

FAMILY PLAYBOOK

Goal: To equip parents with the “how to” of daily operations at Acton Academy North San Antonio so they may support their children’s Hero’s Journeys.



ACTON ACADEMY
NORTH SAN ANTONIO



Welcome

to the first steps in your Hero's Journey...

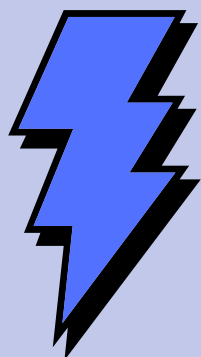


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INTRODUCTION TO TERMS

We believe that our words and traditions should intentionally reflect our purpose and philosophy. Some of the terminology that we use may sound strange to those who are new to our community. The following is a list of words and ideas that you will find in this playbook as well as other forms of communication in our community.

HERO'S JOURNEY: The guiding structure of many of the greatest stories and myths in history. The structure describes the stages that heroes go through on their journey. This structure, which follows a set pattern, is a key principle in the Acton model.

HERO/LEARNER: These terms can be used interchangeably. We prefer to use these terms instead of "children" or "student," because we are all on a learning journey.

GUIDE: We believe that heroes need "a guide on the side" more than a "sage on the stage." This is our term for a "teacher," because it better reflects the role of adults in the school.

STUDIO: Studios are where collaborations happen and great exhibitions are planned.

COMMUNITY: We are very intentional about building trust and deep friendships between all of the learners in a given studio. We refer to them as a "community" because of this level of intimacy and vulnerability that is required to truly belong to the team.

INTRODUCTION TO TERMS

CORE SKILLS: Reading, writing, and arithmetic are the foundational academic subjects that all learners work on individually and at their own pace.

QUEST: A quest is roughly equivalent to a unit in project-based learning. It represents a significant amount of work with a team and a high level of mastery to complete.

FLOW: The mental state that results from being immersed in deep and meaningful work or exploration.

JOURNEY MEETING: The Acton equivalent of a “parent-teacher conference.”

LAUNCH: A Socratic conversation that is geared toward exploring deep and meaningful concepts or challenges. Every school day begins and ends with a “launch.”

SOCRATIC DISCUSSION: A formal discussion based on a defined concept or question that requires participants to clearly articulate their positions or arguments. A leader’s role in a socratic discussion is to ask open ended questions that will help the participants lean into deeper understanding.

FAST FACTS

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PHILOSOPHY OF OUR OPERATIONS

There are three underlying values that drive every policy and system created for our community to function and achieve our mission:

- ✓ Freedom for families. We believe parents, not schools, are in charge of their families and we trust you to make your own choices for your families.
- ✓ Sanctity of studios as learning spaces for learners only. This includes basic safety as well as protection against interruptions, distractions and the threat of lowering standards of excellence.
- ✓ Sanctity of parent/child relationships: we will not come between you and your child.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAYBOOK

The “Acton Way” is best thought of as a game.

THIS PLAYBOOK IS INTENDED TO:

1. Offer your family a valuable resource to return to when you have questions about how/why we do things a certain way.
2. Clarify how we play this game. Clarify the agreements that we make as we play this game together. (Agreements are contained in the contracts that are made between learners, parents, guides, and founders).
3. Offer a condensed overview of “The Rules of Acton” — or the guiding principles that allow everyone that plays to get the most out of their Acton experience.

HOW TO USE THIS PLAYBOOK

1. Read it. Write out questions. Refer back to it. Hold us accountable.
2. Often when you ask us a question, we will refer you back to this playbook. Why? It’s the Acton Way.
3. The “Acton Way” is designed to empower heroes (parents are heroes, too!) with choice and trust as they navigate & ignite their life journey.

WHY THE “RULES” NEED TO BE SO CLEAR:

Imagine you are playing a game of soccer... This is our favorite analogy to help illustrate **why** the rules of this Acton game must be clear to all of the families and learners who join the community.

Imagine you are playing a game of soccer and someone comes in and starts to use their hands to play. Are you still playing soccer at that point? Perhaps it’s a fun game...but if people continue to play with their hands, it is no longer soccer.

Acton is different BY DESIGN. It looks and feels unlike any other school experience.

By clearly outlining **how** we play together, and creating agreements with one another, we can best serve your family and deliver on our promises to you.

WHY WE PLAY

All players work together to build a powerful learning community. Together, this community upholds the mission of Acton Academy North San Antonio.

In order to play the game together effectively, each player (parents, learners, guides, founders) must agree to the following basic **Rules of Play**:

- ✓ I will intentionally grow
- ✓ I will take responsibility for my learning ALWAYS
- ✓ I will practice selfless Leadership
- ✓ I will contribute to and build the community
- ✓ I will hold peers accountable & welcome the same
- ✓ I will uphold Socratic Learning / Guiding at Acton
- ✓ I will strive for excellence through drafting & feedback
- ✓ I will use technology with purpose & focus
- ✓ I will work to purposefully build my family culture

NOTE: If any player does not agree to the basic Rules of Play, this may be an indication that they are not yet ready for the game. If you have questions, please speak to the Head of School.

OUR MISSION IS TWO-FOLD

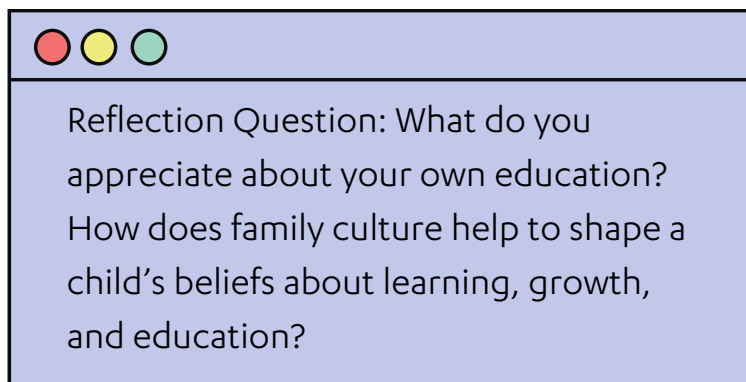
We are a school that empowers families to GROW...and GROW TOGETHER.

