



ACTON ACADEMY WEST END

# INFO KIT

FIND YOUR CALLING | CHANGE THE WORLD



MEET THE FOUNDERS

## OUR STORY

We are Emily and Joe Malizia and Katelyn and Michael Alsop. We're family, best friends, parents and entrepreneurs. We've never done things the "traditional way". From starting multiple small businesses, to growing a seven-figure online education platform for photographers, to raising our kids together, and now starting a non-traditional micro school for our kids and their peers, the excitement of re-imagining what's possible drives us and inspires us!

As parents to six young children between our two families, we have been thinking about education a lot recently. We all attended public school, currently live in a great school district, and have confidence that our children would do just fine in that setting. However, the more we thought about it, the more we wondered, should we settle for "fine"? We've heard about the excessive homework and standardized tests that start in the early elementary years. Will this approach adequately prepare our children for a successful, fulfilling life in the 21st century?

As we began searching for answers to these questions, we came across Courage to Grow by Laura Sandefer, Acton Academy Co-Founder. We were intrigued by the innovative school that she and her husband, Jeff, started 10 years ago in Austin, Texas. Instead of an institution, school is viewed as a community of learners who are each on their own "Hero's Journey" to discover their passion in life. The standards are extremely high and nothing short of excellence is acceptable. Success is not about completing worksheets or memorizing facts to pass a test. Instead, the goals for students are simple and bold: **find a calling and change the world.**

“Every child has passions, gifts, and purpose to discover as they grow up. Why make them wait until 18 to start pursuing it?”

# ACTON

KEY ELEMENTS TO KNOW :

## HERO'S JOURNEY

We believe each of our students will find a passion – something they love and are uniquely gifted to do – finding and pursuing this gift is what we call the Hero's Journey.

## STUDENT-LED

Acton Academy is Student-Led, which means that our students are involved in every step of decision making processes from studio rules, scheduling, school systems, and even disciplinary actions. Age appropriate freedoms, within reason, are given to students. They are responsible for setting their own goals, tracking their progress, navigating relationships, and reflecting on their experiences.

## GUIDE

Acton employs Guides rather than teachers. A Guide's role is not to be an expert but to help lead the learner to their own conclusions. Guides provide instruction with the goal for learners to eventually become intrinsically motivated and independent. We desire our learners to have no have a “sage on a stage” but rather a “Guide on the side” who is coaching them into each season of growth.

## STUDIO

We refer to our classrooms as studios to encourage the idea of an environment of creation and personal expression.

## QUEST

All students engage in experiential learning expeditions we call Quests. Participating in a Quest allows a student to explore a topic in-depth using a variety of hands-on experiences.

# CORE BELIEFS

AND VISION

01.

We believe each child has a gift that can change the world in a profound way

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02.

We believe in a closely connected family of learners

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03.

We believe in learning to learn, learning to do, and learning to be

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04.

We believe in economic, religious, and political freedom

Our vision is to offer an innovative approach to education that celebrates personal responsibility, creative freedom, and the pursuit of one's life's purpose.

# OUR PROMISES

## TO OUR LEARNERS

To prepare young people to live exceptional lives in the real world.

Encourage them to be curious, independent, lifelong learners

Encourage the discovery of gifts and learn to use them to solve difficult problems

Encourage the development of deep respect for economic, political, and religious freedoms

Empowering them to cherish the arts and the wonders of the world

*“Being part of the Acton community means a devotion to a growth mindset: one that cherishes mistakes as learning opportunities.”*

# WHAT MAKES ACTON UNIQUE?

Acton Academy West End uses the latest technology in a self-paced learning environment that is designed to foster responsibility, accountability, and teamwork. Acton students are empowered to thrive in a world that needs independent, motivated thinkers and learners.

## LEARN BY DOING

We believe students learn by doing. Whether it's launching a startup business, creating a tidepool habitat, playing a musical instrument, painting a mosaic, or programming a robot, Acton students are building real-life skills in the classroom every day. We believe the learning experience is much richer when the teacher ("Guide") offers insightful questions and facilitates hands-on learning, rather than teacher-led lecture-style learning.

