

Acton Academy
ALBUQUERQUE

• LEARN • DO • BE •

FAMILY PLAYBOOK



ACTON ACADEMY / ALBUQUERQUE
FAMILY PLAYBOOK

WELCOME

*To the first steps in your
Hero's Journey...*

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INTRODUCTION TO TERMS

At Acton Academy 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 heros go through on their journey. This structure, which follows a set pattern, is a key principle in the Acton model.

HERO/EAGLE: These terms can be used interchangeably. We prefer to use these terms instead of “children” or “student,” because we are all students 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.

TRIBE: We are very intentional about building trust and deep friendships between all of the Eagles in a given studio. We refer to them as a “tribe” because of this level of intimacy and vulnerability that is required to truly belong to the team.

CORE SKILLS: Reading, writing, and ‘rithmetic are the foundational academic subjects that all Eagles 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 TRACKER: The proprietary Learning Management System (LMS) built by and for the Acton network. Think of it like an Eagle’s educational plan, calendar, and record of work.

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 and deeper understanding.

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 founder.
- 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.

KEY



Fun chat



Reflection



Imperative Info



Family Focus

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 Albuquerque (see “Our Mission is Two-Fold,” below).


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

RULES OF PLAY

- > *I will intentionally grow*
- > *I will take responsibility for my learning ALWAYS*
- > *I will practice Servant 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* (see Parent Contract)

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

- 1 We are a school that empowers families to **GROW ...and GROW TOGETHER.** 
- 2 Prepare eagles 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.



Reflection Question: What do you appreciate about your own education? How does family culture help to shape a child's beliefs about learning, growth, and education?

OUR PROMISES TO YOUR CHILD

He or she will:

- Begin a Hero's Journey.
- Learn to be a curious, independent, lifelong learner.
- Develop a deep respect for economic, political, and religious freedom.
- Cherish the arts, wonders of the physical world, and the mysteries of life on Earth.
- Discover his or her most precious gifts and learn to use them to solve difficult problems.

OUR GUIDING BELIEFS

- We believe that we are all made in the image of God.
- We believe each person has a gift that can change the world in a profound way.
- We believe in a closely connected family of lifelong learners.
- We believe in learning by knowing, learning by doing, and learning by being.
- We believe in economic, religious, and political freedom.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Acton Academy Albuquerque admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. The school does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic or other school administered programs.

COMPONENTS OF THE GAME

At Acton Academy we promise heroes will find a calling that will change the world by **Learning to Learn, Learning to Do, and Learning to Be.**

Component 1: **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

Component 2: **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

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.

Component 3: **LEARNING TO BE** *(Character & Matters of the Heart)*

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?

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.



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 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.

HOW TO PLAY

Parent Agreement of Participation

As parents at Acton Academy:

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 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 Weekly Points, 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.
 - At least one of us 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.

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



Please sign and date below.

Parent's Name


Date

Parent's Name


Date

Guide-Hero Agreement of Participation

As a Guide, I promise to:

- Deliver on Acton Academy'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. 

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 travelers 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. These may include being separated from the Studio, being asked to stay home for some period of time or even being asked to leave Acton Academy Albuquerque. 

Please sign and date below.

Hero's Name

Date

Guide's Name

Date

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 Eagles during Session 1).

STUDIO ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW

DREAMER STUDIO

*Starting in Kindergarten,
Generally ages 5-7*

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. ***All learning in Dreamer Studio happens through play.***

LOWER ELEMENTARY

Generally ages 6-9

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, and finding flow

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

UPPER ELEMENTARY

Generally ages 8-12

Guiding Belief: Love of learning must be protected through a delicate balance of challenge and choice. Too many requirements kill the love of learning, too little challenge or expectation kills love of learning and undermines growth.

Character Focus (Learning To Be): Develop and practice curiosity, working hard & playing hard, setting goals, identifying & celebrating failures quickly, conflict management, and independence with a keen awareness of building community.

Academic Focus (Learning To Learn & Do): Project-based exploration in all subjects, while taking on more structured problem solving in math, and challenges in reading & writing.

MID SCHOOL

Generally ages 11-15

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 (Servant 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.

LAUNCH PAD

Generally ages 14-19

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 world-changing adventures, prepare a professional portfolio, and complete all other requirements necessary for entrance into the college or career of their choice.

