



ACEing Autism

First Serve: School Programs





Dear School Representative,

Thank you for your interest in bringing our tennis program to your school. The following information will familiarize you with our organization and outline the process of establishing our program as part of your adaptive physical education curriculum.

Our History

In 2008, ACEing Autism was founded by Richard Spurling, a tennis professional with an MBA in entrepreneurship, and Dr. Shafali Jeste, a pediatric neurologist. They saw an opportunity to help address the lack of quality recreational programs available to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

ACEing Autism was founded with the mission to make the sport of tennis accessible to children with ASD. Their goal was to use tennis as a means to enhance health and fitness, hand-eye coordination, motor development, and social skills of children with autism, while ensuring that each child has fun in the process. They enlisted the help of autism professionals, tennis enthusiasts, and parents of children with ASD to form the foundation of the organization.

The first program began with Richard working one-on-one with just a handful of Shafali's patients. By the fall of 2009, ACEing Autism had grown to serve over 100 families at two locations in the greater Boston area. In early 2010, Shafali accepted a position at the Center for Autism Treatment (CART) at UCLA and Richard began building the program in Los Angeles. Since that time, the program has continued to expand. As of 2024, there are 145+ ACEing Autism programs running nationwide.

In 2018, we began implementing our program in schools with the goal of making a larger impact, allowing kids to play more hours of tennis per year. Each school had ten students playing tennis twice per week as part of their P.E. class, led by the physical education teacher. We now have teachers delivering our curriculum at 47 schools across the country.

The goal for our school-based programming is to introduce your students to the sport of tennis, and if they love it, they can seek additional recreation programs outside of school. We would love to discuss the possibilities of introducing a community-based program in your area for your students to participate in, if there isn't one already!



OUR MISSION

ACEing Autism is on a mission to help individuals with autism to grow, develop, and benefit from social connections and fitness through affordable tennis programming, uniquely meeting individual needs while filling a national void for this growing and underserved population.

OUR VISION

ACEing Autism aims to be the preeminent thought leader on how tennis and sport develop individuals with autism spectrum disorder by reaching 50% of the 1M+ families in the autism community and helping them become aware of ACEing Autism and impact a greater percentage of the population reached with ACEing's unique programming.

School Program Structure

This program is offered year-round and consists of weekly tennis clinics that are held during physical education classes at school. This program is only available to students at the school, focusing on students with autism or similar disabilities.

Curriculum Delivery

Our school-based program can be delivered by your PE teacher, a teacher with interest in tennis, an ABA therapist, or, when necessary, we can help to fill the position with a local tennis pro.

Launching a program typically requires 3-4 months of planning. The school is responsible for determining a suitable space for the program, the length and frequency, staffing, and what students/classes will participate. We ask schools to make a minimum of a two-year commitment, deliver our curriculum one to three days per week throughout the school year, and submit session and participant data.

ACEing Autism Support Provided

Curriculum & Training

Our ACEing Autism Curriculum includes instructions on how to effectively run each clinic of the session, modifications for activities, and strategies for working with our participants.

Our training provides support in teaching the fundamentals of tennis, how to break down tennis skills into smaller parts, and how to efficiently run the program specific to your students' abilities and the space provided for adaptive PE.

We provide virtual training sessions leading up to the launch and ongoing check-in opportunities. Additionally, we provide an in-person training on launch day and in-person visits every 1-2 years from Regional Program Directors.

Program Cost

As part of our commitment to delivering high-quality training and support, a training fee is required for ACEing Autism's school-based program. This fee helps cover the cost of our trainers' travel, time spent on-site, and their work in observing, training, and providing hands-on guidance using our accredited curriculum. The training fee typically ranges from \$1,000 to \$2,000, depending on the duration and scope of the training and observation at your school. The fee also includes all necessary equipment to successfully implement the program.

Equipment

We provide all the necessary equipment to run a successful program. We provide Head racquets, as well as mini-nets, low compression balls with hoppers, and teaching aids. You will need to have dry storage space for the equipment on campus.

Insurance

All ACEing Autism programs are covered by a USTA general liability insurance policy. The policy covers commercial general liability on damages to rented property and personal injury.

Finding a Suitable Space for the Program

Establishing a suitable space on campus for the program to take place will be important, but please note that you do not need to deliver our program on a tennis court. The space should be somewhat isolated from students who are not participating in the tennis program to lessen confusion and distraction.

Some suggestions would be:

- An open playground space
- A gymnasium
- An open cafeteria
- An auditorium

Additional things to keep in mind:

- Our program can be large and sometimes noisy-will it be disruptive to other students or classrooms nearby?
- Is the space located in a relatively quiet and distraction-free environment?
- Is there a dry space on campus to store equipment?
- Is there an indoor space available in the event of inclement weather?

Program Length and Frequency

Our hope is that the ACEing Autism curriculum can help you fulfill the state standards for physical education in your school. Our goal is to provide our tennis curriculum to your students.

Typically, the clinic takes place during the PE class period, running for 30 to 60 minutes. Our vision is to have your staff deliver the program during school hours for 6+ hours each semester.

From our experience, the more time students have playing tennis, the better their outcomes are. Hand-eye coordination, social skills, fitness, and tennis competence all improves with more time playing tennis.

Staffing

Most of our school programs serve eight to ten students per class. We take into account the size of the space the program will take place in, as well as the student to teacher/aide ratio.

We suggest 10 students maximum and to make the best use of paraprofessionals. The majority of our programs range from 6-12 kids per class with a ratio of 1 staff member to 6 participants.

When introducing this program to your staff, please communicate that experience with tennis is not required. ACEing Autism provides an in-person orientation and training, training manuals, and online video resources.

School Partnership Requirements

Required Reporting

We ask our school partners to submit documentation of the tennis classes by filling out a form after the tennis segment is finished for each semester. We will ask about the number of students served, as well as the number of weeks it ran, and the number of hours each week. We also ask about the ages, gender, ethnicities, and zip codes served. This data is primarily used for measuring impact, as well as grant and donor cultivation.

Partnership Commitment

We ask our school partners to commit to at least 2 years of program delivery, as well as maintaining communication with the ACEing Autism team.

If any new teachers are brought on board to deliver the curriculum, the school will let ACEing Autism know so we can provide training to new teachers.

I want to move forward! Now what?

Now that you have an overview of launching your ACEing Autism school program, your next step will be to confirm your interest by completing the [School & District Initial Application](#) and setting up a time to meet with our Director of Program Operations, Justin Belisario. Please feel free to contact him at justin@aceingautism.org.

CONTACT US

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Thank you for your interest and support in
ACEing Autism!

