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Academic Year 2021-2022 ACE Program Report



Harrison School District 2

Fox Meadow Middle School

BACKGROUND

During Academic Year 2021-22 (AY 21-22), Harrison School District 2 (HSD2) introduced the Achieving Competitive Excellence (ACE) Program in two of its schools—Centennial Elementary School and Fox Meadow Middle School (FMMS). This report is exclusive to FMMS with the findings from Centennial Elementary available under separate cover.

The ACE Program was presented by *Believe and Perform Like Champions* featuring Coaches Janice Lee and Charmas Lee. Table 1 shows the composition of program participants during AY21-22. While all sixth grade and selected seventh and eighth grade students received ACE instruction during first semester, second semester student cohorts were assembled as (a) selected sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students who had received the ACE program first semester, and (b) seventh and eighth grade students identified during the second semester who received three 30 minute ACE sessions prior to being surveyed.

Table 1. Fox Meadow Middle School ACE Program Cohorts AY 21-22*

Cohort	Number of Participants	Total Contact Hours 1st Semester	Total Contact Hours 2nd Semester
6th Grade Boys and Girls	146	5.25	0
6th Grade Boys*	12	5.25	4
6th Grade Girls*	11	5.25	4
7th & 8th Grade Girls	11	4	4
7th & 8th Grade Boys	16	4.5	4
7th & 8th Grade Girls**	17	0	4
7th & 8th Grade Boys**	13	0	3.5

* *These students were included in the 146 6th grade boys and girls*

***These students entered the ACE program after the second semester has started*

ACE was designed to teach students how to analyze situations in real-time and make the best decision in the moment. Using a proven coaching model, *Think-Say-Do*, students were guided through novel decision-making approaches intended to improve behavior, increase attention, and enhance classroom performance. ACE provided students with adaptive skills to enable social and academic success in and out of the school setting. Previous studies conducted on similar grade school populations highlighted improved learning conditions, attitudes and academic performance following exposure to the ACE program and suggested students experienced improved focus, concentration and were better able to regulate their emotions (Huisinigh, 2020).

PROGRAM DESIRED OUTCOMES

Intended results included improved emotional intelligence, self-regulation, decision-making, and the skills of self-efficacy, focus, and concentration.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a mixed-methods design consisting of both quantitative and qualitative data streams from multiple sources. Collected data included a Likert-based survey instrument developed by Lee and Lee (2019) related to specific ACE Program objectives. This survey was administered to students each semester. The data set also included open-ended comments from students and semi-structured interviews conducted with the school's principal. The survey instruments were compiled and reported in bar charts, while the student comments were coded using an iterative nodal development process focusing on theme discovery. The school administrator interview was transcribed verbatim using Otter.AI software and coded using a similar process as the student comments to discover themes. Conclusions were made based on the corpus of collected quantitative and qualitative data using a process of triangulation as described by Kelle (2001).