GAME SETUP: LOCATION

GATE PROCEDURE

There are two gates for the main parking lot. Please always enter from the north gate and exit via the south gate. If the north gate is closed when you arrive, enter 2017# on the keypad to open it. From inside the parking lot, the south gate will open automatically when you drive near it. Both gates will close after a short interval.

ARRIVAL PROCEDURE

Arrival starts at 7:45. From 7:45-8:25 am, Eagles engage in free time, reading, socializing and getting organized for the day. The youngest three studios must stay outside until 8:25.

For dropoff, please pull forward toward the south gate in two lines so that four families can be unloading simultaneously. Families with Dreamers may park along Bryn Mawr and walk their Eagles to the main gate.

DISMISSAL PROCEDURE

Dismissal is at 3:15pm. You may park and wait for your older Eagles to come out to you (Upper Elementary or older) or you can park and come wait near the main gate. There is a walking path around the perimeter of the lawn, and we welcome parents and siblings to come in and linger after dismissal. We encourage socializing and building community at dismissal time.

Eagles who have not been picked up by 3:45 will be signed into After Care and will incur a fee.

LATE ARRIVAL/EARLY PICK-UP

If you are picking up or dropping off your Eagle at any time other than arrival/dismissal, please follow gate procedure, park, and ring the doorbell at the front office door. This door is located at the far SE corner of the school building.

AFTER CARE PROGRAMS

Acton Academy Albuquerque will be offering After Care on campus from 3:45 – 5:30pm Monday through Friday when school is in session. This will include the full day in-service Fridays at the end of each Session for Dreamers and Lower Elementary (8:00 – 5:30) and the half-day in-service Fridays at the end of each Session for Upper Elementary and Mid School Studios (12:30 – 5:30).

You may request details about the After Care fees and packages from the Head of School. All charges will be applied and paid through TADS.

Our goal for After Care at Acton is to carry through the philosophy of self-governance and inquiry that characterizes the Studios. The coordinators will guide attendees in creating and adopting a contract and rules of engagement for after school. Eagles attending after care will have a lot of time to play, but they are also free to work on Core Skills or project work if they so desire.

Your child should be confident and knowledgeable about the people who are allowed 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 at pick up, he or she should immediately ask a guide.

GAME SETUP: ELECTRONICS & SUPPLIES

As the world is more and more digitally connected, people are also more and more attached to their devices. At Acton Academy Albuquerque, we hope to promote balance.

Cell phones, tablets, and smart watches are not permitted in any of the Acton Studios. The only exception to this policy is higher freedom levels in Mid School and Launch Pad 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 at any freedom level. If your Eagle does bring a cell phone or other device to school, they will be asked to check it into their Studio's phone box upon arrival and may check it back out after school, unless a higher freedom level dictates otherwise.

Guides may make exceptions for iPads being used as a primary computer, though gaming and social media restrictions still apply. 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 and/or the request that they be left at home.

Please contact Eagles through the main office during the school day. Eagles are also asked to use the main office as the channel to contact parents if necessary during the day.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

At Acton ABQ 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, etc...To that end, we provide all school supplies Eagles 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 purification system in all Studios where water bottles can be refilled. Learners who forget a water bottle will be able to buy one with eagle bucks or by doing jobs for the school.
- Mid School and Launch Pad Eagles may bring and use their own computer if they have obtained the freedom level to do so.

FOR DREAMERS AND LOWER ELEMENTARY: Please also bring 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."

Reflection Question:
How can you help prepare your child to courageously uphold this standard? What adjustments (if any) can be made in your home to help fuel your child's curiosity & wise use of electronics?



GAME SETUP: HEALTH / ATTENDANCE POLICIES

HEALTH FORMS & SCREENINGS

Per state requirements, please provide a copy of your child's immunization records or state exemption from your pediatrician's office. You may email or request a file upload link from the Head of School.

MEDICATION

Eagles 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 expect Upper Elementary and older Eagles to keep track of their own schedules and be primarily responsible for informing their guides when it is time to take their meds.

Acton staff and guides have simple 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 TADS enrollment process.

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 101+ F
- Unusual yellow color to skin or eyes
- Diarrhea
- Stiff neck or headache
- Vomiting (with one or more of the symptoms listed above)
- Nausea
- Difficult breathing or wheezing
- Severe cough
- Complaints of severe pain

WHEN TO KEEP YOUR CHILD HOME

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

- A fever (temperature of 101 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 (this is especially important if your child is unable to use a Kleenex by him/herself), nasal or lung/chest congestion, coughing that is constant or persistent, or recurrent sneezing that is not allergy related.
- Head lice, nits, scabies, etc
- Atypical rash (until a physician has examined the rash and has cleared your child to return to school.)