## DEVELOP CHARACTER

We encourage our students to develop personal virtues such as honesty, hard work, responsibility, kindness and empathy. Armed with purpose and good character, we believe our students will launch into adulthood prepared to find their calling and change the world.

## PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Acton Academy is "student-led." This means young people take ownership of their education and peer relationships.

# OUR LEARNING

## ENVIRONMENT

Hands-on learning | no homework or frequent standardized testing

Character Education | Opportunities for service and growth

Fine Art and Music workshops | opportunities for learning beyond the studio

Purposefully designed indoor studio and outdoor learning spaces

Fun and enriching family and community involvement

# STUDIO DESIGN

Acton Academy is a blend of the old and the new. It resembles a return to the community schoolhouses that built America with multi-aged classrooms. It also utilizes the best of modern technology and 21st century organizational design.

In a tightly knit community bound by shared mission, promises and accountability, young people develop deep friendships and the skills to keep them for the long run.

## DISCOVERY STUDIO (AGES 5–7)

Learners will spend time each day developing their CORE SKILLS (Reading, Writing & Math) and also be involved in hands-on projects (QUESTS) to master the skills needed to solve real-world problems.

**EXAMPLE:** Instead of memorizing the periodic table .....  
You are an ER doctor in a 6-week simulation quest.

The young people learn the processes, tools, decision trees and facts to triage patients. On the final-day exhibition, parents come with prepared “diseases.” You can order an MRI, an X-ray, etc., paying for each. The winner of the simulation is the ER doc who saves the most lives (correct diagnoses) for the lowest cost.

## ADDITIONAL STUDIOS COMING SOON!

At this time, Acton Academy West End only offers the discovery studio for learners ages 5-7.

# MEASURING

## GROWTH AND MASTERY

For most people with a background in traditional education, the idea of testing is a must in order to ensure that students are actually learning. However, at Acton, we believe that there is another way to prove a young person is mastering a skill. Below are four ways we track progress and growth:

Students celebrate the mastery of tools, skills, and character by **earning badges, assembling portfolios and taking part in public exhibitions.**

Parents can **review a student’s academic progress** by reviewing their earned badges in Core Skills like reading, writing, math, and spelling and character development.

**Public exhibitions** at the end of most Quests allow young heroes to present work to experts, customers or the public for a real-world test.

**Electronic and hard copy Portfolios** capture rough drafts, photos, video, and other creative work.

# A DAY IN

## THE LIFE AT ACTON

A day in our studio is marked by creativity within constraints: large blocks of time for work and play with clear but broad guardrails, equipping young people to manage their time, set goals, and track progress. As learners demonstrate their readiness, they earn more freedom and responsibility. Mornings are reserved for Core skills and afternoons are for hands-on projects with integrated time to reflect, think deeply, and connect with peers. Within each work block, students choose from a broad range of work options based on their personal goals, passions and commitments.

## OUR LEARNER-DRIVEN COMMUNITY

Our Learner Driven community is run mostly by our learners, where closely connected families of lifelong learners are bound by clear covenants; and **“Learning to Do”** and **“Learning to Be”** are even more important than **“Learning to Know”**.

- > Students create and sign a Contract of Promises describing how each individual will act and the consequences for violating community norms
- > Mentor teams encourage younger and older students to listen, affirm, set goals and hold each other accountable
- > “Learn to Be” badges that celebrate character and completing leadership challenges

## SAMPLE DAILY SCHEDULE

8:00-8:30 AM
drop-off / free time
8:45-11:30 AM
core skills (Goal setting, math, Writers' Workshop, reading, civilization discussion, “Brain Breaks” throughout)
11:30- 12:30 PM
lunch / free time
12:30 - 12:45 PM
quest launch (socratic discussion)
12:45 - 2:45 PM
quest (Hands-on work, team-based challenges, sciences, coding, entrepreneurship, art & music, history, report on goals)
2:45 - 3:00 PM
studio maintenance
3:00 - 3:15 PM
closing group (socratic discussion)
3:15 PM
pick-up

IS THIS THE

# RIGHT FIT

FOR YOUR FAMILY?

