach for different learning profiles, as well as staff appropriately, offer staffing professional development, and ultimately maintain an excellent educational growth experience for every student. For more information on the timeline for support rollout, please see Support Conversation Timeline.

More information about neuropsychological evaluation, IEP process, WISC assessments.

Major School Events

Annual & Biannual Acera Events: for the most updated upcoming events, please view the calendar at aceraschool.org.

July	Whole Community Parent Wine & Cheese to Welcome New Parents
September	Welcome Back to School Night Listening Conferences (Parents + Core Teacher/s) All Family Potluck & Acera Parent Partnership Kick-off
October	Innovator Symposium Oct-Jan 1: All School Annual Fund Campaign
November	Open House for Prospective Students & Math Festival Teacher Panel Parent Education Event Alumni Panel Museum Walk (also in Spring)
December	Parent Conferences All School Ice Skating Trip
January	IMPposium Sessions
February	Parent Education Event

	Reed Hollett Enrichment Scholarship Trivia Night Fundraiser
March	Parent Conferences Museum Walk
April	Poetry Day
May	Spring Fundraising Event (Love to Learn)
June	Museum Walk & Field Day IMPposium Sessions Graduation (all invited! 2pm last day of school) + Alumni Event

Enrichment: After School Classes, Vacation and Summer Camp Offerings

The Goals of our After School Program (offered on school days until 6pm) are to:

- Offer incredible enrichment programs which are not regularly found elsewhere. Our Enrichment Programs are also open to students who do not attend Acera's school day program.
- Provide enrichment (and after school coverage as-needed) for current Acera Students
- Attract non-Acera students, enriching our community with new friends

We offer open enrollment enrichment programs for children ages 5-14 in an exciting, hands-on learning environment, including After School Enrichment Classes, February and April Vacation Camps, and Summer Camps. Students discover engineering, biotechnology, math, arts, theater, design, electronics, music, chemistry, physics, teamwork, friendships — and who they are as individuals, learners, and collaborators. At Acera, teachers excel at weaving science, creativity and making into our Enrichment Programs. Our staff consists of professionals with significant experience in the classroom and in their own fields of expertise. Among them are award winners, active research scientists, and working artists.

Browse our award-winning classes and camps by age by visiting our After School, Vacation, and Summer Camps pages.