Prepare learners to **hear a call** to adventure, **start a hero's journey** and ultimately FIND A CALLING & CHANGE THE WORLD.

MAKING THE CONNECTION

How does your mission relate to my child's education?

- Foundations and attitudes toward education happen first, and most powerfully, in the family.
- Empowering families empowers children to fully experience meaningful education.
- Empowered Acton heroes and families **learn to grow intentionally and to contribute powerfully to society**. This is what education is all about at Acton Academy.



OUR PROMISES TO YOUR CHILD

We promise, through Socratic guiding and experiential learning, you and your children will:

- Begin a Hero's Journey
- Become a curious, independent, life-long learner
- Learn to learn, learn to do, and learn to be
- Discover your gifts and the dedication it takes to develop real talent
- Embrace the forging of a strong character
- Cherish the arts, the wonders of the physical world, and the mystery of life
- Value and cherish the freedom to pursue diverse economic, political, and religious beliefs.

COMPONENTS OF THE GAME

We promise heroes will find a calling that will change the world by Learning to Learn, Learning to Do, and Learning to Be. However important the tasks of learning to learn and learning to do, the most important part of finding the Grail in the Hero's Journey is not the Grail itself, but how the hero is changed in the process. This is the essence of Learning to BE.

LEARNING TO LEARN

PROCESSES

Learning to LEARN means finding the recipes, processes, and algorithms that help us make better decisions and more deeply embed the right habits of critical thinking.

- ✓ Goal Setting
- ✓ Time Management
- ✓ Reflecting
- ✓ Learning Through Play

LEARNING TO DO

SKILLS & ACADEMICS

Learning to DO means making practical decisions in the real world to accomplish great tasks, as a way to change the world.

- ✓ Apprenticeships
Personal & Business
- ✓ Budgeting
- ✓ Product / Invention
- ✓ Demonstrations
- ✓ Hands-on Discovery
of the World

LEARNING TO BE

CHARACTER & GROWTH

We want heroes near the end of a successful, satisfying and fulfilling life to have answers to three important questions:

- ✓ Did I contribute something meaningful?
- ✓ Was I a good person?
- ✓ Who did I love and who loved me?



Fun Chat: What family habits do we have that are “etching positive character traits into our souls?” What negative habits do we want to work to rub away?

The final “learning to be” promise means finding ways through difficult challenges and decisions to deeply etch habits of positive character traits into each soul, while rubbing away the negative habits that take away from who we are destined to become, if we want to reach our full potential.

PLAYERS

ACTON PARENTS



ACTON HEROES



ACTON GUIDES



Each player will do their best to uphold their role. To be certain that each player fully understands their role, they are outlined and agreed to through a series of contracts. This way, all players understand their role and can clearly see the role of other players as well.

Player will sign their agreements prior to the second session of the academic year.



Reflection Question: What are you working on that you are excited about? What is the next fun project on your list?

HOW TO PLAY

Parent Agreement of Participation

As parents at Acton Academy North San Antonio:

1. **We long for our hero to discover a calling that will change the world**, as promised in Acton Academy's mission. We will allow our hero to fail early, cheaply, and as often as necessary without intervening, and in the event our hero struggles, we will reflect on our own Hero's Journey and growth before reacting.
2. **We welcome Acton Academy NSA as a self-paced environment** where heroes run the studios through the delegation of certain rights by founders and parents, with access to dozens of experts for instruction, allowing guides to focus on challenges and questions.
3. **We will celebrate our hero's progress in earning Bee Bucks, Badges, and 360 Peer Reviews** according to a learning plan we create. If needed, we will remove distractions like gaming, video, or social media. We will work to resolve resistance or feelings of victimhood so our hero can soar.
4. **Further, for our own Hero's Journeys as parents:**
 - We will remain lifelong learners and encourage our child to do the same.
 - We will attend at least two of the three Parent Meetings each year, where Socratic discussions will focus on our Hero's Journey as parents.
 - We will attend journey meetings in the fall and in the spring.
 - We will deliver our hero to campus by 8:25 am and understand heroes who arrive late may not be able to participate in that morning's activities.

Please sign and date below.

Parents Name

Date

Parents Name

Date

HOW TO PLAY

Guide - Hero Agreement of Participation

As a Guide, I promise to:

- Deliver on Acton Academy North San Antonio's promises to heroes and parents.
- Provide challenges, milestones, rewards, and guardrails to inspire and equip each of our heroes.
- Present processes, frameworks, examples, recipes, and hard questions for heroes to use.
- Allow heroes to learn from failure and natural consequences, when necessary.
- Hold up a mirror so heroes can see themselves (and their impact) and insist they live up to the promises they have made to each other, their parents, and guides.
- Affirm heroes' gifts, listen to them, and praise their effort, especially when the path is difficult.
- Celebrate as heroes take on more and more of a guide's responsibilities as they move from being Independent Learners to Squad Leaders, Project Leaders, and Organization Leaders.
- If I fail to deliver on these promises, I invite heroes to comment on the surveys, which are taken very seriously by all guides and the founders of the school. Guides who continually fail to uphold these promises will no longer be allowed to serve at Acton Academy.