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.

GAME SETUP: ATTENDANCE & DRESS CODE

Acton Albuquerque 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 and engaging in experiences with family is healthy and educational.

We are, however, required by state law to maintain attendance records and report excessive absences. If you have mid-session travel planned, we ask that you please prepare a goal-setting plan with your Eagle and share it with the Guide and Head of School. This will allow us to track them as "in school" during all or part of that time. This may also require providing evidence of work on Journey Tracker and collaboration with peers.

Also, keep in mind that consistent attendance will help your Eagle be fully engaged in the community and with the project/quest learning. In fact, most projects depend on the participation of all team members. If you know in advance that you will be taking your Eagle out of school, it is helpful for the others in the Studio to be informed so they can make alternative work plans. While away from school, your Eagle will be able to access his or her online programs and the Journey Tracker system for Core Skills work. Eagles in Mid School, and Launch Pad also have the option to Zoom in for launches, Town Hall, and Squad Meetings.

SNOW DAYS/DELAYS

We follow the APS system for snow delays and cancellations. If APS calls for a 2 hour delay, drop-off will begin at 9:45, and school will start at 10:30. Families who live in the mountains or other areas with more snow may choose to keep their Eagles home even if APS is not cancelled.

DRESS CODE

At Acton ABQ, we value an open learning environment. Guides may ask learners to change their clothing if we feel that it is a distraction to themselves or others. Please remember that Studios have the option to create their own policies around dress code (and just about everything else).

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. Families are asked to sign a “Media Release” waiver during their initial TADS enrollment.

SAFETY AT SCHOOL

At Acton ABQ we believe natural consequences are the most effective teaching tool. We have taken great care to create a campus environment that allows Eagles to explore the limits of their strength, balance, and physical abilities.

- Acton staff have been trained in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and there is an AED housed in the main office.
- Guides will step in to enforce infractions of the Honor Code listed below.

OUT OF BOUNDS: HONOR CODE

HONOR CODE SYSTEM BRIEF OVERVIEW

The Honor Code is the founder/guide-directed accountability system. All other systems are Eagle-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.



OUT OF BOUNDS: HONOR CODE

The Strike system is used to reinforce the Honor Code.
(Strikes reset each session)

FIRST STRIKE

against the Honor Code

The Eagle steps out until they choose to participate again within the community guard rails.*

- A guide will speak with the Eagle to ensure he or she understands why the strike was given.
- The guide will work with the Eagle to brainstorm specific strategies to prevent a second strike by reflecting on a Choices and Consequences Checklist.

SECOND STRIKE

against the Honor Code

The Eagle is removed from the group and spends the rest of the day at the guide's desk. The Eagle does not participate in any group activity.

- 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 encourage family discussion about the issue (it may be helpful to ask the Eagle about the Choices and Consequences Checklist.)

THIRD STRIKE

against the Honor Code

The Eagle 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.

- Everything from First / Second Strike process above
- When returning to school the following day, the Eagle will share a statement with the Studio which contains 2 or 3 strategies he or she will use to avoid another strike.
- If Eagles 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 Eagle.
- 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.

***Please Note: In the Dreamers and Lower Elementary studio, any kind of physical aggression will result in a hero receiving a strike and possibly being sent home for the day.**

PROBATIONARY CONTRACT

If an Eagle receives 3 strikes in one session, he or she 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 Eagle can demonstrate the required change(s). We typically offer an Eagle one to two sessions to make these changes so that we can measure long-term success. The Eagle, family, guide, and Head of School will meet to discuss and sign the contract. Eagles who adhere to the contract for the agreed amount of time will not receive any further disciplinary action. If the Eagle is not able to uphold the contract, he or she will be asked to leave the school and will not be able to reapply for 1 school year.

NOTE: Founders reserve the right to ask an Eagle 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 3 consecutive sessions may also trigger a probationary contract.

