

# WELCOME TO VOICE: EMPOWERING A POSITIVE CLIMATE!



The Arts & College Preparatory Academy  
4401 Hilton Corporate Drive  
Columbus, OH 43232

EMPOWER A POSITIVE CLIMATE  
**VOICE**

AN **ACPA** PROGRAM

# INTRODUCTION

The VOICE program was developed by ACPA because of students like Sophia & Alex. The purpose of the program is to teach other school boards, administrators and teachers how to empower a positive climate within their schools and school districts.

The VOICE program is a compilation of ACPA's best practices that influence our culture of safety and inclusion. This interactive program gives participants tangible advice and tools from ACPA as to what is needed from administrators and teachers to encourage an inclusive environment within the student body.

Participants in the VOICE program come away with a guide book of activities, lesson plans and administrative best practices to help schools build an environment of inclusion, free of bullying, violence and issues of inequality among student groups.



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“After being emotionally knocked down by people I’ve known since preschool, I hated school. Now I walk in every morning with smiles from kind students and thoughtful teachers. ACPA gives me the best education and happiness.”

— Sophia

“I think the most important thing about ACPA, really, is the fact that you will never have to feel out of place. Not fearing social issues allows you to focus more on your classes and other things that you enjoy.”

— Alex

# HISTORY OF ACPA

ACPA was founded in 2002 by GG Howard — a visual art teacher, world traveler and mother. GG witnessed the emotional and physical effects of bullying first hand when her daughter entered high school.

Outraged at the treatment her daughter received from peers and the response of administrators, GG created a place where she believed students would feel safe, loved, and nourished, both creatively and academically.

Students and staff constantly strive to uphold the standards on which ACPA was founded and built; and challenge one another to reexamine those standards often, adapt when needed and develop together as a community. Our diverse student body is a point of pride; the various backgrounds, experiences and identities that ACPA encompasses allows for a more holistic and just educational experience.

ACPA's vision is to sustain a progressive teaching and learning culture that thrives on safety and acceptance, high academic achievement, a commitment to the arts and college preparedness.



## OUR CORE VALUES

**Honest** – Our students are trailblazers. They are expected to represent the truth through their voices and their actions. They are encouraged to be leaders, to use their voices and to reject passivity.

**Inclusive** – We believe in creating a safe environment for all students, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender or gender expression, that respects and celebrates difference and where everyone can feel free to express who they are without the threat of being bullied.

**Creative** – We celebrate and encourage artistic expression and innovative thinking from all students and staff. We believe in thinking outside of the box in regards to our curriculum and how that curriculum is delivered to our students. Our students utilize their artistic abilities to critically solve the educational endeavors that they encounter.

**Rigorous** – Our academic programs demand a commitment from our students. We believe in challenging our students with a robust college preparatory academic curriculum that prepares our students for college.

# LGBTQ STUDENTS

ACPA's success is dependent upon all students feeling safe and valued in our school.

This value of diversity and individuality has created an environment that allows students to embrace the questions that they have about their identity. In a recent survey, 30% of the ACPA students that responded identified as LGBTQ.

This respect for all members of the community regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, race or religion, is the backbone of our inclusive environment. It is our successes with our students that we want to share with you to help you create an inclusive environment for all students to feel safe and welcomed. Specific to our LGBTQ students, we have implemented programming, practices and policies that highlight our commitment to this group of students.

At ACPA, there are administrative practices that provide support for our LGBTQ students.



## OUR PRACTICES

### School Policies

ACPA's policies and student handbook ensure inclusion. Although not mandated by the State of Ohio, ACPA's anti-bullying, anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies ensure a safe place for our LGBTQ students.

### Administrative & Staff Support

ACPA's administrators and teachers are prepared and trained to support the unique experiences of our LGBTQ teens, including assistance navigating the coming out process.

### School Support of National Initiatives

ACPA honors its LGBTQ students by celebrating National Coming Out Day, National Day of Silence and the Trevor Project, just to name a few.

