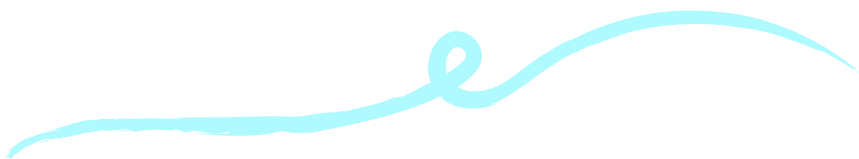
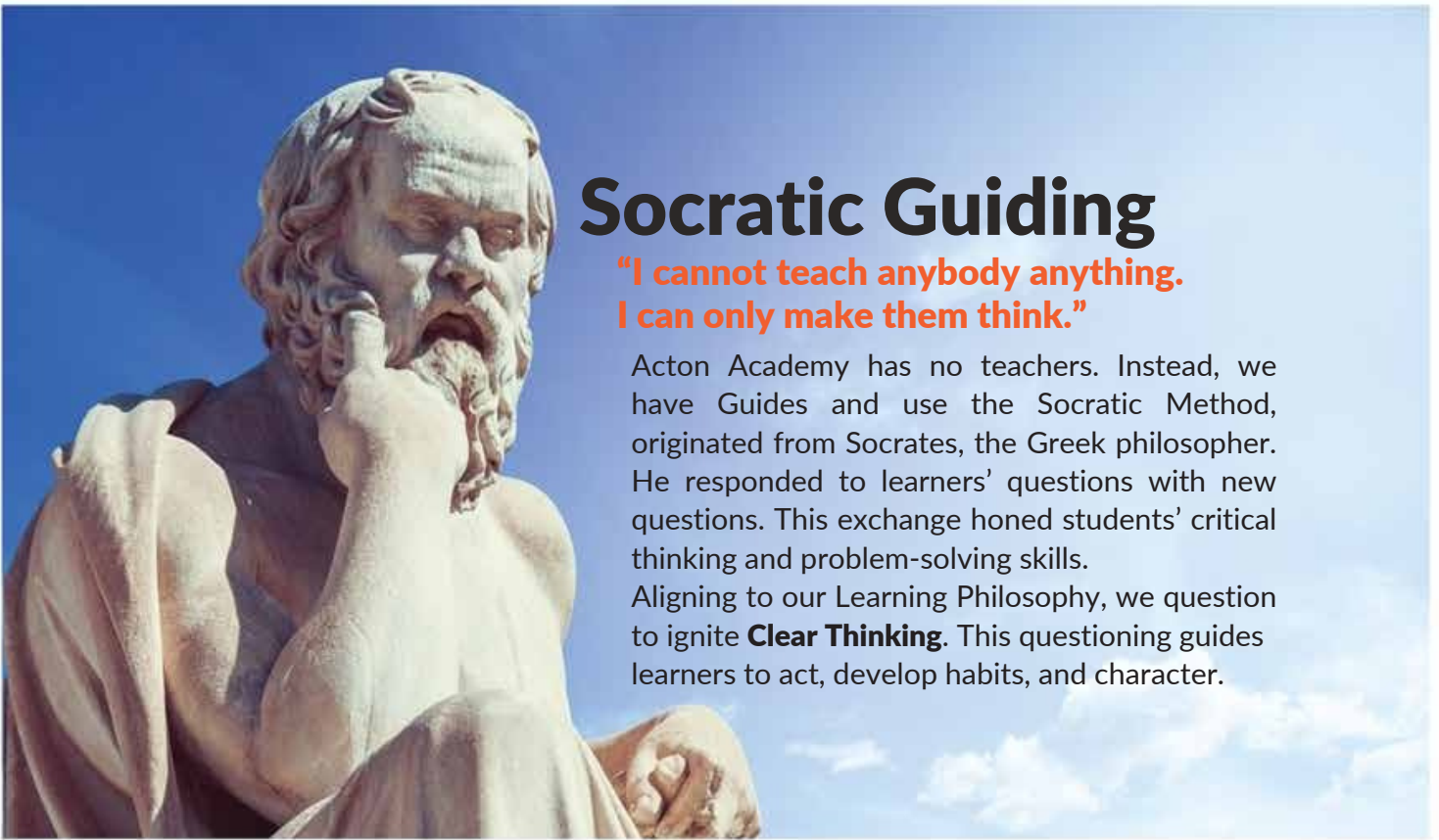




Acton Academy Merrimack Valley

FIND A CALLING, CHANGE THE WORLD.





Socratic Guiding

**"I cannot teach anybody anything.
I can only make them think."**

Acton Academy has no teachers. Instead, we have Guides and use the Socratic Method, originated from Socrates, the Greek philosopher. He responded to learners' questions with new questions. This exchange honed students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Aligning to our Learning Philosophy, we question to ignite **Clear Thinking**. This questioning guides learners to act, develop habits, and character.

