



2024 National Award Winners

CAP's K-6th grade [Aerospace Connections in Education \(ACE\) program](#) began in 2007 as the Jr Cadet program. In 2008, the program name was changed to ACE and the sixth grade curriculum began being used in grades 6-8. Since the program's inception, over 638,000 students have been impacted. During the 2023-2024 AY alone, over 101K students were involved! Each year, those who are nominated for their stellar ACE work are considered for awards. Awards are included for the [ACE Plus Adopt program](#) as a component of the ACE program which connects CAP squadron as mentors for grades 5-8. The names found below are the award winners for 2024. Each award recipient will receive an award plaque and a grant award courtesy of the [Air & Space Forces Association Education Council](#).

Click on each blue award, below, for each winner's story!

[National ACE School of the Year: Grayhawk Elementary School](#)
[National ACE Coordinator of the Year: Grayhawk's Michelle Lindstrom](#)

~ Principal, Eli Hubbell, Scottsdale, AZ

Site of the 2024-2025 National ACE Liftoff Event on Oct 15, 2024!

[National ACE Teacher of the Year: Thomas Ellis, 5-8th Grade Science Teacher](#)
Palm Beach Day Academy, Palm Beach, FL

[National ACE Collaborative Teacher of the Year: Caitlin Hayes, STEM Teacher](#)
St. John the Apostle Catholic School, Virginia Beach, VA

[National ACE Resource Teacher of the Year: Kayla Kill](#)
LeMay Elementary School, Bellevue, NE

[TWO National ACE Students of the Year:](#)

[Mason Grinder, 6th Grade](#)

Macon County R-IV School, New Cambria, MO ~ Dawn Johnson, Teacher

[Kyle Adams, 6th Grade](#)

Palm Beach Day Academy, Palm Beach, FL ~ Thomas Ellis, Teacher

[National ACE Plus Adopt Collaborative Squadron and School Teams of the Year:](#)
[GLR-MI-059 Adrian Composite Squadron & Prairie Elementary School and](#)
[SER-FL-049 Ormond Beach Composite Squadron & Ormond Beach Middle School](#)
Adrian, Michigan, and Ormond Beach, Florida

How are ACE awards determined?

Nominations are accepted for the major ACE awards of National Teacher, School, and Student of the Year for the Aerospace Connections in Education (ACE) program.

For other ACE awards selected, to include the collaborative ACE Plus team award, the CAP National HQ ACE team in Montgomery, AL, identifies schools, teachers, and/or squadrons having gone above and beyond; uniquely standing out via their photos sent to the HQ team and their social media posts which tagged @CAPaerospace.

For all ACE participants for the upcoming 2024-2025 Academic Year, keep the ACE team informed of all being done with ACE students and remember to tag @CAPaerospace on any social media posts about your CAP work so that YOUR work will be noticed!

Points of Pride for 2023-2024

Exceeding the goal of 100,000 “faces of ACE” across the nation was the highest achievement of the year. Reaching 101, 384 students with 658 teachers from 548 schools in 48 states + Europe (DoD) was a significant milestone. (See ACE list by state [HERE.](#))

In addition to a variety of school types, there were Boys and Girls Clubs, Scout groups, Women in Aviation International (WAI) groups, after-school programs, museums, libraries, and summer camps all using the ACE program. Proudly, CAP had a large group of ACE Plus teams this year, as well.

- 98% educators view ACE as fitting well with standards; supporting STEM education; a valuable use of time; and a positive influence on behavior and learning.
- 78% of ACE schools are Title 1 Schools, therefore allowing CAP to reach a broad range of ethnicities and socio-economic demographics.

The new [ACE Plus: Squadron-Classroom Adopt program](#) expanded in its fourth year to have CAP squadrons connect with teachers to help teach the ACE lessons, share information about the CAP cadet program, coordinate field trips, and teach about a variety of STEM careers. Included in this year’s ACE Plus Adopt program was 8 Regions, 24 wings, 30 squadrons, 38 teachers, and 2,786 students. (See the outstanding ACE Plus award winners above.)

Through the Years

Since 2007 inception: over 638,000 ACE students in 50 states + DC & PR + Europe (DoD)

- ***The [Air & Space Forces Association](#) has been a steadfast partner, providing shirts and award grants. CAP appreciates their continued support.***
- To get a perspective of the overall ACE program and history, see the 16-year milestone and 2024 ACE awards story in CAP.NEWS, [HERE.](#) (July 2024)



2024 National ACE Student of the Year:
Mason Grinder, 6th Grade
Nominated by Teacher, Dawn Johnson
Macon County R-IV School, New Cambria, MO

Mason Grinder is being recognized by his teacher who describes *Mason as the epitome of an ACE student, one who excels in academic areas (specifically in science), shines in good character, and enjoys working to become physically fit, the three components of the ACE program.*

From Dawn Johnson:

“As Mason's ACE teacher for the past year, I have had the privilege of witnessing his exceptional academic abilities, strong character, and unwavering passion for STEM activities.

“In the classroom, Mason consistently stood out for his outstanding work ethic, critical thinking skills, and his ability to grasp complex concepts with ease. He actively participated in discussions, asked insightful questions, and demonstrated a genuine curiosity for learning. His commitment to academic excellence is truly commendable, as evidenced by his consistently high grades and exemplary performance on assessments.

“Beyond his academic achievements, Mason’s character is truly remarkable. He is a natural leader who has the rare ability to inspire and motivate his peers. Whether it was leading group projects, or supporting classmates in need, Mason consistently demonstrated maturity, empathy, and integrity. His leadership skills have not only benefited his classmates but have also enriched the overall learning environment.

“One area where Mason particularly shines is his deep interest in science activities. He has been actively involved in Science Olympiad and Scholar Bowl, where he has showcased his dedication, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Mason's passion for STEM not only reflects his intellectual curiosity but also his commitment to pursuing his interests with enthusiasm and determination.

“In conclusion, Mason is an exceptional student who embodies the qualities of a true scholar and leader. His academic achievements, outstanding character, and passion for aerospace activities make him an ideal candidate for the National ACE Student of the Year award. I have no doubt that Mason will continue to excel in all his future endeavors and positively impact any community or institution he becomes a part of.

“Mason is highly deserving of this honor, and I offer my highest recommendation for his consideration as the National ACE Student of the Year.”

**CONGRATULATIONS, MASON GRINDER,
ONE OF TWO NATIONAL ACE STUDENTS OF THE YEAR!**

