











African Cultural Education WITH TACA
TIDEWATER AFRICAN CULTURAL ALLIANCE

EXPLORING AFRICA THROUGH DANCE, LANGUAGE & STORYTELLING

**Report on the 2021-2024 Educational Program
of the Tidewater African Cultural Alliance
*In Collaboration with***

ForKids  **BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF SOUTHEAST VIRGINIA**  **Communities
In Schools®**
Hampton Roads

Made Possible with Support from

 **Hampton Roads
Community Foundation**  **VB**  **Arts & Humanities
Commission**  **NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS**  **VCA**  **VIRGINIA COMMISSION FOR THE ARTS**  **CFAC**  **Chesapeake Arts Commission**

Solidarity through the Celebration of the African Diaspora Worldwide
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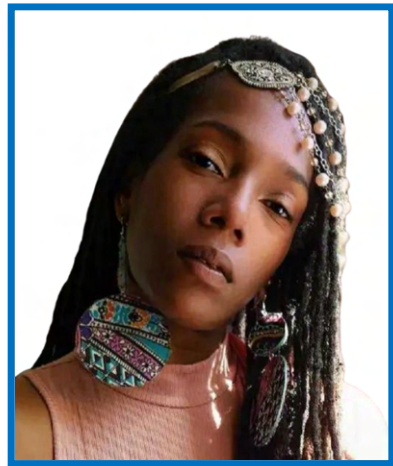


Instructors

Rita Addico Cohen, program creator and lead instructor, fuses lived memories of her childhood in Accra, Ghana, with her late aunt re-telling folktales from the Akan and Ewe nations; her fluency in over ten languages, including 4 from her native Ghana; decades of professional musical theatre and operatic performing experience; and dance performance and choreography with her insatiable curiosity about African history and culture, to deliver an energetic and engaging experience for all participants.

Assisting instructor Suzanne Hing learned the love of dance and culture from her native Trinidad and Tobago. She currently teaches Dance Fitness classes and enjoys incorporating her culture through dance and stories. Furthermore, she enjoys learning about the rich and diverse culture and history to be found on the African continent through the ACE with TACA program.

Assisting instructor Sam Lewis (Years 2 & 3 only) is a Chesapeake, VA native who uses Dance to heal those by and large ignored by the dominant culture, and free the minds of people who have been restricted in their own natural growth. Thus, her dancing promotes self-awareness, discipline, confidence, and healthy expression, attributes that the ACE with TACA program aims to develop and enhance.



[Check Out](#) the Hampton Roads Community Foundation Feature on the ACE with TACA Program!



Year One: October 2021 – June 2022

Collaborating Organizations: ForKids and Boys & Girls Club of Southeast Virginia

Participating Grades: 65 K-5 Youth

Funding Support: Hampton Roads Community Foundation, Virginia Commission for the Arts (with the National Endowment for the Arts)





Participants

33 children from ForKids (FK), divided into K-2 and 3-5 grades, and 32 children from Boys & Girls Club of Southeast Virginia (BGC) met with two instructors from the Tidewater African Cultural Alliance (TACA) in weekly one-hour after-school Sessions to learn about Nigeria, South Africa, and Ghana during the school year. They then gave a public performance at the end of the school year. In addition to pre- and post-Session surveys measuring content retention, the surveys also measured emotional and social development during the program.

The ForKids youth, 93% of whom identified as African American and were experiencing homelessness and therefore living in the ForKids landmark center in Chesapeake. The BGC youth, 91% of whom identified as African American, were from the Thurgood Marshall Elementary School club, also in Chesapeake. 87% of the group were from households that reported incomes on or below the poverty line. Many of the FK kids had overall social adjustment issues, while many of the BGC kids had behavioral issues in the classroom.



For each country, the children learned:

- The geographical location
- Capital city
- Vocabulary from the predominant indigenous language spoken
- Facts about the country
- A folk story
- Dance

Quick Reel of a Session on South Africa with the Boys & Girls Club of Southeast Virginia at Thurgood Marshall Elementary School in Chesapeake.