HOW TO PLAY

Guide - Hero Agreement of Participation

As a Hero, I promise to:

- Choose kindness & respect, even when tough-heartedness is at play.
- Work hard and play hard.
- Make courageous choices.
- Develop a hero's mindset and resist the victim's mindset.
- Be conscientious about what I commit to, keep my promises, admit honestly when I don't, and accept the natural consequences of my actions.
- Do my best to uphold the basic rules of the Acton Game & work to help my fellow heroes do the same.
- If I fail to deliver on these promises, I understand that guides may change the studio incentives, or I may suffer natural consequences, which will be laid out in advance.

Please sign and date below.

Hero's Name

Date

Guide's Name

Date

STUDIO ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW

FIELD OF PLAY

How the game is played depends on the studio in which you are playing. Each studio fulfills our mission in distinct ways and has its own contract (created and signed by the learners during Session 1).

HONEYBEE STUDIO

(ages 3-6)

Guiding Belief: Play is the important work of the child.

Character Focus (Learning To Be): Develop and practice a sense of right and wrong with a foundation in learning to be a good friend. Learn to be part of a community with a focus on collaboration, conflict resolution, curiosity, and creation.

Academic Focus (Learning To Learn & Do): Exploration of the natural world, Strong Reading Foundation, Develop a real-world math sense through manipulatives and game play.

ELEMENTARY

(ages 6-11)

Guiding Belief: Exciting challenges foster curiosity and encourage a child to dig deeper.

Character Focus (Learning To Be): Develop and practice stewardship of self, space, and time. Learn to more fully consider others and their ideas & needs. Goal setting and maintaining a growth mindset.

Academic Focus (Learning To Learn & Do): Project-based exploration in reading, writing, math, and art that encourages natural love of learning.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

(ages 11-13)

Guiding Belief: "Work Hard. Play Hard"

Character Focus (Learning To Be): Mid School is an active learning environment where heroes thrive in love of learning and take on greater responsibility for self and community contribution (Selfless Leadership). They learn to foster healthy peer connections through team building, collaboration, meaningful discussion, and actively practice holding one another accountable.

Academic Focus (Learning To Learn & Do): Increased responsibility for higher levels of rigor and time management in writing and problem solving (math). Increased focus on assimilating knowledge from powerful books, history, and science through discussion & self reflection. Increased focus level (for longer periods of time) is gained by alternating work with intermittent breaks for movement and collaboration. Hard work leads to the opportunity for fun group activities.

HIGH SCHOOL

(Launchpad)

Guiding Belief: Preparing to launch

Character Focus (Learning To Be): Self-discovery & personal gifts, servant leadership, high-level morality, habits of personal success.

Academic Focus (Learning To Learn & Do): Critical thinking, conceptual mastery of all high school core subjects, clear written & spoken communication through practice and repetition. Making meaningful connections between the work of learning and real life experiences. Pressing deep into areas of passion or calling. Heroes will secure and complete apprenticeships, work together on large, long term worldchanging adventures, prepare a professional portfolio, and complete all other requirements necessary for entrance into the college or career of their choice.

GAME SETUP: LOCATION

Arrival | Dismissal Procedures: Acton's school hours are 8:30am to 3:30pm.

School starts at 8:30 am sharp.

The doors will be opened at 8:00 am. From 8:00–8:30 am, learners engage in free time, reading, socializing, and getting prepared for the day. When each student arrives at school, a guide or learner will greet them. We ask you to stay in your car and refrain from socializing with the guides in order to make this process go as quickly as possible for all involved.

If your child arrives after 8:30 am due to an unexpected emergency, doctor's appt, etc, you will be responsible for leading him or her to the studio.

Dismissal is at 3:30 pm sharp.

A guide will dismiss the students out to the drop-off / pick up area. Please wait in your car and follow the line for efficiency and safety. We encourage socializing and building community at dismissal time. Learners must be picked up at 3:30 pm. There is a 15-minute grace period.

You are in charge of being clear with your child about who is driving him or her home if it is someone other than yourself. Your child should be confident and knowledgeable about the people who are allowed by you to drive him or her home. This is not a guide's nor Acton's responsibility. It is a family responsibility. If your child is ever confused by who is there to drive home, he or she should go immediately to the guide to request help.

If you are picking up your child at any time other than dismissal, please park and walk to the studio door to get your child. It is most helpful if you inform your child so he or she can be mentally prepared to stop working and leave the group without hesitation.

FRIDAY FIELD TRIPS Throughout the year, we'll designate certain Fridays for field trips to see local/area establishments like free play at a local park, Botanical Gardens, attending a pottery workshop, or going to a pumpkin patch/hayride in the fall. We value family time and community building opportunities that these field trips offer. We will regularly ask the Learners what types of field trips they want to do and have them plan them.

GAME SETUP: ELECTRONICS AND SUPPLIES

As the world is more and more digitally connected, people are also more and more attached to their devices. At Acton Academy North San Antonio, we work to promote balance.

Cell phones and tablets are not permitted in any of the Acton Studios. The only exception to this policy is in Mid School and Launchpad Studios, where phones may be used for music or necessary business communication. Devices are never allowed to be used for social media or gaming during school hours.

School-issued Chromebooks may be used for educational purposes only. Failure to respect these boundaries will result in the loss of freedom to use these devices.

COMPUTER FILTERING & EMAIL

We use a whole-school filtering system to protect students. GoGuardian and SafeSearch are installed on all Chromebooks in the studio. This helps us monitor Learner activity online, follow daily instructional goals, and filter content.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

At Acton Academy North San Antonio we desire you to focus your time on building family culture and enjoying each other. We strive to remove busy work such as buying school supplies, fundraising, PTA. To that end, we provide all school supplies learners will need outside of those listed under "What to Bring" below.