### Curriculum

ACPA encourages our teachers to include a more well-rounded perspective of our history, the arts and literature by including those historical figures and contributors from the LGBTQ community.

### Extra-Curricular Activities

From walking in the Columbus, Ohio PRIDE parade to the school's Annual Drag Show, ACPA supports our LGBTQ students with programming that gives them an opportunity to participate in the larger LGBTQ community.

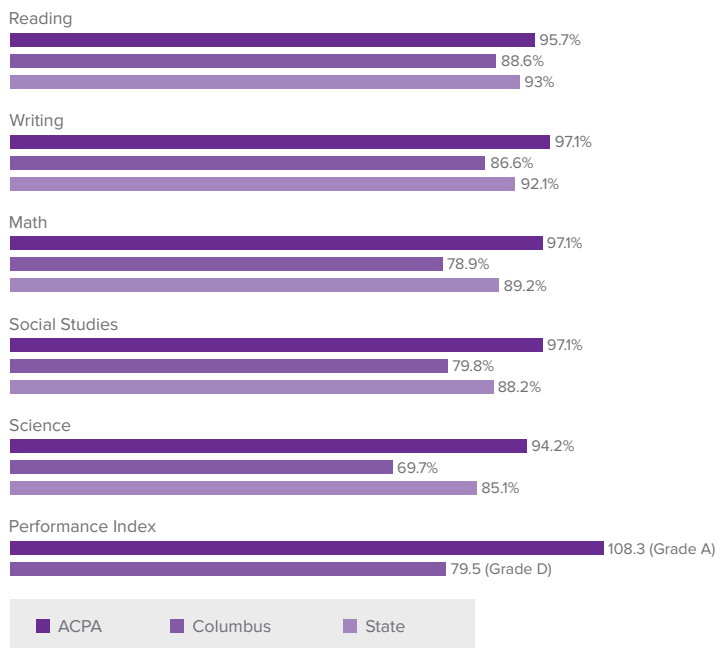
# ACPA'S RESULTS

The results of creating an inclusive and safe environment are proven in our students' test scores and the continued recognition we receive.

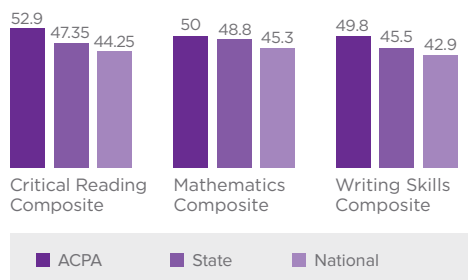
Here is an overview of what we have achieved over the past year.

**Graduation Rate:** 95.5%    **Attendance Rate:** 92.8%    **2013 ACT Scores:** 20.5

## Student Achievement: 2013 Ohio Graduation Test



## PSAT Scores: 2013 Results



## SCHOOL AWARDS & RECOGNITION

### 2013

Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools:  
Charter High School of the Year