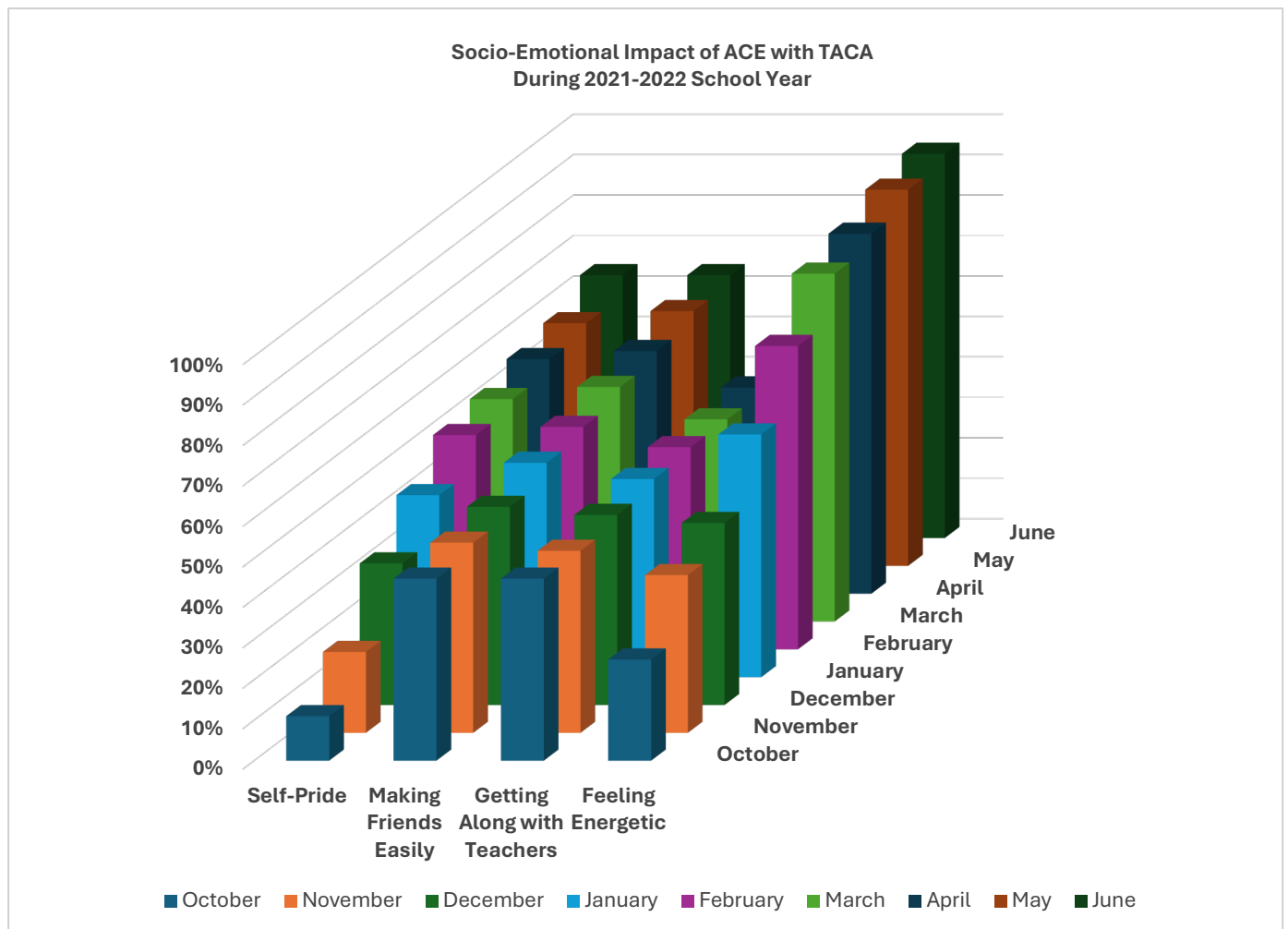


OUTCOMES

Because none of the 65 children who participated in the program had never heard of the three countries studied or knew anything about them, there was a definitive upward trend, from 0 to an average 91% improvement in their ability to provide the capital city and vocabulary words covered in the target language. While some students had an interest in visiting the country studied at the beginning of the program, an average 94% was interested in visiting by the end of the program. 100% selected the Dance portion as their favorite.

