

Frequently Asked Questions About the Alternative Classroom Experience

Which Child Should I Send?

Please refer to the procedures for ACE page at the beginning of this manual for a list of student characteristics. The at-risk ACE student is not necessarily the student who camps out in the principal's office. He/she is not emotionally disturbed nor learning disabled. He is not the student who has failed school for more than two years in a row, nor is he/she the student that has been repeatedly suspended.

The ACE student must have the potential to succeed in the regular classroom. We only have 25 classroom days to work with the student, which is a short time-frame to work 40 miracles.

The at-risk student must have a solid parent behind him/her who is willing to make a commitment to attend parent meetings and provide transportation. The at-risk student we are looking for may have had a drastic drop in grade performance or drastic change in personal behavior. He/she may be suspect of abuse – mental, emotional, or physical. The child best suited for the program may be the one who goes unnoticed and makes average to low grades.

MEDICAL CONSIDERATION: Some children should not be referred to our program for medical reasons. The ACE program is very active and strenuous. Any student who for medical reasons cannot participate in sports at school should not be referred. Also, students with asthma historically have had problems completing the program. Even those students who have not had an “attack” within the last year often have problems as the camp setting is filled with many environmental concerns such as fireplace smoke in the cabins and classrooms, rainy days and nights, and the physical nature of the program.

Please consider these guidelines when selecting students for ACE.

When and how should I begin the referral process?

Candidates for the ACE program should be referred to the camp by the regular classroom teachers of participating schools. These referrals should be channeled through the principals of the schools and the appropriate school district's representative: JoEvelyn Elston for Little Rock and Dr. Jerry Welch for Pulaski County.

The best place to begin is with your teachers, as they should be most familiar with the students. You may even want to conduct an in-service with teachers to help them understand the characteristics of an ACE candidate. Teachers should identify the student(s) using the characteristics previously listed that they think will gain the most from the ACE program. Discuss the teacher's choices with appropriate school personnel. At this point, schools vary in the way the referral process is handled. Usually the principal or counselor completes the referral process from here by contacting the student and parent. Again, there are many different approaches. Some schools approach the child first and send information home with him/her. Others contact the parent by phone first, and still others have a group meeting with several candidates. However the initial contacts are made, the most important part of this process is to be positive with the students and parents. Let them know that ACE is a wonderful, once in a lifetime opportunity, as indeed it is. Either send a tape of the camp documentary home with the student for them to watch or have the family come to the school to watch it. You may want to have a parent whose child has already graduated from the program speak to those parents and students who have been selected as candidates. Usually, this is the most convincing method, as the parents of graduates understand the anxieties of sending their child to a five week program with strangers.

What do I say to the parents and students?

Again, be positive. Let them know that the program is not for “bad kids.” Rather it is a help program for students who have the potential to do well in school, but for some reason are not doing as well as they should be at this point. Tell them some of the things you or the teacher has noticed at school that you are concerned about and that you think the ACE program will help. Tell the students about all of the activities they will get to participate in: camping, cooking out, canoeing, basketball, softball, hiking, nature activities, arts and crafts, kickball, and lots of new games. The students will live in cabins with a counselor and 9 other campers. Assure parents that campers are supervised 24 hours a day and will have 3 good meals a day. Emphasize to parents the importance of attending the Initial Parent Meeting for more information, an opportunity to meet staff, and most importantly to secure their child’s slot. More thorough information is included below.

What is covered at the Initial Parent meeting and when is it held?

Principals or primary contact persons should notify parents of future ACE participants of the Initial Parent Meeting for each session which is a joint meeting of parents from both districts. The dates and meeting places may be found on the calendar of events at the beginning of this manual. In general, these meetings are held on the Tuesday immediately before each session is scheduled to begin. This meeting is held at the camp and typically includes a slide show about the program, detailed information about the program, forms to be completed by the parent, and an explanation of the discipline model and what parents can expect. Students are taken out of the room during the discipline discussion. **This meeting is required to secure a child’s slot in the program.**

What do I do/say when the parent and student decide to participate?

Parents should be aware of the following information before committing to the program:

ACE is a 5-week residential program.

Students will attend class in the camp classroom under the direction of the camp’s teacher.

Camp staff will be visiting the students in their regular classrooms upon completing the program to ensure a smooth transition.

Parents must attend all parent meetings which are held on Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m.

The first parent meeting will be at 4:00 p.m. at the camp on the first Sunday of the session.

Parents are responsible for bringing their children to camp each Sunday at 7:00 p.m.(4:00 p.m. on the first Sunday) and picking them up on Fridays between noon and 2:00 p.m.

The camp charges \$1 per minute baby-sitting fee after 2:00 p.m. on Fridays.

Parents must fill out the Registration Form and return it to the school or the camp as soon as possible to reserve a slot.

Each child must have a physical signed by a doctor or nurse practitioner to attend ACE – **NO**

EXCEPTIONS!

Parents may bring the completed physical on the first day of camp.

Campers will need \$5 spending money the first week. This money will be placed in a camp checking account. When campers need to buy supplies or candy, they can write a check. This way money does not get lost or stolen.

Concession (candy, pops, chips, etc.) is given on a very limited basis (once a week at most).

Parents must make sure children have necessary clothing, bedding, and toiletries. A complete list of necessary items can be found among the parent information.

