

## UNLOCKING POTENTIAL: HOW THE A.C.E. PROGRAM EQUIPS LEARNERS FOR LIFE

### Introduction

For more than fifty years, Accelerated Christian Education has faithfully delivered a Christian academic curriculum and an individualized learning system designed to disciple and guide young people in living lives that glorify God. The program weaves God's Word into every aspect of learning, integrating Scripture memorization and character-building principles into academics. This approach helps learners develop a biblical worldview, teaching them to love, follow, and serve the God who demonstrated His love by sending His Son to redeem them.

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).*

Christian education is not simply an option or a luxury, nor is it merely a commendable idea—it is a divine mandate. It is the law established by God for our ancestors and remains His commandment to us today. It is, indeed, the GREAT COMMANDMENT as recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy.

*<sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup> These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. <sup>7</sup> Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. <sup>8</sup> Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deut. 6:4-9)*

Let us now explore the invaluable benefits of this God-inspired curriculum.

### 1. The Academic Distinctives of the A.C.E. Program

The Accelerated Christian Education (A.C.E.) program is a unique and innovative educational system that emphasizes individualized learning, self-directed progress, mastery-based outcomes, and the development of critical thinking skills. Grounded in Christian values, it offers a tailored and learner-centred approach to education, ensuring learners achieve their fullest potential through a comprehensive and supportive framework.

#### Individualized Learning

At the heart of the A.C.E. program is a commitment to individualized education. Each learner is placed on an academic program that aligns with their current level of achievement, allowing them to experience success while progressing at their own pace. This approach ensures that advanced learners are not held back by the pace of their peers, while those needing additional time are not pressured to keep up with others.

This methodology acknowledges that just as children grow physically at different rates, their cognitive and academic development also varies. Individualized education enables each learner to work at a level where they excel, building confidence and fostering a love for learning. Assessments are conducted when learners are ready, rather than adhering to rigid, pre-determined schedules.

#### Programmed Learning

A.C.E.'s programmed learning model is designed to guide learners through a carefully structured series of sequential steps, building skill upon skill. This ensures mastery at each stage before advancing to more complex concepts. The process begins with assessing the learner's current knowledge and abilities, then progresses through activities that reinforce understanding and retention of new concepts.

Learners are empowered to set their own goals, take ownership of their progress, and develop the discipline to achieve them. Academic supervisors provide essential support and guidance, emphasizing the partnership between learners and educators. This approach positions the learner as an active participant in their educational journey.

### **Independent or Self-Directed Learning**

The A.C.E. program fosters independence by equipping learners to take responsibility for their own learning. Unlike conventional schooling, where educators often bear the burden of driving academic progress, A.C.E. encourages learners to manage their studies, complete activities accurately, and prepare for assessments independently.

This self-directed model cultivates essential life skills such as goal setting, time management, and self-discipline. These qualities have contributed to the success of A.C.E. graduates in tertiary institutions worldwide. Additionally, the program emphasizes meaningful relationships between learners and supervisors, ensuring consistent, personalized interaction that supports academic and personal growth.

### **Built-In Reinforced System of Learning**

To enhance comprehension and retention, the A.C.E. curriculum incorporates a built-in system of reinforcement. New vocabulary and concepts are introduced gradually, explained thoroughly, and revisited through activities and assessments.

Learners engage in a cycle of reading, completing activities, and testing to ensure mastery at each level. Tools such as Checkups, Self-tests, and PACE tests provide multiple opportunities to measure progress, reinforcing learning at every step.

### **Developing Critical Thinking Skills**

#### ***Mastery-based Learning Approach***

The A.C.E. program emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills through its mastery-based learning approach. By ensuring a thorough understanding of foundational concepts, learners are prepared to tackle more advanced critical thinking challenges.

Key features that promote critical thinking include:

- Individualized learning plans with clear objectives and immediate feedback.
- Assignments that require analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, such as compare-contrast essays, map interpretation, and creative compositions.
- Problem-solving exercises in subjects like mathematics and science that encourage application of knowledge to new situations.
- Structured activities, such as writing original sentences with new vocabulary or conducting experiments, that require higher-order thinking.