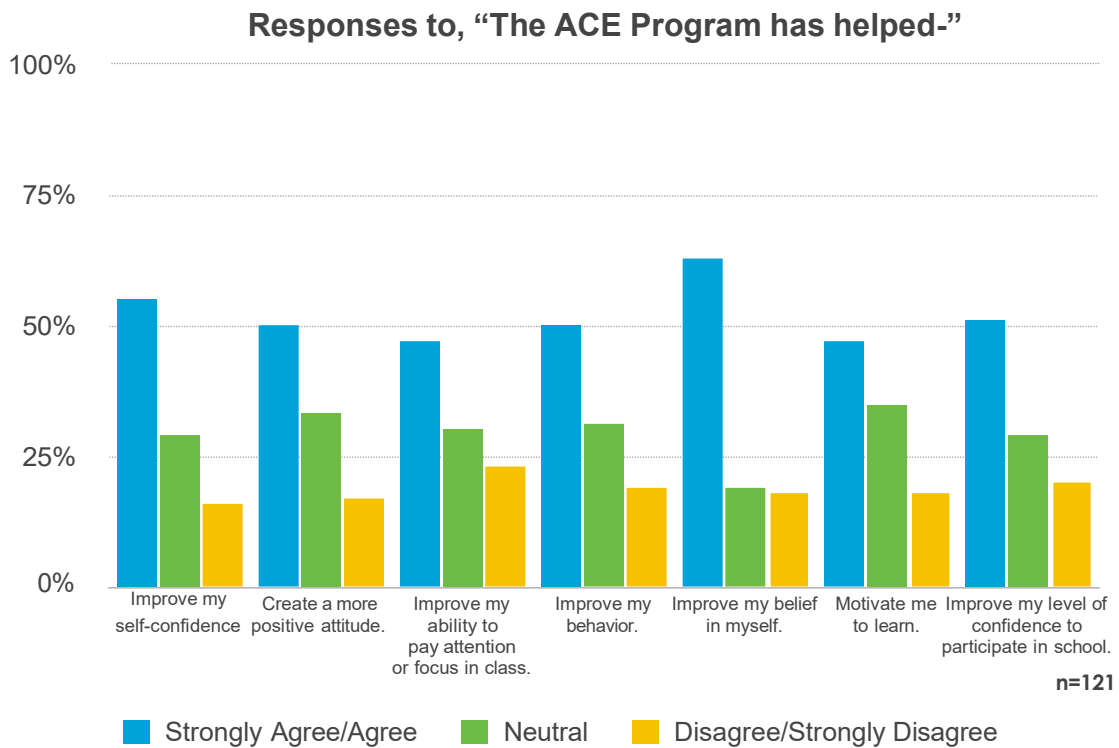
STUDY LIMITATIONS

This study was conducted under a persistent COVID-19 threat, with precautions ranging from compulsory to voluntary masking. These factors may have impacted both the extent and variability of student participation in the ACE program of instruction. The COVID-19 threat may have also impacted the number of students available to take the *ACE Program Survey*.