WHAT TO BRING

- Headphones (please label these), and a computer mouse, if desired
- Lunch and snacks: We have a refrigerator and a microwave available for student use
- Water bottle - We have a water system in all studios where water bottles can be refilled. Learners who forget a water bottle will be able to "buy" one with Bee Bucks
- Two changes of clothes, a hat, and sunscreen if desired. Also, please dress for the weather. We follow the adage, "There is no bad weather, only poor clothing choices."
- Houseplant (At Acton NSA, we are wild about gardening and houseplants!)
- Comfortable indoor shoes/slippers
- Book to read for DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) (we have a small library at the school as well)

GAME SETUP:

HEALTH AND ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Per state requirements, please provide a copy of your child's immunization records or state exemption from your pediatrician's office. You may email the file to the Head of School, or hand deliver before the start of school.

MEDICATIONS

Learners may not carry medications into the school. Parents must give medicines and written instructions to the Head of School. Send any prescription medications in the original pharmacy containers with the child's name and a dated note listing amounts to be given that day along with times of dosage. Please indicate whether refrigeration is required or not. Note: In order to foster the growth of personal responsibility, we encourage learners to keep track of their own schedules and be primarily responsible for informing their guides when it is time to take their meds.

ILLNESS POLICY

Heroes who develop any of the following symptoms will be isolated and their parents will be notified and asked to remove them from school as soon as possible:

- Fever of 100° F or higher
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Difficult breathing or wheezing
- Complaints of severe pain
- Stiff neck or headache with one or more of the symptoms listed above

If your child is not feeling well in the morning, please observe them carefully before sending them to school. Take their temperature. Children must be free of symptoms for 24 hours before returning to school.

WHEN TO KEEP YOUR CHILD HOME

If your child has any of these symptoms please keep them home.

- A fever (temperature of 100 degrees F or higher) within the last 24 hours
- Vomiting within the last 24 hours
- Diarrhea in the last 24 hours
- Strep, Pinkeye, or any other bacterial illness (must stay home until they have been on antibiotics for a minimum of 48 hours)
- Severe cold symptoms which may include: a constant runny nose, especially with abnormal color or consistency, nasal or lung/chest congestion, coughing that is constant or persistent, or recurrent sneezing that is not allergy related
- Head lice, nits, scabies
- Atypical rash (until a physician has examined the rash and has cleared your child to return to school)

GAME SETUP: ATTENDANCE AND DRESS CODE

Acton does not have an attendance policy that specifies a required number of days that your child must be in school. It is the school's philosophy that traveling with family and engaging in experiences with family is fruitful and educational.

At the same time, consistent attendance in general will help your child feel connected to the group and engaged in the projects. If you know in advance that you will be taking your child out of school, it is helpful if you inform the lead guide via email of the dates they will be out of school. They can also reach out directly to their guide or squad for support. We believe learners can take responsibility for what needs to be completed while they are absent.

For unexpected absenteeism, such as a child waking ill, please let their guide know.

“ICE/SNOW” DAYS/DELAYS

We follow the NEISD system for storm delays and cancellations.

DRESS CODE

Due to encouraging our students to be active, we prefer that all students come to campus with closed-toed shoes. If sandals are worn, please ensure there is a back strap. No flip flops or sandals on Health and Wellness days. If your student still struggles with tying his or her own shoes, please have the shoes double-knotted or be sure your child is wearing a shoe he or she is able to adjust without assistance (i.e. velcro).

NEST CAMERA & PHOTO WAIVER

As part of being an Acton Academy, each school in the network agrees to use Nest cams in all Studios. These cameras provide accountability for Acton founders, guides, families, and Heroes.

SAFETY AT SCHOOL

At Acton ANSA we believe natural consequences are the most effective teaching tool. We have taken great care to create a campus environment that allows learners to explore the limits of their strength, balance, and physical abilities. Acton guides have first-aid supplies to use for small cuts, scrapes, bruises, etc. They also have basic pain relief and homeopathic treatments. Families have the ability to opt-in or out of specific treatments during their initial enrollment process.

- Acton staff have been trained in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and there is an AED housed in the studio.

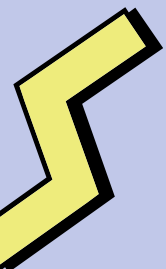
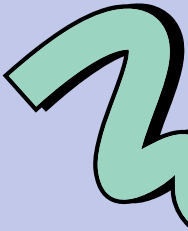
OUT OF BOUNDS: HONOR CODE

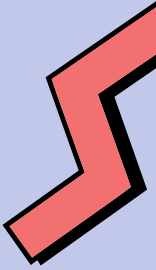
HONOR CODE SYSTEM BRIEF OVERVIEW

The Honor Code is a guide-directed accountability system. All other systems are learner-directed.

The following are violations of the Honor Code:

1. Persisting in victim language after being guided toward growth and responsibility.
2. Harassment/bullying of any kind, including hitting, pushing, threatening or other physical or verbal aggression.
3. Consistent disregard or disrespect for the Studio Contract and accountability systems (the Studio Contract is different from the Honor Code).
4. Cheating, plagiarizing, or misreporting of accomplished work in any activity.
5. Destruction of school property.
6. Inappropriate language or sexual innuendo or actions.
7. Leaving campus without parent/guide approval.
8. Drug, tobacco, or alcohol use during any school day or activity.





The Strike system is used to reinforce the Honor Code.

1ST STRIKE: The learner is paired with the guide until they choose to participate again within the community guard rails.