In addition to measuring how much content the children learned and retained from Session to Session in the Surveys, the ACE with TACA program also measured the following socio-emotional factors in the 65 participating students during the school year.

Socio-Emotional Impact of ACE with TACA Program on 65 Children During 2021-2022 School Year





YEAR TWO: October 2022 – May 2023

**Collaborating Organizations: Boys & Girls Club of Southeast Virginia,
Communities In Schools Hampton Roads**

Participating Grades: 62 K-5 Youth and 12 Middle School Youth*

**Funding Support: Hampton Roads Community Foundation, Virginia Commission for
the Arts (with the National Endowment for the Arts), City of Virginia Beach Arts &
Humanities Commission**

**Due to the Ruffner Middle School Girls & Boys Club's closure in April, the data provided is
for the K-5 youth only.*





Participants

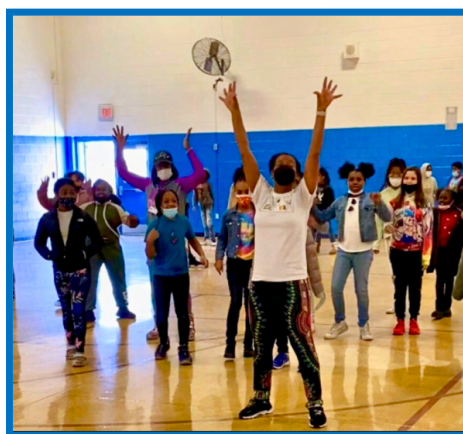
50 2nd through 5th graders from Boys & Girls Club of Southeast Virginia (BGC); 12 4th and 5th graders from the Communities In Schools Hampton Roads (CIS) program; [and 12 students from the BGC program at Ruffner Middle] met with two instructors from the Tidewater African Cultural Alliance (TACA) in weekly one-hour after-school Sessions to learn about Nigeria, South Africa, and Ghana during the school year. They then gave a public performance at the end of the school year. In addition to pre- and post-Session surveys measuring content retention, the surveys also measured emotional and social development during the program.

The BGC youth, 87% of whom identified as African American, were from the Truitt Intermediate School in Chesapeake. The CIS youth, 100% of whom identified as African American, were from the Bettie F. Williams Elementary School in Virginia Beach. 85% of the BGC group were from low-income single parent households that reported incomes on or below the poverty line. Many of the CIS kids had chronic absenteeism and behavioral issues in the classroom.

For each country, the children learned:

- The geographical location
- Capital city
- Vocabulary from the predominant indigenous language spoken
- Facts about the country
- A folk story†
- Dance