Encourage parents not to buy new outfits, sleeping bags, etc. Sheets and a blanket will be fine.

Parents are welcome to contact the camp for more information.

How long will the students be out of the regular classroom?

5 weeks

Can I enroll a student after registration day or is there a cut-off date?

Only students selected from the waiting list may be admitted to the program after registration on the first Sunday of a session without discussing this situation with the executive director or program director in advance. Those students from the waiting list will not be accepted later than 9 a.m. on the first Tuesday. The program is very intense, especially the first few days. Experience has told us that students who arrive late have a more difficult time adjusting than do those who were on time, and those late students tend to be dismissed from the program as a result.

How do I get the forms to the camp?

The school is responsible for making sure the Statement of Needs Form and the Parent Registration Form get to the camp as soon as possible to reserve a slot for the student since all slots are reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. Once you have been notified that your student's slot is reserved, all other forms can be completed and sent to the camp any time before registration day. Please feel free to mail or fax these forms directly to the camp. If you mail any forms, please keep a copy of the completed paperwork at the school. Sometimes items are lost in the mail, which causes a great inconvenience for both you and the parents.

Can I visit the camp while my student(s) is there?

Please do! Probably the best time to visit the camp is during the 3rd or 4th week of the program. We strongly encourage your visits for many reasons: (1) Your student will be elated and feel special because of it, (2) You will be able to meet with the camp teachers and counselors concerning your student, (3) You will get to see the camp and the program first hand to help you understand your student's experience. This visit may be crucial to ensuring that your student maintains what he/she has learned during ACE. We are by no means magicians. We need your support and cooperation to help your student "make it." We do ask that you call before coming to make sure the students will be accessible (not camping out).

What happens when students return to the regular classroom?

During the first week back at the regular school, someone from the camp staff will be making daily visits to your school to meet with the teacher and observe the student in the regular classroom. This is designed to help monitor the student's transition back into the regular classroom. Following graduation, each school will be contacted at least monthly to check on the progress of all ACE graduates enrolled at that school. This contact is normally done through the school counselor, so please be sure to let him/her know if problems arise that the camp needs to be made aware of.

How does the teacher average the camp grades into the nine weeks report card?

Students will receive a daily grade, a test grade, and an average for each subject. This represents five weeks worth of grades. Therefore, if the teacher has four weeks of grades in his/her gradebook, then he/she should average in camp grades as 5/9 of the final nine weeks grade. Sometimes the camp session does not fall neatly into a nine weeks grading period and grades should be averaged accordingly.

May I attend the graduation ceremony?

Yes, all school personnel are encouraged to attend the graduation ceremony held the first Sunday after the student's first week back at the school. These dates are marked on the enclosed calendar.

What discipline model is used at the camp?

Our model is based on Reality Therapy by Dr. William Glasser. This model emphasizes taking responsibility for one's own actions and incorporates the use of natural and logical consequences. We do not use corporal punishment. A more thorough description of the discipline model may be found elsewhere in this manual.

What do I do if the student slips back into old behaviors?

Phone Call to Camp: One option is to call the camp. We have found over the years that a simple 5 to 10 minute conversation with the student can often “get them back on track.” If possible, we will arrange for his/her counselor or the follow-up team to visit the student at the school.

Use camp language/discipline model: Still another option is to ask the student what would have happened at camp if he/she had this behavior there. Sometimes this will lead him/her toward problem solving. One of the goals at camp is for campers to solve their own problems by considering the consequences. By the 3rd or 4th week, the ACE staff can usually help campers problem solve simply by saying, “What do we need to do about this?” or “What should your consequence be?” For this problem solving to work at school, the student will need to practice it within that setting versus the camp setting.

What other incentives do students have to maintain?

Free Summer Camp: Our primary incentive program is one free week of summer camp. Any graduate who continues to do well in the regular classroom may attend the free summer camping program for one week for the next three years. Summer slots are reserved on a first-come, first-serve basis, so parents should be encouraged to send their registration cards in quickly as the slots do fill up quickly. At the end of the school year, the camp staff will ask regular classroom teachers to complete an evaluation form and to make recommendations concerning summer camp. We recommend that teachers establish an accounting system for ACE graduates as a means of working toward the goal of summer camp. For example, students may receive a “star” for each day that all work is completed. The teacher and student may then set a goal of 3 stars per week required for summer camp. In this way, the incentive program works on a daily basis. Through summer camp come other incentives.

Honor Camp: Honor Camp is an extra week of summer camp for those summer campers who do exceptionally well at camp in terms of responsibility, attitude, and dependability.

Counselor-In-Training: The CIT program is available for 14 to 17 year old students who have proven themselves to be responsible at camp and who have been recommended by their counselor.

What is the typical day at the Alternative Classroom Experience?

The following schedule should give you a general idea of Pfeifer Camp’s daily routine.

7:00	Wake up/clean up/KAPERS(chores)	4:15	Outdoor Fun & Games
7:45	Flag Ceremony	5:00	Flag/Dinner
8:00	Breakfast	6:00	KAPERS (chores)
8:30	Class – Reading and Language Arts	7:00	Homework/Study Session/ Reading/Games(if work is completed and correct)
11:00	Class – English	9:00	Showers
12:00	Lunch	10:00	Lights out/Bed Time(if done)
12:30	Environmental & Experiential Activities		
1:45	Math		
3:15	Spelling, Social Studies/Science		