- A guide will speak with the learner to ensure they understand why the strike was given.
- The guide will work with the learner to brainstorm specific strategies to prevent a second strike by reflecting on a Choices and Consequences Checklist. We feel that many strikes don't move beyond #1 and we equip the learners to work through it in the studio

2ND STRIKE: The learner spends the rest of the day paired with the guide.

- When a second strike is received, guides will follow the same procedure as above, and parents will receive an email documenting the reason for the second strike. We use this "buddy" system as a way to encourage and never shame the learner.
- We encourage family discussion about the issue (it may be helpful to ask the learner about the Choices and Consequences Checklist.)

3RD STRIKE: The learner is sent home for the remainder of the day, or stays home the next day if the strike occurs at the end of the day.

- Learner to reflect and converse with parents for extra support.
- When returning to school the following day, the learner will share a letter with the Guide that contains 2 or 3 strategies they will use to avoid another strike.
- If learners are unprepared or unwilling to do this, they should remain at home until they are ready.
- Guides will schedule a mandatory Probationary Contract Meeting with parents and learner.
- The hero comes back to school on a probationary contract.
- The Studio will celebrate the hero's return and honor the process of learning from failures.

The Strike system is used to reinforce the Honor Code.

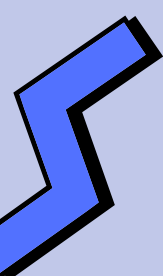
PROBATIONARY CONTRACT

If a learner receives three strikes in one session, they will be offered a probationary contract that acknowledges the behaviors or attitudes that need to be addressed and changed. The contract will also stipulate a specific period of time during which the learner can demonstrate the required change(s). We typically offer a learner one to two sessions to make these changes so that we can measure long-term success. The learner, family, guide, and Head of School will meet to discuss and sign the contract. Learners who adhere to the contract for the agreed amount of time will not receive any further disciplinary action. If the learner is not able to uphold the contract, they will be asked to leave the school and will not be able to reapply for one school year.

NOTE: Founders reserve the right to ask a learner or family to leave immediately for behavior that is dangerous or especially damaging, regardless of the number of strikes accumulated.

STRIKE RESET

Strikes are tallied over the course of each session and reset at the beginning of a new session. However, the accumulation of two strikes in three consecutive sessions may also trigger a probationary contract.



GAME PLAY SYSTEMS

Acton systems are implemented based upon studio needs. Not all systems may be “in place” in each studio and will vary at times.

BEE BUCKS

Bee Bucks are the hero-directed accountability system. As heroes produce work, they earn Bee Bucks. Heroes can hold one another accountable by requesting Bee Bucks for contract infractions. At that point, the hero who made the alleged violation may do one of the following:

1. Agree that an infraction was made and pay the bank one Bee Buck.
2. Take the matter to the Bee Buck Committee to seek guidance on how to resolve the matter. The Bee Buck Committee is a group of elected heroes who have agreed to fairly and without partiality help fellow heroes resolve their conflicts.

TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Weekly hero meetings are held whereby heroes can propose new rules for the studio, encourage each other, or bring up concerns and potential solutions.

RESOLVING CONFLICT

It is an important part of the Acton learning model to allow heroes to resolve their own conflict by:

1. Controlling tempers and words.
2. Sharing their feelings.
3. Seeing both sides.
4. Focusing on solutions vs. whining, blaming, or complaining.
5. Turning away from distraction, resistance, and victimhood.

If your hero has a conflict within the studio, we encourage you to calmly talk it through with them and empower them to use one of the following systems to handle the matter:

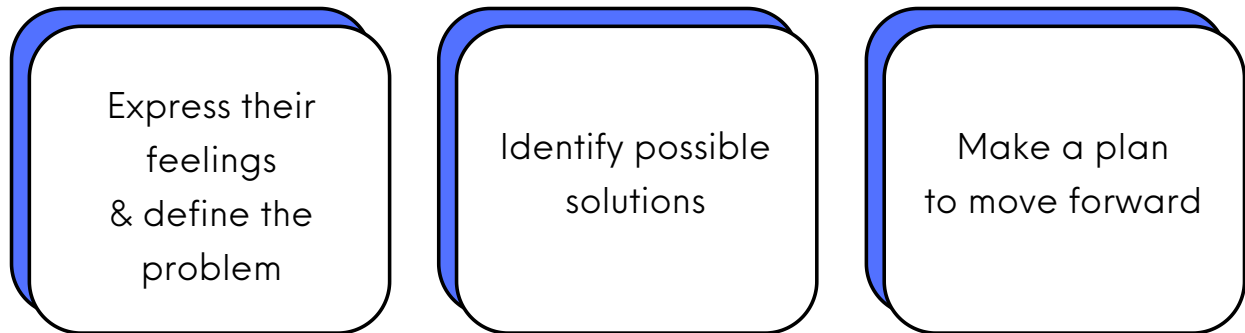
SYSTEMS FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT

Bee Bucks

Heroes may request a Bee Buck and follow the process for appropriately doing so as designated in their studio.

Peace Table

A hero or guide may call a peace table with involved parties. This process is very powerful and fosters healthy friendship and communication skills through a scripted conversation that allows heroes to:



STUDIO MAINTENANCE

Heroes are required to help maintain their Studio through daily Studio Maintenance. This encourages organization and good habits. Be prepared to have this trickle affect in your own home!

●●●

Reflection Question:
How do you feel about receiving feedback? How often do you ask for it? How can you implement the seeking and receiving of feedback into your life & home as a powerful tool for growth?

360 PEER REVIEWS

Periodically, the Heroes receive a questionnaire whereby they are asked to rate studio-mates and/or guide. The rating is based on a scale of 1 to 5 and provides the ability to write constructive feedback. The feedback can be either positive or an area for growth. The review measures leadership, work methodology, and contribution to the studio. Intentionally hurtful or unhelpful comments will be removed by the guides before they are shared with learners. This begins in our Middle School studios.