† For K-5 Youth Only



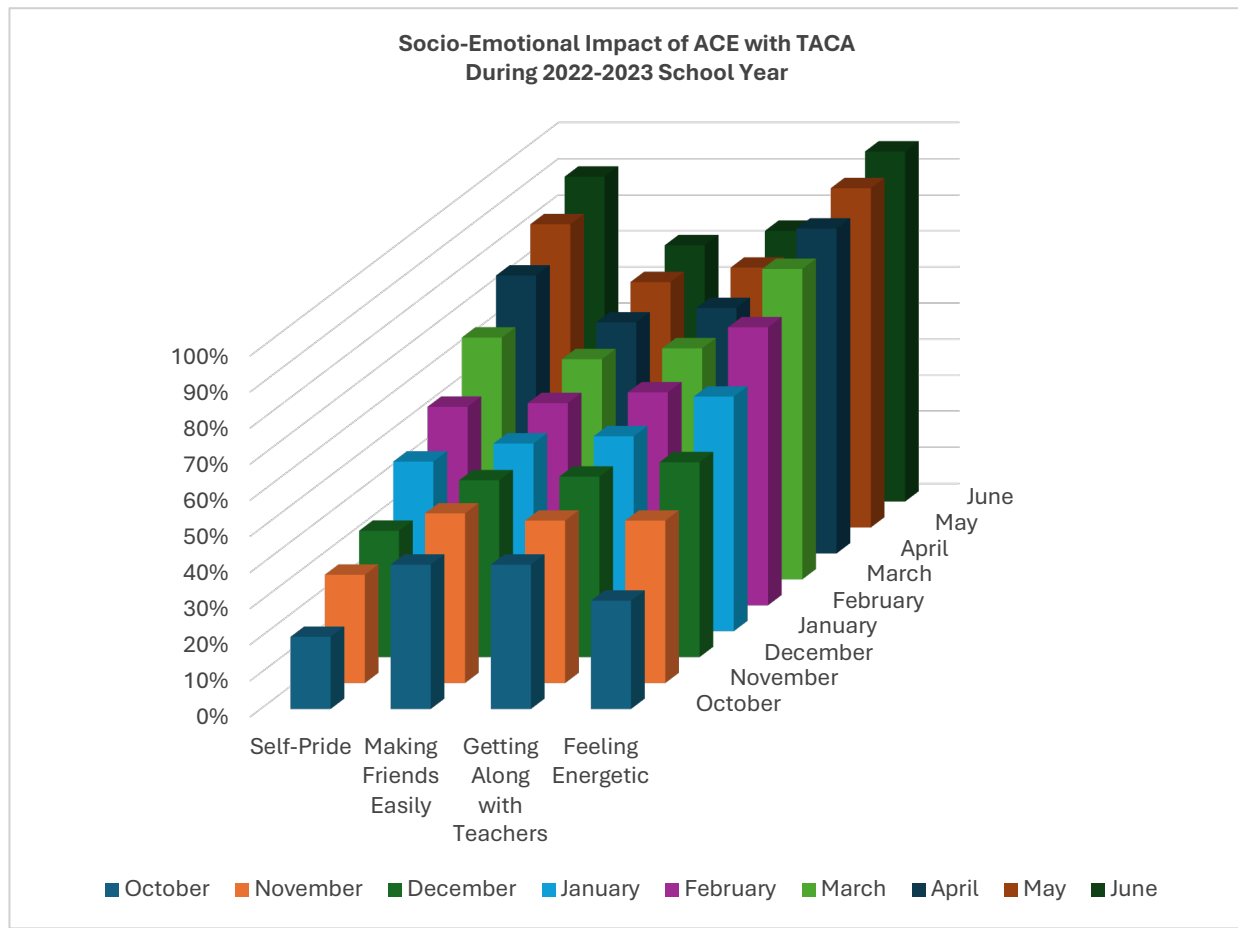


OUTCOMES

Because none of the 62 children who participated in the program had never heard of the three countries studied or knew anything about them, there was also a definitive upward trend from this year, from 0 to an average 93% improvement in their ability to provide the capital city and vocabulary words covered in the target language. While some students had an interest in visiting the country studied at the beginning of the program, an average 91% was interested in visiting by the end of the program. 99% selected the Dance portion as their favorite.

In addition to measuring how much content the children learned and retained from Session to Session in the Surveys, the ACE with TACA program also measured the following socio-emotional factors in the 62 participating students during the school year.

Socio-Emotional Impact of ACE with TACA Program on 62 Children During 2022-2023 School Year





YEAR THREE: October 2023 – June 2024

**Collaborating Organizations: Boys & Girls Club of Southeast Virginia,
Communities In Schools Hampton Roads**

Participating Grades: 66 K-5 Youth and 18 Middle School Youth*

**Funding Support: Hampton Roads Community Foundation, Virginia Commission for
the Arts (with the National Endowment for the Arts), City of Virginia Beach Arts &
Humanities Commission, Chesapeake Fine Arts Commission, Black BRAND**

**Due to not being able to begin the Communities In Schools program at Bayside Middle
until January, the data provided is for the K-5 youth only.*





Participants

66 2nd through 5th graders from Boys & Girls Club of Southeast Virginia (BGC) [and 18 8th graders from the Communities In Schools Hampton Roads (CIS) program] met with two instructors from the Tidewater African Cultural Alliance (TACA) in weekly one-hour after-school Sessions to learn about Nigeria, South Africa, and Ghana during the school year. They then gave a public performance at the end of the school year. In addition to pre- and post-Session surveys measuring content retention, the surveys also measured emotional and social development during the program.