GAME PLAY SYSTEMS

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

EAGLE BUCKS

Eagle Bucks are the hero-directed accountability system. As heroes produce work, they earn Eagle Bucks. Heroes can hold one another accountable by requesting Eagle 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 1 Eagle Buck, or...
2. Take the matter to the Eagle Buck Committee to seek guidance on how to resolve the matter. The Eagle 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

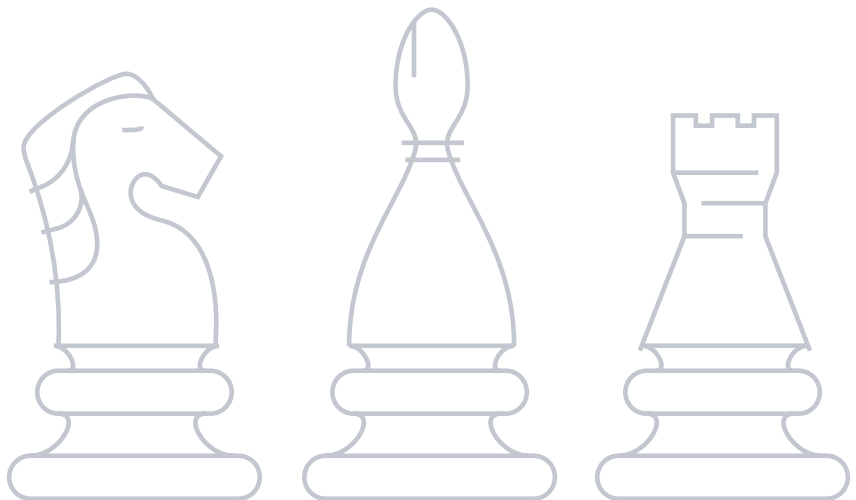
Weekly hero meetings are held whereby heroes can propose new rules for the Studio, encourage each other, or bring up concerns and potential solutions.

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 through it with them and empower them to use one of the following systems to handle the matter:



SYSTEMS FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT

Eagle Bucks: Heroes may request an Eagle 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:

1

*Express their feelings
& define the problem*

2

*Identify possible
solutions*

3

*Make a plan
to move forward*

STUDIO MAINTENANCE

Heroes are required to help maintain their Studio through daily Studio Maintenance. This encourages organization and good habits.

FREEDOM LEVELS

The Acton environment encourages heroes to learn time management and self-governing of tasks to be completed within a certain projected time-frame. When a hero at Acton exhibits these attributes, they can earn additional privileges. Each Studio's system may look different from one another and be in place for different reasons. Freedom levels vary by Studio and can be changed to maximize their effectiveness.

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 Eagles.

This can be a very challenging experience for both Eagles and parents. For more about 360 reviews and the parent-Eagle experience, please read this helpful blog post: <https://www.actonacademyparents.com/what-we-wish-our-parents-knew-about-360-surveys/>

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?



BRAINS, BOOKS, BUDDIES

Acton Academy 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).

BBB is defined as:

- > **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. Acton Academy 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.)

The Acton Academy learning model is not well suited to support children with certain learning struggles or behavioral challenges. 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.

Acton Academy 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 coordinators. 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. If it is determined that a Hero’s individual needs interfere with the overall learning community (and studio functionality), the Hero may be asked to leave Acton.

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!**

Reflection Question:

When has failure resulted in some greater lesson for you? Share this with your child.



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. (See Honor Code Violation #1)

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 towards proficiency, then Acton ABQ 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 allow Eagles 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 or freedom to do anything you whenever you want. 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.

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

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.

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 Eagles work well over a whole session, and others may benefit from more frequent check-ins.

Reflection Questions: 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? Who guided you? Is there something you need a break from to get back to a strong start for next week?



JOURNEY TRACKER (journey.actonacademy.org)

For Upper Studios, points, badge plans, work submitted, weekly tracking, SMART Goals, and Eagle Buck details can all be viewed in Journey Tracker. While Journey Tracker is a powerful tool, it is only a small measure of the learning that your child is experiencing at Acton.

Journey Tracker is organized by the learning categories (Learn to Be, Learn & Do) to offer perspective about the badges your child is working on.



LEARNING BADGES VS. GRADES

*At Acton ABQ,
we do not use
letter grades*

Milestones of achievement at Acton are Learning Badges which prove success in completing a long-term series of learning challenges. These Badges will document the entire Acton ABQ 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, Civilization, 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 a 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 Eagles are required to complete in order to transition to the next studio. Each year, Eagles, parents, and guides will work together to develop a badge plan for the year. If the badge plan is completed early, the Eagle 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.

Eagles 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 ABQ, 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.” Eagles, parents, and guides will use the first Journey Meeting to discuss and agree on the Eagle's badge plan. The second Journey Meeting will give the same team the opportunity to revisit the plan.