BRAINS, BOOKS AND BUDDIES

Acton Academy North San Antonio is a Hero-led and learner-driven environment. Guides do not serve as teachers at Acton. Heroes learn to teach themselves by utilizing resources and by developing problem-solving skills. Should a hero run into difficulty, they are encouraged to use Brains, Books, & Buddies (BBB).

- ✓ **Brains:** First exhaust your own knowledge by thoroughly defining the problem and attempting to solve it on your own.
- ✓ **Books:** What resources do you have available to you that may give you clues or ideas? Heroes are encouraged to use in-studio resources, approved online resources, or collaborate with a community expert.
- ✓ **Buddies:** Who is someone that may have expertise in the area you are struggling in? This is not a time to simply get the answer from another hero but to jointly work to understand how to solve the problem for yourself.

Lastly, If a hero has diligently exhausted all three of these options and is still struggling with a concept, they may schedule an appointment with a guide for the purpose of brainstorming how the hero could solve the problem. **A foundational principle within the Acton learning model is to provide opportunities for heroes to learn collaboratively to solve hard problems.** Perseverance and creativity are developed through this process.

AANSA discourages the use of tutors or adults “helping” heroes solve problems. Guides never answer questions nor do they teach in the traditional sense. Encourage your hero to take ownership if they are facing a hard question and/or challenge, and always point them in the direction of problem-solving and perseverance.

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATIONAL PLAN (I.E.P.)

When a guide recognizes that a hero is not reaching his or her full potential or is showing signs of a learning challenge, a letter will be sent to the hero’s parents outlining the school’s concerns and recommendations for further assessments. The school, parents, and hero will determine appropriate accommodations and/or interventions to meet the needs of the Hero.

AANSA does not offer one on one tutoring. We do, however, provide a space, outside of the Studios, where specialized tutors can work with Heroes who have a formal dyslexia/dysgraphia diagnosis. Families of these students are required to cover the costs associated with these tutors, but we are happy to provide the space. As a small school, we do not have access to a school counselor, on-campus nurse, or special education coordinator. If guides encounter social or emotional needs that may require additional professional support, observations will be provided to parents via email and/or in person, and we will make a suggestion for outside support.

HERO ACCOUNTABILITY

Some of the most powerful opportunities a hero has within the Acton learning model are regular chances to learn self-governance, problem-solving, discipline, and perseverance.

As parents of an Acton hero, you play a very important part! If your child is choosing not to work at school or has made decisions that could result in a strike, we encourage you to allow natural consequences to come to fruition. Embracing failure as a teacher of valuable lessons vs. something to be avoided is an important concept to embrace.

**“The first and best victory is to conquer self.”
- Plato**

MINDSET:

WHAT MAKES A HERO A HERO?

One of the most powerful principles that your child will explore is that of “mindset.” When families and heroes embrace powerful mindsets, we not only see the greatest academic growth; we also see higher levels of emotional balance and joy in learning. THIS IS A BIG DEAL!

Hero Mindset:

Welcome challenges and embrace responsibility. Strive for and celebrate excellence. Praise heroic choices by others, practice frequent acts of kindness, and hold firm boundaries in relationships. Grateful and generous.

Victim Mindset:

Avoid hard work. Look for the easy way out and seek loopholes, rather than delivering their best work. Fail to keep their word, gossip, brag or diminish others. Feel entitled, whine, blame, complain, give excuse for poor behavior or work.

MINDSET MILESTONES + HABITS

Each studio will have a structure of hero progression in place. As powerful habits are practiced and proficiency is proven, heroes will be granted additional privileges and responsibilities. These habits may include (but are not limited to): time management, honoring the studio schedule, personal accountability, work ethic/grit, and goal finishing. Should a hero habitually not progress toward proficiency, then Acton may not be the best option for him or her.

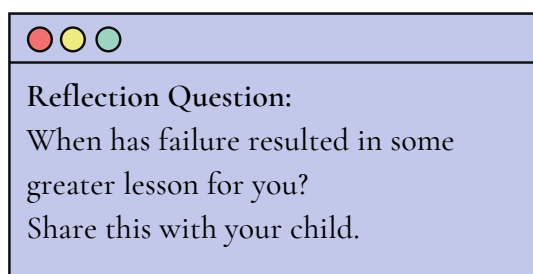
- **Your child will fail.** This is built into the system so that they can learn from it, improve their processes, and grow.
- **Honor the Schedule:** At Acton, we have many liberties. We encourage learners to work at their own pace. This freedom is defined as freedom to work ahead and to work towards independent goals/passions during specified times not freedom from work. This implies that you are always working towards a larger goal as part of your Hero’s Journey and that you honor the Studio’s forward movement as well, which is facilitated by the studio schedule.

KEEPING SCORE

We don't "keep score" in the same sense that other schools or sports games do. Your hero will set goals and track progress as a tool to help them grow and improve their skills. Heroes can see where their friends are excelling and struggling and they often share these successes and setbacks with one another as stepping stones on their journey. They learn to support, empathize, and to seek and offer help.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT & GOALS

We encourage you to discuss your child's learning goals as often as you feel it is necessary. Some learners work well over a whole session, and others may benefit from more frequent check-ins.



LEARNING BADGES VS. GRADES

Milestones of achievement at Acton are Learning Badges which prove success in completing a long-term series of learning goals. These Badges will document the entire Acton learning journey with evidence appropriate for college applications and job interviews of the authentic accomplishments of each Acton graduate. Heroes will receive feedback of the work they produce from their peers, guides and from other sources as appropriate.

