

Academy of Cultural Excellence



Curriculum at the Academy of Cultural Excellence (ACE)

What We Teach, How We Teach, and Why It Matters

At the Academy of Cultural Excellence (ACE), our curriculum choices are intentional. We have selected high-quality instructional programs that support strong academics, cultural responsiveness, and the development of essential life skills - what we call our **ACE Core Competencies**. Our goal is to ensure that every child experiences joyful, rigorous learning that builds confidence, curiosity, and a strong sense of self.

The Big Picture: How Curriculum Supports ACE Core Competencies

All ACE curriculum choices are designed to help students grow as thinkers, readers, problem-solvers, and community members. Across all subject areas, students will develop:

- Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving - asking questions, exploring ideas, and making meaning
- Empowered Literacy - reading, writing, speaking, and expressing ideas with confidence
- Self-Awareness & Advocacy - understanding strengths, needs, and how to ask for support

- Cultural Awareness & Empathy - valuing diversity, listening deeply, and honoring different perspectives
- Adaptability & Resilience - persisting through challenges and learning from mistakes

Literacy (Reading, Writing, Phonics & Language)

HMH (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

HMH supports strong reading comprehension, writing, vocabulary, and discussion skills. Students engage with rich texts, storytelling, and purposeful writing.

How this supports ACE competencies:

- Builds Empowered Literacy through reading and writing across genres
- Strengthens Critical Thinking by analyzing texts and sharing ideas
- Encourages Self-Awareness as students reflect on their learning

Foundations (Phonics & Foundational Skills)

Foundations provides explicit, systematic phonics instruction, helping students build strong decoding, spelling, and early reading skills.

How this supports ACE competencies:

- Builds confidence and independence in reading (Empowered Literacy)
- Supports Resilience by giving students clear strategies to tackle challenging words
- Helps students advocate for themselves as readers (Self-Awareness & Advocacy)

Heggerty (Phonemic Awareness)

Heggerty focuses on listening skills, sound recognition, and early language development, which are critical for early readers.

How this supports ACE competencies:

- Strengthens early Critical Thinking through sound manipulation
- Builds foundational literacy skills that support long-term success
- Encourages persistence and growth (Adaptability & Resilience)

Science

Amplify Science

Amplify Science is an inquiry-based science curriculum where students learn by asking questions, conducting investigations, and explaining their thinking.

How this supports ACE competencies:

- Develops Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving through hands-on exploration
- Encourages collaboration and discussion (Community & Empathy)
- Builds confidence in explaining ideas (Empowered Literacy)

Social Studies

Passport for Social Studies

Passport for Social Studies helps students learn about communities, history, and the world, emphasizing identity, civic understanding, and belonging.

Hidden Voices (Supplemental Resource)

Hidden Voices is used to amplify perspectives that have historically been overlooked, ensuring students see themselves, and others, reflected in learning.

How this supports ACE competencies:

- Builds Cultural Awareness & Empathy by honoring diverse stories
- Encourages respectful dialogue and perspective-taking
- Strengthens Self-Awareness and identity development

Mathematics (Coming Soon)

For math, ACE is awaiting final guidance from the NYC Department of Education regarding the approved curriculum options:

- Illustrative Mathematics
- Amplify Math

Both options emphasize:

- Conceptual understanding (the “why,” not just the answer)
- Problem-solving and reasoning
- Student discussion and multiple strategies

Once DOE guidance is finalized, we will share more details with families about how math instruction will look at ACE.

How math supports ACE competencies:

- Strengthens Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving
- Develop Mathematical Fluency
- Builds Resilience through productive struggle
- Encourages students to explain and defend their thinking (Empowered Literacy)

What Families Can Expect at ACE

Across all subjects, families can expect that:

- Learning is engaging, joyful, and developmentally appropriate
- Students are encouraged to think, talk, question, and reflect
- Culture, identity, and student voice are honored daily
- Teachers work collaboratively to ensure high-quality instruction for every child
- Curriculum is a tool to support the whole child, not just academic outcomes

Closing Message to Families

At ACE, the curriculum is more than a set of books or programs, it is a pathway to developing confident, curious, and compassionate learners. Our instructional choices are designed to support not only what students learn, but who they become. We look forward to partnering with you as we bring this learning to life together.