### 2011 – 2013

Ohio Department of Education:  
High Progress School of Honor

### 2010 – 2013

Ohio Department of Education:  
School of Excellence

### 2010 – 2013

Ohio Department of Education:  
School of Promise

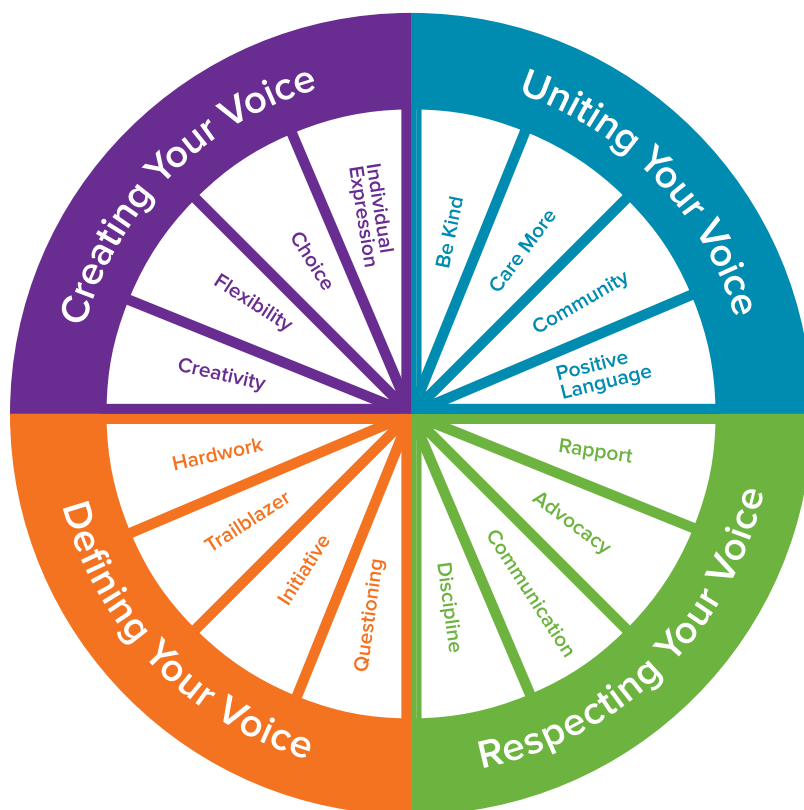
**ACPA has also been featured on  
MSNBC, NPR and NBC.**



# VOICE CURRICULUM

The VOICE curriculum is the essence of how each student, staff member and administrator can use their VOICE to impact an inclusive culture. This is shared throughout the presentation of the curriculum.

The VOICE curriculum is divided into four program areas that highlight the ACPA culture and how they create an inclusive environment within our school. The purpose of this interactive program is to disseminate ACPA's best practices to spark ideas for how you can create an inclusive culture.



## CURRICULUM

### Uniting Your Voice

Helps participants to understand how the expectation of inclusiveness is something that starts before the student ever enters the hallways at your school. This helps to unite the school under the expectation of respect and inclusiveness.

### Respecting Your Voice

Walks teachers and administrators through how the use of rapport, advocacy, communication and discipline can foster respect from the student on all levels. Discipline at ACPA is handled mainly through communication and problem solving, not punishment. This approach empowers students in the situation.

### Defining Your Voice

By providing a safe environment where students feel they can express themselves, students can question the norm and speak out if they feel there is a need for change, helping them define who they are and their place within the community. ACPA is committed to showing students how even the most marginalized groups influence change within our culture.

### Creating Your Voice

Helps students gain a sense of who they are while finding their own VOICE within our inclusive environment. We share how as teachers and administrators we can be flexible in a way that allows our students to achieve at a very high level all the while being able to create and showcase their own VOICE.

# CONTACT VOICE

If your school is facing challenges with bullying, violence or issues of inequality among student groups, VOICE may be able to help your school.

## **The Arts & College Preparatory Academy**

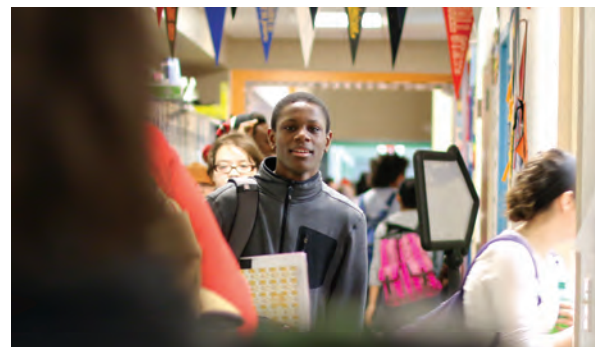
4401 Hilton Corporate Drive  
Columbus, OH 43232

**Phone:** 614-986-9974

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[ACPAVOICE.org](http://ACPAVOICE.org)

**To get involved in our program or to become a partner school, please contact ACPA VOICE staff at [VOICE@artcollegeprep.org](mailto:VOICE@artcollegeprep.org).**



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