The BGC youth, 85% of whom identified as African American, were from the Truitt Intermediate School in Chesapeake. 39 of them had participated in the program in the previous school year and chose to repeat it. 87% of the BGC group were from low-income single parent households that reported incomes on or below the poverty line. Because it was the second year in the same school, there were much less instances of behavioral issues, with some children remembering words/stories from the previous year.

For each country, the children learned:

- The geographical location
- Capital city
- Vocabulary from the predominant indigenous language spoken
- Facts about the country
- A folk story†
- Dance

† For K-5 Youth Only



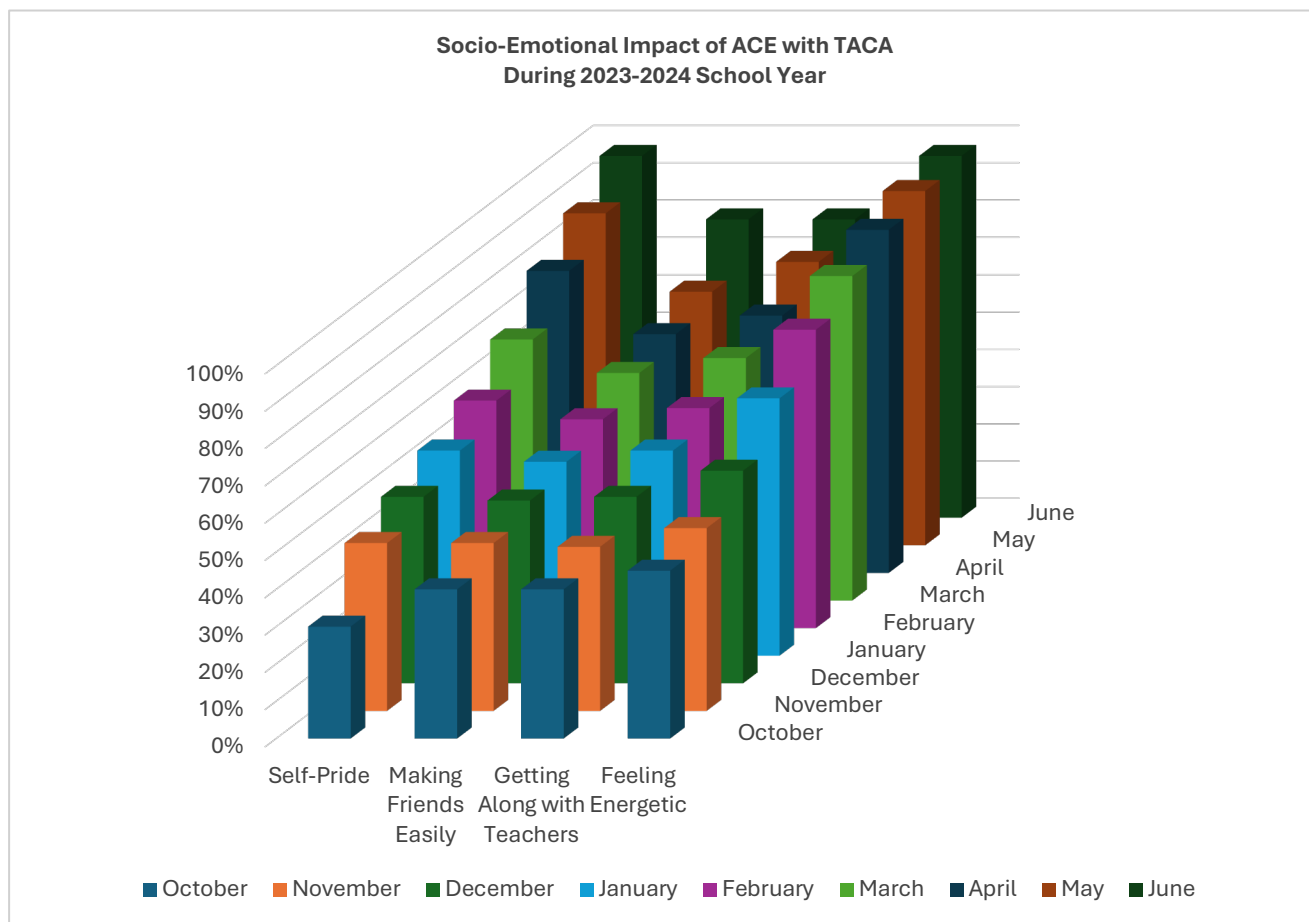


OUTCOMES

Because most of the 66 children who participated in the program were repeat participants who *chose* to participate for a second year, they had heard of the three countries studied and knew something about them. Yet, there was still a definitive upward trend from this year, from an average 24% to an average 95% improvement in their ability to provide the capital city and vocabulary words covered in the target language. While some students had an interest in visiting the country studied at the beginning of the program, an average 95% was interested in visiting by the end of the program. 99% selected the Dance portion as their favorite, and 100% would repeat the program.

In addition to measuring how much content the children learned and retained from Session to Session in the Surveys, the ACE with TACA program also measured the following socio-emotional factors in the 66 participating students during the school year.

Socio-Emotional Impact of ACE with TACA Program on 66 Children During 2023-2024 School Year





Sample Survey

CIRCLE THE SMILEY THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOU.

1. I AM HAPPY WITH MYSELF			
2. I AM PROUD OF THE WORK I DO			
3. I HAVE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE			
4. I LIKE TO BE WITH OTHERS IN THE PROGRAM			
5. I GET ALONG WITH MY TEACHERS			
6. I DO AS WELL AS OTHERS IN THE GROUP			
7. I MAKE FRIENDS EASILY			
8. I KNOW I WILL DO WELL IN THIS PROGRAM			

I CAN FIND NIGERIA ON A MAP.

NIGERIA'S CAPITAL CITY IS Oh joo ba

THE WORD FOR WATER IN YORUBA IS Oh me

THE WORD FOR HIPPO IN YORUBA IS oh sheen oh me