A.C.E.'s Christian and values-based environment further supports the development of critical thinking by nurturing traits like self-discipline, integrity, and empathy. Through individualized attention, learners are guided to recognize their responsibilities and approach challenges with confidence and independence.

### ***Memorization***

Memorization is a foundational component of the A.C.E. methodology. It enhances cognitive processes by solidifying understanding and serving as a stepping stone to higher-order thinking. The program integrates memorization into activities that promote mastery learning, ensuring learners have a strong grasp of key concepts.

## ***Asking Questions Instead of Providing Answers***

The role of the educator is to lead the learner to learn on their own and master new concepts with the minimum assistance from the educator. They become more of a coach to the learner than being the source of knowledge.

To deepen understanding, supervisors use leading questions to guide learners in critical thinking exercises, such as:

- "Tell me in your own words what you think you are supposed to do."
- "Where is the example or paragraph that relates to this question?"
- "Let's review the examples or previously completed problems/activities."

## **2. Character Development Distinctives of the A.C.E. Program**

Character development is a cornerstone of the Accelerated Christian Education (A.C.E.) program, reflecting its commitment to nurturing learners not only academically but also morally and spiritually. Recognizing that children are not inherently born with good character or values, the program provides a deliberate, structured framework for instilling these essential qualities.

Character training does not happen by chance; it must be purposeful and planned. A.C.E. emphasizes the importance of proactive effort in shaping learners' character, aligning with the biblical principle, *"Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6).

This training extends beyond mere teaching, which transfers knowledge, to training—a process that requires consistency, patience, and time. Educators are not only transmitters of knowledge but also role models and guides in a continuous journey of character formation. Supervisors and monitors serve as mentors, modelling Christlike leadership by guiding learners with love, patience, and care (Mark 10:45). This relationship encourages learners to emulate servant leadership in their own lives.

### **The Biblical Foundation**

At the heart of A.C.E.'s character development is the Bible, which serves as the foundation for Christian values and behaviour. The life of Jesus Christ is the ultimate example, with His actions, speech, and interactions with others forming the model for learners to emulate. By embedding biblical principles throughout the curriculum, A.C.E. ensures that learners are not only taught but also trained in godly character.

The A.C.E. curriculum is rooted in the belief that the Bible is the ultimate source of truth and wisdom (2 Timothy 3:16-17). By integrating scripture into academic lessons, learners learn to see all knowledge through a biblical lens.

A.C.E. integrates faith and education, teaching learners that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). This principle instils a lifelong hunger for both spiritual and academic growth.

Learners are also encouraged to engage in acts of service, reflecting Matthew 25:40. This focus on benevolence helps learners develop compassion and a heart for others. The A.C.E. program emphasizes loving God and loving others (Matthew 22:37-39), encouraging learners to integrate faith into every aspect of their lives, including their education.

### **The Four Pillars of Character Training**

A.C.E. identifies four essential components of effective character training: imparting, investing, involving, and inspecting.

#### **a. Imparting Knowledge**

To develop godly character, learners must first have a clear understanding of what these traits are. This involves:

- Emphasising carefully selected character traits woven in the learning materials.
- Teaching learners what is right and boldly addressing negative behaviours.
- Integrating illustrations, activities, and testing to ensure learners grasp the practical applications of the character traits.

#### **b. Investing Energy**

Educators play a crucial role in character development by prioritizing it in their teaching and interactions. They are called to:

- Dedicate effort to intentional character-building moments both inside and outside the learning centre.
- Model Christian character traits through servant leadership, showing learners what it means to live out values like integrity, compassion, and self-discipline.
- Demonstrate that what is important to educators becomes important to learners.

#### **c. Involving Learners**

Character development is not a passive process. Learners must actively engage in practicing and applying the values they learn. A.C.E. promotes this by:

- Encouraging participation in benevolence projects and service opportunities.
- Providing opportunities to study and emulate individuals who exemplify godly character.
- Implementing character-related awards to celebrate and reinforce positive traits.