Their progress will be documented through their achievement of badges in the core skills of Writing, Problem Solving (Math), Reading, and Socratic discussions. In addition, Journey Tracker and exhibitions share documentation of learning in the arts and sciences through projects and quest work. The software programs used in our Studios track the progress of learning and can be accessed by parents at any time; as milestones are reached, they may also be reflected in Journey Tracker.

SELF-PACED MASTERY OF CORE SKILLS

Learners at Acton have the opportunity to work at their own pace. We recognize that children learn at different speeds, and we are watching for consistent and diligent progress. Some Acton learners complete multiple grade badges in a school year while others might take longer. We invite parents to embrace their child's learning speed and embrace the philosophy of, **"the only person you should compare yourself to, is you – yesterday."**

Within the Acton model, Heroes are provided the privilege and respect of being held to an expectation of excellence and mastery. Heroes will not be awarded badges simply by completing tasks, but by mastering them. An expectation of mastery may mean that a Hero needs more than a school year to complete grade-level work, but families can be assured that their child is not being pushed into more difficult concepts before understanding foundational skills.

STUDIO BADGE PLANS

Each studio has a certain number of badges learners are required to complete in order to transition to the next studio. Each year, learners, parents, and guides will work together to develop a badge plan for the year. If the badge plan is completed early, the learner can always begin work on future badges. Changes to badge plans must be made in advance and not "after the fact" or close to a deadline in order to avoid the consequences of procrastination, laziness, or distraction.

Learners who have completed all of their studio badges will be given the opportunity to begin work on some of the badges for the next studio. Studio transitions represent a significant accomplishment at Acton, and we look forward to celebrating these milestones at the Final Exhibition!

PARENT/GUIDE JOURNEY MEETINGS

Twice a year, parents will be offered Guide and Parent conferences. We call these "Journey Meetings." Learners, parents, and guides will use the first Journey Meeting to discuss and agree on the learner's badge plan. The second Journey Meeting will give the same team the opportunity to revisit the plan.

FEEDBACK/ASSESSING LEARNING

How do I know how my child is progressing academically? The learners in ES and MS will set and track S.M.A.R.T. goals. These goals are tracked in Journey Tracker and supported by the learner's squad.

We encourage parents to ask their children about their goal-setting at the beginning of the week and follow up at the end of the week. This is an important part of your role as an Acton parent. It is helpful to ask/say things like:

- ✓ What would you do differently?
- ✓ Do you feel that your work this week was the best you can do?
- ✓ Where are you feeling most challenged?
- ✓ What was your greatest achievement this week?
- ✓ What was your greatest failure?
- ✓ When did you have the most energy today?
- ✓ When did you serve as a guide to someone?
- ✓ Everyone has an off-week now and then.
- ✓ Is there something you need a break from to get back to a strong start for next week?

HONEYBEE STUDIO DAILY FLOW

8:00-8:30 AM | Drop off / free play

8:00-10:30 AM | Morning work cycle

10:30-10:45 AM | Morning snack

10:45-11:00 AM | Morning cicle

11:00-12:00 PM | Outdoor free play

12:00-12:30 PM | Lunch / free time

12:30-2:00 PM | Story time / quiet time

2:00-3:00 PM | Afternoon work cycle

3:00-3:30 PM | Outdoor free play / pick-up

ELEMENTARY STUDIO DAILY FLOW

8:00-8:30	AM	Drop off / free time
8:30	AM	Morning launch
9:00-10:00	AM	Core skills
10:00-10:15	AM	Brain break
10:15-11:30	AM	Core skills
11:30-12:30	PM	Lunch & free time
12:30-12:45	PM	Quest launch
12:45-2:00	PM	Project time
2:00-2:15	PM	Brain break
2:15-2:45	PM	Civilization
2:45-3:05	PM	Studio Maintenance
3:05-3:15	PM	Closing Launch
3:15-3:30	PM	Free time / pick-up

LUNCH | SNACKS

In order to keep our tuition costs low and support each family's healthy food choices, Acton does not provide lunches or snacks. Each learner must bring his or her own lunch. In the coming years, school lunches and snacks may be something we provide.

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Fueled by family interest, there may be after-school programs and sports on campus during parts of the year. These programs, however, will not be part of Acton's curriculum. By participating, you will be asked to sign a waiver and pay any fee associated with these activities. If you want to start an after-school club or program, contact hola@actonnsa.com. You will receive an email notifying you of any after-school offerings and can sign up for those in which you are interested.

COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL

"...stop thinking of yourself as the manager of kids' education, and start seeing yourself as their consultant: someone who gives advice, shares expertise, and provides resources while remaining fundamentally detached from the specific outcomes of this process." —Blake Boles

SLACK APP

There is no better way to stay informed on the details of the studio than to read the weekly emails and information posted in Slack. You can find the app in your app store or at www.slack.com. Please sign up for our group by searching for <https://actonacademynsa.slack.com> and make sure your notifications are turned on. We use Slack to make school announcements, highlight daily Studio "goings-ons," and sometimes to coordinate outside activities.

EMAILS AND TEXTS

Important announcements and updates will also be sent out via email. If you would like to receive these announcements via text, please inform the Head of School. In case of a school-wide emergency, we will send information to everyone via Slack, email, & text message. If you are experiencing an emergency, please call the Head of School at 512-712-6806.

CONTACTING GUIDES

If you need to contact guides, please do so either through Slack or email. Please include the Head of School in all forms of direct communication that relate to school matters. In general, when there is a deeper concern, scheduling a meeting or phone call with the Head of School may be the best course.