LAUNCHES

Launches are sacred, and every Eagle is expected to participate every time. If Eagles are late or asked to leave the launch, they will wait outside the studio until the launch ends. Eagles 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. Eagles 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.

EXCELLENCE AT ACTON

“How you do anything is how you’ll do everything” is an unofficial motto of the Navy SEALs.

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

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 EAGLES

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

SITTING ON THE SIDELINES

“...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

COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL

SLACK APP

Please use the Slack App to connect with your Hero’s studio, as well as other parents in the Acton Community. We use Slack to make school announcements, highlight daily Studio “goings-ons,” and sometimes to coordinate outside activities.

EMAIL & 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 505-358-1163.

ATTENDANCE

attendance@dactonabq.org or 505-278-0540

Please use the Attendance Tracker email or phone number to let us know when your Eagle will be late, absent, or leaving early. Texts to this phone number will appear in the attendance mailbox. You may also call the number and leave a voice message. Guides and Eagles will also use this mailbox to report absences in the studios.

Please be aware that we do not monitor this number in order to answer phone calls. Mornings are often very busy for us. We want to know when Eagles will not be attending, but we are a small staff and we do not always have the capacity to answer attendance-related communication in real time.

Please do not call, text, or email daily attendance-related information to the guides or Head of School. Use the email address or phone number above.

Older Eagles can email their squad leaders or colleagues to coordinate or report work that is done while they are absent.

COMMUNICATION

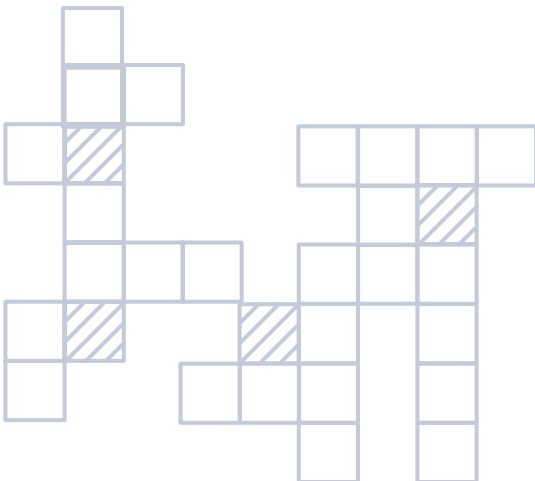
CONTACTING GUIDES

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.

If you are writing an email to your guide:

1. cc your child with their @actonabq email address (when applicable).
2. Refrain from using negative, derogatory, or inflammatory statements,
3. Refrain from debating/explaining emotional or challenging topics.

Be prepared: Guides are Socratic and rather than answering questions may ask you questions and refer you to resources to help you. You should review this handbook (or other studio procedures before sending an email, as that is likely how you will find your answers anyway). Please understand that we will not be available to talk with you during the morning drop off, during school, or afternoon pick up times.



SESSION SURVEYS

As part of our commitment to families, each family will receive feedback surveys. Your responses will be kept anonymous. We ask that you guide your child to provide helpful input rather than anything personal about another hero. The summary of these surveys will be shared with Acton families and guides periodically. By sharing the results, we uphold our shared value of transparency and accountability to you. The survey is a place for constructive input and suggestions for how ActonABQ can better serve your family. Survey access will be sent via Slack and email.

SURVEY FAQ

1. To remain affiliated with Acton Academy, we must have a yearly average of 4 or higher.
2. We ask that you include your child in the survey process.
3. 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!

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS FOR ADULTS

While on campus or interacting with members of the Acton Academy community, all adults are expected to adhere to the following values: respect, calm communication (no yelling or cursing), compliance with this Policy & Procedures Handbook, no harassment, and absolutely NO alcohol, tobacco, or drug use.

If adults engage in inappropriate behavior, they will be:

- Informed that their behavior is inappropriate.
- Requested to stop.
- Requested to leave school premises if appropriate.

Any faculty or staff member may refuse to place a child in the care and custody of an adult who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

If inappropriate behavior continues, the school reserves the right to prohibit visits to the campus and/or reconsider the enrollment of the child(ren) in the school.

FORMING A TEAM: PARENT/FAMILY JOURNEY

The life of an Acton parent is not always easy, as we are committed to the idea that struggles will help our children grow and become independent, confident learners.