#### **d. Inspecting the Fruit**

Regular evaluation ensures that character training is effective. Educators are tasked to:

- Observe how learners interact with peers and authority figures.
- Recognize and commend learners for displaying godly character, while constructively addressing areas needing improvement.
- Consistently inspect what they expect, ensuring learners internalize and apply the traits taught.

#### **Character-Building imbedded in the Curriculum Materials**

Character-building is integrated into every aspect of the A.C.E. program. Each PACE (Packet of Accelerated Christian Education) from Levels 1 to 12 includes:

- **A Character Trait with a Character Trait Poem:** Each PACE highlights a specific Christian character trait, such as diligence, honesty, or humility. These traits align with biblical teachings, fostering Christlike behaviour in learners (Galatians 5:22-23).
- **Bible Memory Verses:** Instilling scriptural foundations for values and encouraging learners to hide God's Word in their hearts, fostering spiritual growth and character transformation (Psalm 119:11).
- **Cartoons and Characters:** Portraying biblical traits in relatable scenarios.

- **Activities and Testing:** Helping learners understand and practice each character trait.

The program covers 90 Christian character traits, repeated and reinforced across levels to solidify their integration into learners' lives. The strategic repetition ensures learners not only learn about these traits but also begin to live them out.

Training in the A.C.E. program involves a systematic and intentional process that focuses on:

- **Repetition:** Traits are revisited at different levels, increasing familiarity and retention. A.C.E.'s mastery-based system reflects the biblical principle of meditating on God's Word day and night (Joshua 1:8). Through repetition, learners internalize godly principles and academic concepts.
- **Practical Application:** Learners are provided with daily opportunities to practice what they learn.
- **Biblical Integration:** From text content to activities, every aspect reflects a Christian worldview.

### **Character Building through the A.C.E. Procedures**

- **Goal Setting and Stewardship**

Learners are taught to set daily academic goals, reflecting the biblical principle of stewardship over time and resources (Proverbs 16:3). This practice encourages responsibility and intentional living.

- **Obedience and Accountability**

The A.C.E. procedures require learners to complete work responsibly and honestly, echoing biblical principles of obedience and accountability to authority (Ephesians 6:1-4).

- **Encouraging Perseverance and Faith in Trials**

The A.C.E. system teaches learners to work diligently through challenges, reflecting James 1:2-4, which emphasizes perseverance as a pathway to maturity in faith.

- **Promoting Integrity Through Self-Assessment**

Self-scoring and correction processes align with Proverbs 4:26, encouraging learners to evaluate their work honestly and uphold integrity in all they do. Score Keys are a trust placed in the hands of learners. Learners should be taught to handle that trust. Learners learn the most from their PACEs with proper scoring and rescoring. It builds godly character.

- **Building Relationships Based on Christian Love and Respect**

The A.C.E. Learning Centre fosters an environment of mutual respect and encouragement, reflecting the biblical command to love one another as Christ loved us (John 13:34-35).

- **Biblical Discipline and Correction**

The program incorporates structured discipline, consistent with Proverbs 22:6, which emphasizes training a child in the way they should go. This guidance fosters a sense of moral responsibility.

### **3. The Value of the Accelerated Christian Education Program in Developing Essential Life Skills**

The Accelerated Christian Education (A.C.E.) program stands apart from traditional educational systems by focusing not only on academic achievement but also on cultivating essential life skills such as goal setting, time management, and personal responsibility. These skills are integral to lifelong

success, equipping learners to navigate challenges and achieve their full potential in both personal and professional domains.

### **Fostering Goal Setting**

One of the core strengths of the A.C.E. program is its emphasis on empowering learners to set and achieve their own academic goals. Each learner begins the day by setting specific objectives, which provides a clear direction for their learning journey. This process encourages learners to:

- **Define achievable targets:** Learners learn to break larger academic tasks into smaller, manageable goals.
- **Cultivate discipline:** By consistently working toward these goals, they develop a sense of commitment and persistence.
- **Build self-confidence:** Achieving goals reinforces a sense of accomplishment and motivates learners to aim higher.