Please understand that we will not be available to talk with you during the morning drop-off, during school or afternoon pick-up times; and will respond to messages between 3:30pm and 5:00pm on weekdays.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Every year we will work with the learners to create a birthday tradition for our studio. Each learner's celebration will look different, but the common element is that the learners are an equal part in the planning and carrying out of the traditions.

HOMEWORK

There will never be homework expectations outside of the school day unless the learner requests time at home.

PARENT SURVEYS

As part of our commitment to families, we ask that each family completes a feedback survey. This survey will be sent to you via Slack and email and we ask that you fill it out within 48 hours. We ask that you provide helpful input rather than anything personal about another learner or family. The summary of these surveys will be shared with Acton families, guides, and Acton leadership each time. Your input is vital to our service to you. By sharing the results, we ensure transparency and accountability to you. The survey is a place for constructive input. For any personal situation in which you need insight, please email your guide and discuss offline.

SURVEY FAQ

1. We ask that you include your child in the survey process.
2. Venting and overly critical comments or nonspecific reviews do not add value to the survey process. Giving specific ideas and suggestions on how to make the school better is greatly appreciated!

PARENT PARTNERSHIP/VOLUNTEERING

We welcome parents to share the joy of the studio experience to gain a further understanding of the learning journey. You will be a part of a team that is striving to provide a first-class education for every learner throughout our community. The studio is a very special environment for the learners and we want to protect their personal space and privacy. The following guidelines will help ensure integrity and focus during studio hours.

- Please inform a guide the week in advance before you plan to volunteer or visit. Include the time of your arrival and your expected length of stay. The guide will reply 24 hours after receiving the email (during weekdays). Please inform your child that you will be visiting to volunteer their studio.
- Please maintain good communication, especially in the event of an absence or schedule change. If you cannot fulfill your commitment for any period of time, please contact the guide as soon as possible so other arrangements can be made.

We also encourage parents to volunteer at the school by participating in extracurricular activities like field trips and school events.

LAUNCHES

Launches are sacred, and every learner is expected to participate every time. If learners are late or asked to leave the launch, they will wait outside the studio until the launch ends. Learners should not leave the circle until the launch has finished and should arrive having taken care of anything (such as bathroom use) ahead of time. Learners are expected to uphold decisions made in launch, even if they are unable to participate.

STANDARDIZED TESTING

We do not believe that standardized testing is a critical component of a quality, meaningful education. However, they may offer guides and parents some useful data. Heroes may be given nationally-normed achievement tests to assess progress. Your hero will be guided through the process so that they have a full understanding of the purpose of such tests. These tests are given only to watch for patterns of progress over time. If testing results are an important benchmark for your family, we encourage you to go over them with your child. We also know that these numbers are not important to all families, because they are a single measure and can never reflect the personal character growth of a child.

ASSISTANCE FROM GUIDES AND STAFF

Acton Heroes are encouraged to discover their own solutions to academic challenges. If heroes exhaust their options to understand an academic concept, they may ask a guide for assistance, which will be given through a series of leading questions and demonstrations. Guides will not provide one-on-one tutoring or lessons to assist with Core Skills progress. (Also see, Brains, Books, and Buddies)

ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER LEARNERS

Learner-driven environments work because they group learners of different ages and abilities into one space. Learners who feel stuck with an academic concept can ask for assistance from another learner who has already mastered that skill. Acton also utilizes a peer review process which allows learners to offer their insights and suggestions for improvement.

EXCELLENCE AT ACTON

“How you do anything is how you do everything” At Acton Academy North San Antonio, we feel the same way about excellence. Excellence is a deliberate practice at Acton. While every studio is watching for excellence in different ways (See Studio Environment Overview), here is an example of how it may be measured by fellow heroes:

STANDARDS	DESCRIPTION	TO ASK/CONSIDER/PREPARE
BEST WORK	If this is the first time someone has attempted a task, have they certified it as their “best work?”	Do you agree this is their best work? Your best work is achieved after multiple drafts. How much time was spent on this? Ask if they could improve any areas of the work.
SHOWS IMPROVEMENT	If this is a task or skill that has been tried before, is this better than last time?	In order to show improvement, you will need both pieces of work. Is there a detailed critique favorably comparing their work this time to last time?
COMPARISON TO WORLD-CLASS STANDARDS	As work quality soars and plateaus: How does it compare to a world-class example?	Is there a detailed critique favorably comparing the work to a world-class example? Would you consider their world-class example to truly be a world-class example?
WINNER OF A CONTEST	Was the work select as a “best of” example by a vote in the studio, or has it been approved for a public exhibition?	Have they recorded what contest they won? Are they competing against peers at the same level? Higher?

PHOTO WAIVER

All Acton schools across the nation are linked to provide accountability, share best practices, and ensure high-quality services. Acton is proud of the many accomplishments of our learners. Occasionally we use photos or videos of our learners in the newsletter, school displays and projects, blog, school social media accounts, or website. Photos and videos would not identify students by name. It is understood that permission is granted to Acton to use the photographs or videos on the world wide web or other printed publications unless otherwise stated in writing.

ACTON CALENDAR

Because learning doesn't happen just within school walls, we have tailored our yearly calendar to benefit your hero and your family.

Our calendar is currently posted on our website. This calendar will help you manage session breaks, exhibition dates, field trips, our three parent meetings, end-of-the-year celebrations, information sessions, and all other Acton events.

A few benefits we think you'll appreciate about our unique schedule:

- Allows children to unwind after working fervently in their learning process.
- Allows families to travel or spend more quality time together.
- Coincides with many of the break periods given to NEISD students.
- Reduces the approximate 3 months of learning-gain that is lost over an extended summer break.
- Reduced burnout for both students and guides.



ACTON ACADEMY

N O R T H S A N A N T O N I O