PARENT MEETINGS

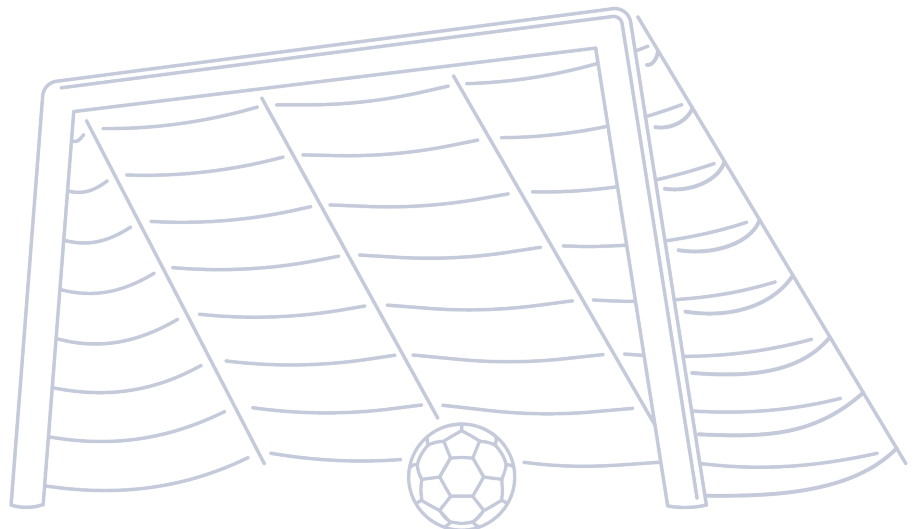
Each year we host three parent lunch meetings. Part of the Parent Contract includes the commitment for one parent from each family to attend at least two of these meetings each year. Parent Meetings will provide an opportunity for you to reflect on your own Hero's Journey particularly as it relates to being an Acton Parent.

PARENT/FAMILY SOCIALIZATION

Feel free to socialize! We want our parents to be highly involved in creating a positive community of family support and friendship. As a small school we will offer occasional gatherings, but feel that each family can positively contribute by planning their own activities/gatherings and reaching out to the Acton ABQ Community for comradery. A family directory will be compiled and shared (with permission) for your convenience. Additionally, the Slack message boards can aid in getting the word out about Acton ABQ Parent/Family events.

FAMILY BADGE/FAMILY PLAN

Each year we ask our families to complete a Family Badge and/or a Family Plan. This project is meant to help your family identify your guiding values, dreams, and goals. We will provide examples of completed badges, as well as suggestions for how to develop your badge/plan.



TO UP YOUR GAME

ACTON READS FOR OWNERS, GUIDES, AND PARENTS

FOUNDATIONAL

Courage to Grow by Laura Sandefer

UnSchooling Rules by Clark Aldrich

The Power of TED by David Emerald

Choice Words: How Our Language Affects Children's Learning by Peter Johnston

Mastery: The Keys to Success and Long-Term Fulfillment by GB Leonard

The Talent Code by Daniel Coyle

An Ethic of Excellence by Ron Berger

Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius by Angeline Stoll Lillard

A Thomas Jefferson Education: Teaching a Generation of Leaders for the Twenty-First Century by Oliver DeMille

Work Rules by Laszlo Bock

The Self-Directed Child: The Science and Sense of Giving Your Child More Control Over Their Lives by William Stixrud and Ned Johnson

Empower: What Happens When Heroes Own Their Learning by John Spencer and A.J. Juliani

Fires in the Mind: What Kids Can Tell Us About Motivation and Mastery by Kathleen Cushman

SCORE THE WINNING POINT



What is the point in providing your child with a world-class education if you do not come out of it with stronger bonds and solid relationships?

The Winning Point is to truly grow as an individual, a family, and to be your Eagle's #1 fan in this game called life. **How?**

- Work to remove fear from your parenting by “drilling down to the Why?” Not sure what this means? Our Head of School would love to chat with you about this.
- Be on your own journey! Your privilege is to enjoy growing next to your child! Have a project. Share your excitement with your child - they will follow your lead.
- See the genius & the hero. We define heroes as: Someone who gets up every time they fall. This truly heroic approach to life is absolutely enough to change the world for good.

The Result: Peace in knowing that your child (like you!) is working to do the best they can with the knowledge they have. You have a clearer picture of their divine, unlimited potential, and you can more readily trust them. Your family grows...and grows together.