MY FAVORITE PART OF THIS PROGRAM WAS: every thing

Feedback from Some of Our Participants [on Facebook](#)



OBSERVATIONS/CONCLUSIONS

While we expected the participants to walk away with linguistic and cultural knowledge of the African countries covered, we also wanted the children to learn lessons from the folktales and apply them to their own lives, therefore making them less likely to have disciplinary issues not only during the program, but also afterwards.

Our Program Director/Creator having herself been raised culturally with this 'program,' as have many West African children, we know that constant exposure to African culture through storytelling, dance and music, create happier and better-behaved and therefore more successful kids. Therefore, our findings were in line with what we had expected. What we did not expect, however, was the kids being wiped out from the dancing in the first half of the program; and were surprised at their fitness levels, or lack thereof. Of course, as they gradually became sensitized to the movements, they craved more and were always disappointed when the session ended.

We noted that from the very first Session to the last, there was at least a 35% increase in self-worth, as the children reported being prouder of the work they did and therefore getting along better with their teachers and each other during the academic year. There was a slight increase from Year 2 to 3, as we were able to have the Truitt group - little more than half repeating the program from the previous year - again in the final year. Had we been able to have the two same groups as we had originally planned for the entire 3 years of the project, we believe that we would have seen even more of an increase each year.

The ACE (African Cultural Education) with TACA program directly led to raising the confidence and self-worth of 193 predominantly African American youth hailing from low-income households from Chesapeake, Norfolk, and Virginia Beach, VA. Supervising adults from each school/organization also benefitted from the experience and verbalized how much they enjoyed what they learned.

TACA is grateful to all our collaborating organizations, schools, and supporters in making this program a reality for 3 school years. We look forward to strengthening it to build a curriculum that can be offered across multiple school districts state- and nationwide.