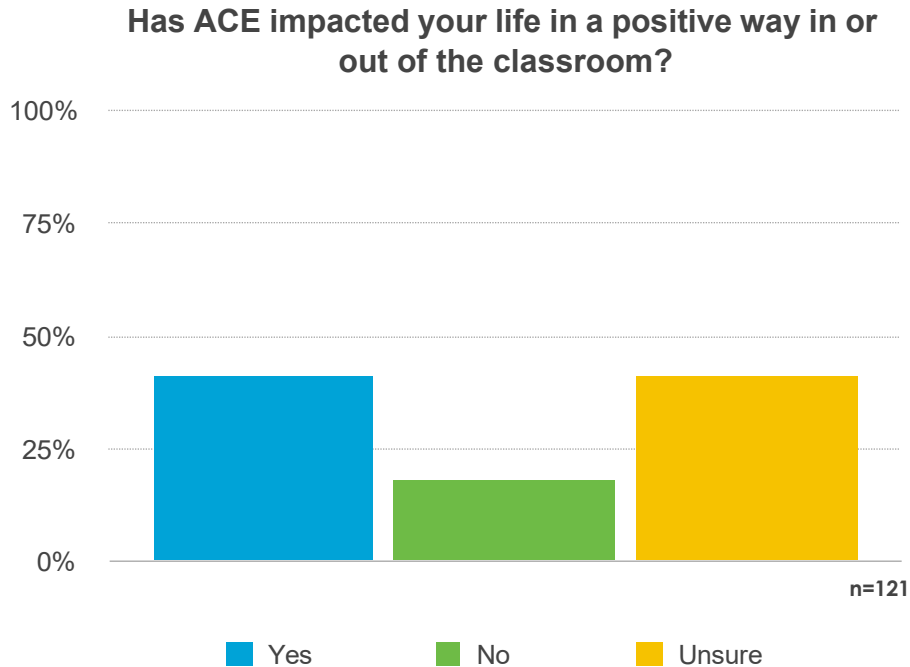
FINDINGS

ACE Program Survey

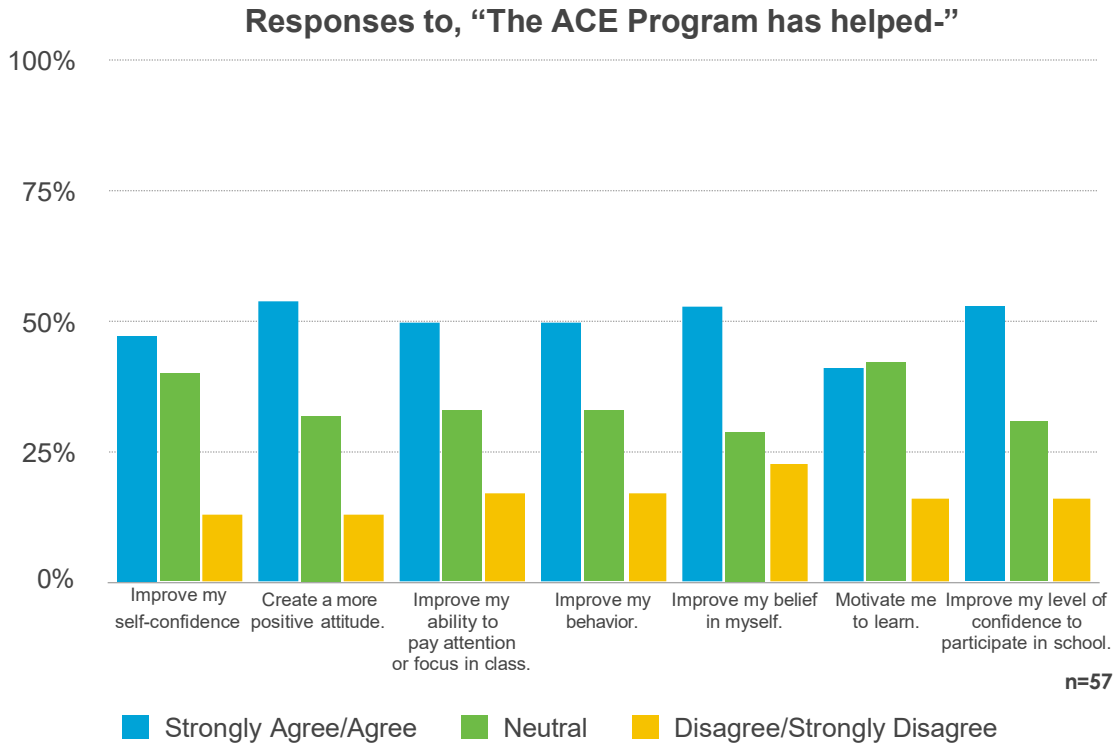
During both semesters, students were surveyed (n=121 and n=57, respectively) regarding their perceptions of the ACE Program using a survey instrument developed by Lee & Lee (2019). This survey binned eight questions into two categories (a) stem-response [self-confidence, attitude, focus, behavior, self-belief, learning, motivation, participation] (Figures 1 and 3) and (b) yes or no as to the ACE Program's impact on their lives both in and out of the classroom. (Figures 2 and 4). First semester results (Figures 1-2) are followed by the results from second semester (Figures 3-4).