Acton Academy West End is a wonderful fit for families who resonate with the following:

- > You believe the traditional school system is no longer the best option to prepare children for the modern world
- > Entrepreneurs, Creators, and Creatives
- > Out-of-the-box Thinkers
- > People who want the benefits of child-directed learning without having to make a full-time commitment to homeschooling
- > Families with flexible schedules
- > Children who want additional time to pursue their passions beyond traditional after school hours
- > People who want to maximize their family time
- > Trailblazers and trendsetters
- > Families who value their freedom and want their children to develop a love of learning

## FAQS

### HOW IS ACTON ACADEMY WEST END AFFILIATED WITH ACTON ACADEMY?

Acton Academy West End is part of the network of over 250+ Acton Academies around the world. We follow the same exact Learning Design (curriculum) and learning model that Jeff and Laura Sandefer helped create at the original Acton Academy campus over a decade ago.

### WHAT GRADES DO YOU OFFER?

For the 2022-2023 year, we are enrolling young people ages 5 (kindergarten) through 7 (2nd grade). As the founding group matures we will grow into additional studios for older learners.

### WILL CHILDREN BE GROUPED TOGETHER BY GRADES?

We believe that children learn best when working with children younger and older than themselves rather than split up into groups based solely on age. In addition to individualized curriculum, all ages of students work together in groups.

### WHAT IS YOUR TUITION?

Tuition is \$850 per month for 10 months or \$8,500 per year. There is a \$100 (non-refundable application fee), a \$150 deposit due upon acceptance to hold the spot for your learner, and a \$550 supply fee due with the first month's tuition.

### WHAT KIND OF LEARNER THRIVES AT ACTON ACADEMY WEST END?

Students who love to learn, are curious, self-motivated, and respectful. Our environment is an accelerator for the independent learner who can tackle challenging questions, follow instructions, and solve problems.

### IS ACTON ACADEMY WEST END A MONTESSORI SCHOOL?

We respect and incorporate Maria Montessori's philosophy but, we are not a Montessori school. We also use the latest interactive technologies, hands on projects and the Socratic Method for discussions.



# FAQS

## HOW DO I KNOW IF IT'S THE RIGHT FIT FOR US?

Each family is unique, though there are some similarities we've seen between the families who are happiest and most successful in this model. We encourage families to be intentional about their decision to apply! Please read "Courage to Grow" by Laura Sandefer, and reach out to us to schedule a time to meet.

## DO YOU OFFER SCHOLARSHIPS?

There are limited scholarship opportunities in our founding year. If you are interested in a scholarship, please let us know in your application. If you would like to contribute to the scholarship fund, please let us know. We are eager to share this opportunity with as many highly qualified applicants as possible.

## WHAT RESOURCES DO YOU HAVE FOR SPECIAL LEARNING NEEDS?

We take our commitment seriously when we promise to deliver a transformative education experience for young people at Acton Academy West End. Since we are a small school, we make sure that we have the resources necessary to keep this promise for each family that joins us. Currently we have resources to assist young people who experience ADD/ADHD, dyslexia, and some minor forms of autism. We are not currently equipped to serve young people with other specific learning needs.

## IS ACTON ACADEMY WEST END ACCREDITED?

Yes the school is accredited through the International Association of Learner Driven Schools.

## HOW DO YOU USE TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM WITHOUT STUDENTS HAVING TOO MUCH SCREEN TIME?

At Acton Academy, we believe in the power of balance. Using the incredible, self-paced eLearning tools now available, we are able to provide the rigor needed for learning math, vocabulary, spelling and grammar in about 90 minutes each day, while freeing up the rest of the day for engaging, project-based learning. The two are highly complementary.



## NEXT STEPS

WE'D LOVE TO CONNECT WITH YOU



**EMAIL US**



**SCHEDULE A VIRTUAL  
MEETING**

[ACTONACADEMYWESTEND.COM](https://actonacademywestend.com)