Through this structured approach, learners internalize the importance of setting goals not just academically but in other areas of life, preparing them for future challenges.

### **Mastering Time Management**

The individualized nature of the A.C.E. program allows learners to work at their own pace, which requires them to take control of their time. Unlike conventional classroom models where the pace is dictated by the group, A.C.E. learners must plan their daily and weekly activities to meet their academic objectives. This fosters:

- **Prioritization:** Learners learn to allocate their time to tasks that are most important, ensuring deadlines are met.
- **Efficiency:** With the freedom to progress at their own speed, learners discover the value of focused, productive study sessions.
- **Accountability:** The responsibility for managing their time instills a sense of ownership over their academic progress.

These time management skills are essential for succeeding in higher education, careers, and personal endeavours, where self-directed planning is often critical.

### **Encouraging Responsibility for Learning**

A defining characteristic of the A.C.E. methodology is its emphasis on learner-led learning. Each learner is responsible for working through their curriculum, completing activities, and preparing for assessments independently. This model encourages:

- **Autonomy:** Learners take control of their education, understanding that their success depends on their effort and initiative.
- **Critical thinking:** The program's self-assessment tools, such as Self-tests, require learners to evaluate their understanding and identify areas for improvement.
- **Accountability:** By tracking their progress, learners learn to take ownership of both their achievements and challenges.

This shift from educator-driven instruction to learner-driven learning mirrors real-world scenarios, where individuals must take responsibility for their growth and development.

### **Practical Applications of Life Skills**

The skills cultivated through the A.C.E. program extend far beyond the classroom. Learners who learn to set goals, manage their time, and take responsibility for their learning are better equipped to:

- **Succeed in higher education:** The self-discipline and organizational skills gained through A.C.E. provide a solid foundation for managing the demands of college or university.
- **Thrive in the workplace:** Employers value individuals who can set objectives, work independently, and meet deadlines without constant supervision.
- **Navigate personal challenges:** Whether balancing commitments or pursuing personal ambitions, the ability to plan and execute effectively is invaluable.

## Conclusion

In summary the A.C.E. program's benefits lie in its ability to balance academic rigor with personalized support, fostering a learning environment where each learner can thrive. By prioritizing individualized learning, self-direction, mastery, and critical thinking, A.C.E. equips learners with the tools to succeed academically and beyond. Its holistic approach, rooted in meaningful relationships and Christian values, makes it a transformative educational experience.

Character development is not an incidental outcome in the A.C.E. program—it is a deliberate, foundational goal. By integrating biblical principles, modelling Christ-like behaviour, and emphasizing the four pillars of imparting, investing, involving, and inspecting, the program ensures learners grow into individuals of strong moral character. A.C.E.'s comprehensive approach equips learners not just for academic success but for a life grounded in integrity, service, and faith. The A.C.E. program's procedures are also aligned with biblical teachings, creating a comprehensive framework for both academic excellence and spiritual discipleship.

The A.C.E. program's focus on developing life skills such as goal setting, time management, and personal responsibility makes it a valuable educational choice. By instilling these habits early, the program prepares learners not only for academic success but also for a lifetime of achievement and growth. In a world that increasingly values independence and self-motivation, the A.C.E. methodology provides learners with a competitive edge, equipping them to become confident, capable, and responsible individuals.

The pursuit of *True Education* extends beyond academic excellence to the cultivation of one's character rooted in the observed character of God, which is *wisdom*.

*The constant refining of the child's character through imprinting the word of God into the life of the child, impression into the soft flesh of the heart of the child, infused by activity, testing, trial and feedback, brings forth a "polishing" of the being of the child, into a greater likeness of Christ.*

This is true education and serves as the core purpose of the Accelerated Christian Education programme.