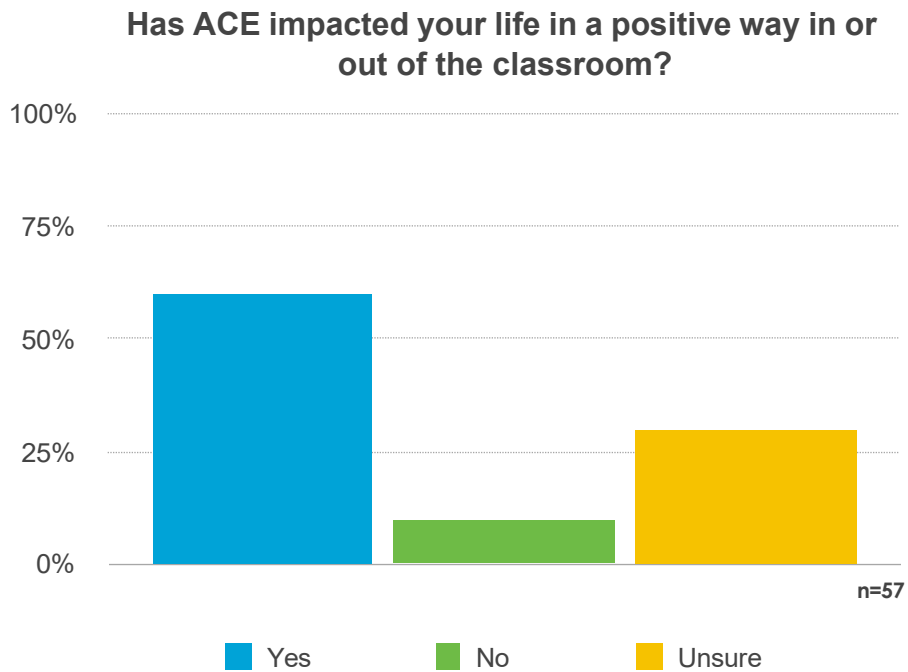
**Figure 1. ACE Program Survey, First Semester AY 2021-22
Fox Meadow Middle School—Attributes**



**Figure 2. ACE Program Survey, First Semester AY 2021-22
Fox Meadow Middle School—Impact**

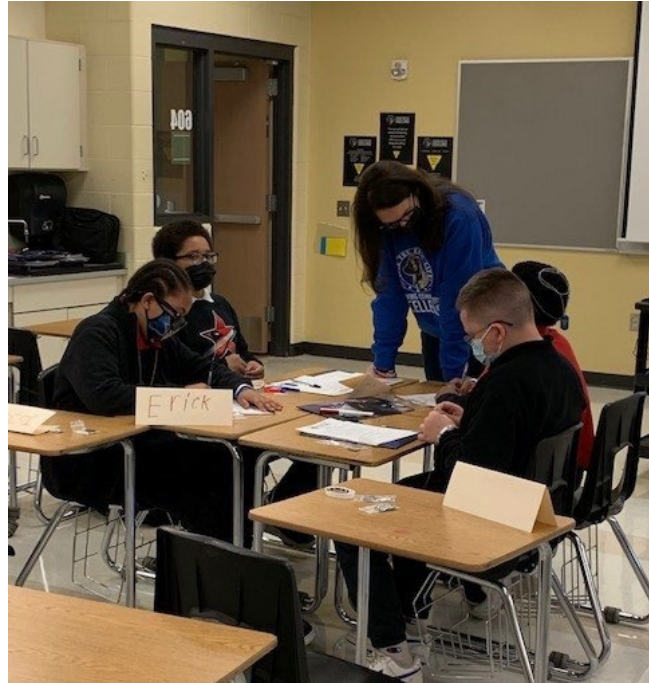


**Figure 3. ACE Program Survey, Second Semester AY 2021-22
Fox Meadow Middle School—Attributes**



**Figure 4. ACE Program Survey, Second Semester AY 2021-22
Fox Meadow Middle School—Impact**

Students participating in the ACE Program self-reported generally positive feedback as to the program's merits with positive sentiments expressed three to four times more often than negative comments concerning the attributes of self-confidence, attitude, focus, behavior, self-belief, learning, motivation, and participation. Feedback was most positive in terms of individually reported improvements in self-confidence and positive attitude, while the most uncertainty of all questions asked concerned overall life impact of ACE. Based on the positive and definitive results concerning self-confidence and positive attitude, it is possible the students did not make a connection between these attributes and impact on their lives.



Coach Janice Lee

Teacher and Principal Comments

A teacher and administrators provided written feedback on the ACE Program. No negative comments were received, with overwhelmingly positive perceptions of the ACE program from student to administrators. Their comments follow.

What an impact ACE has made on select...students. We have seen an increase of self-confidence, ability to problem solve and self-motivation has skyrocketed. Students have a belief that they are capable and ready to be successful. The skills and positive self-talk that Coaches Lee and Lee have instilled in these students has been powerful.

—Principal

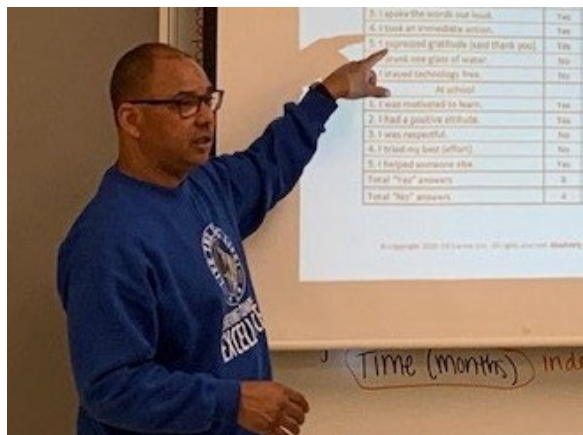
ACE students consistently express their willingness to participate in the class and activities. Students that I have met with stated how they look forward to attending ACE because it's engaging; THEY believe it's helping them to grow.

Many of our students need a coach that motivates them, a mentor they can connect with; specifically, someone outside of their parents and teachers vested in their now and future. When I'm observing our students in ACE class, I see an attentiveness and confidence that can transfer in and outside of a classroom setting. These are not only skills, but a mindset to know excellence is within their reach and within them.

It's more and more apparent in my nearly 20 years as educator, school is not solely about content. Learning social-emotional skills are just as critical. ACE provides the opportunity for students to learn life-long skills with a support system.

—Assistant Principal

Mr. and Mrs. Lee have given a chance to the students to have another adult motivate and encourage them to really reach their potential. Students are excited to go to ACE and ask often when they are coming back. They look forward to the next lesson and what they can learn from Coach Lee. Coach Lee takes the time to make sure the students feel heard and validated. We as teachers are also able to use their techniques in class and remind them of their excellence in our daily lessons. It has been exciting seeing students grow, get out of their comfort zones, and talk about topics that have intrigued and caught their attention to learn more.



Coach Charmas Lee

—Middle School Teacher

Principal Interview Analysis

The FMMS principal consented to an interview about the ACE program. She reported her insights based on both personal observations and discussions with teachers with participating ACE students. Her comments converged on the following themes:

- a. *Janice and Charmas Lee are uniquely gifted coaches.* They are compelling role models for the student population. Their personalities, exemplary ethical code, and their ability to connect with students is considered anomalous. The principal expressed that it would be extremely difficult to find others that could replicate the intangible qualities Charmas and Janice bring to the classroom.
- b. *Engagement.* The students were very engaged with Coaches Lee and Lee and faculty members are engaged with students using the power words taught by the Lees.
- c. *Common language.* The ACE program provided a common language and shared understanding for students and faculty to communicate between and among both groups with regard to the fundamental ACE concepts. The principal reported internalization of the program's messaging with students using ACE program language in their conversations with students and teachers.

- d. *Contact Interval*. The sweet spot for regular contact would likely be weekly as student retention is an issue with contact every two weeks.

Conclusions

The quantitative and qualitative data set analyzed suggest that the ACE Program is an effective program contributing to the self-confidence, attitude, focus, behavior, self-belief, learning, motivation, and classroom participation of students at Fox Meadow Middle School. Students, teachers, and administrators endorsed the program, specifically citing Janice and Charmas Lee, as a positive influence in their school. The principal supported retaining the ACE Program in her school with contact intervals possibly increased from once every two weeks to weekly.

References

Huisingh, J. L. (2020). 2019-2020 ACE program report. Clovis Point Research.

Kelle, U. (2001). Sociological explanations between micro and macro and the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 2, (43 paragraphs). Retrieved from <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs010159>

Lee, J. & Lee, C. (2019). Achieving competitive excellence: Second quarter student survey. [Survey instrument].