Acton Academy Turning Learning Upside Down

Traditional School



- Rows of desks and a teacher at the blackboard.
- Memorization and testing of rules and facts.
- Report cards measure your success.
- One teacher lectures to many students.
- Worksheets and homework.
- School like a factory with bells, shifts, and one-size-fits-all.

Acton Academy



- Collaborative work like at Google or Facebook.
- Acquisition and application of real skills in projects.
- Personalized goals are set, and progress is transparently tracked.
- Everyone's a teacher; everyone's a student.
- Professional tools for art, engineering, & storytelling; Cutting-edge adaptive tech for Core Skills.
- School like a journey, with big goals, mentors, tools, and a destination you care about.

The Hero's Journey

Every human yearns for powerful stories.

The Hero's Journey is a classic story structure that is shared by stories worldwide — Star Wars, Harry Potter, Disney movies and many myths.

A hero goes on an adventure, enter into a special world, facing challenges and trials. He overcomes them and then returns home transformed.

The Hero's Journey is the founding narrative of Acton Academy — the "why" behind all the passion.



Each of us is just an ordinary person; But if we're willing to say Yes to New experiences and keep moving forward, even when it's hard, it hurts, and it includes failure, then we are—all of us—heroes on a journey.

Laura Sandefer, co-founder of Acton Academy



acton language

We have turned learning upside-down!

HERO'S JOURNEY

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

SOCRATIC LEARNING

Daily Launches are Socratic discussions, designed to help students defend their ideas, open their minds, and draw conclusions as a group.

LEARNER-DRIVEN

Acton Academy is Learner-Driven, 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 at the greatest extent. Students are responsible to set their own goals, track their progress, navigate relationships, and reflect 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.

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



Acton Academy is “learner led.”

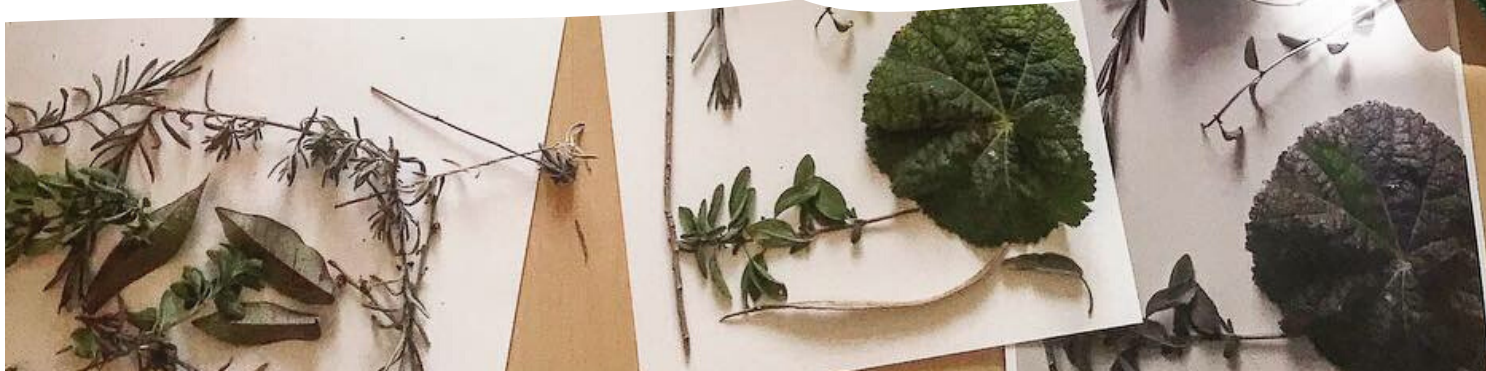
Acton Academy is “learner led.” This means young people take ownership of their education and peer relationships.

Acton students learn to think independently, take responsibility and embrace challenge.

They are being prepared to bring their own unique genius to the world. We believe in the power of apprenticeships. Beginning in middle school, our students obtain summer internships in a field they are passionate about. Acton students have interned with doctors, entrepreneur bakers, plumbers, attorneys and graphic designers. What will your child choose?

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.



How do we measure progress?

Joy + Rigor = Mastery

Deep learning brings a special sense of joy, but the mastery required for a Hero's Journey goes even further, requiring commitment, discipline and hard work towards a worthy goal.

Embracing rigor is part of saying 'yes' to a Hero's Journey.

Measuring Mastery

Laura, the co-founder of Acton Academy shared:

First of all, be assured of one thing: you are completely qualified to assess your child's intellectual and moral growth. No teacher certification or education degree necessary. You are smart. You are experienced. You know your child better than anyone in the universe.



We measure progress and feedback in a variety of ways:

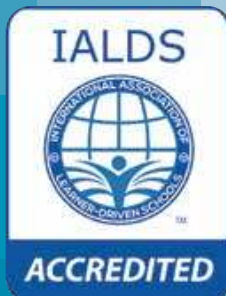
- Learning Badges
- Learning Exhibitions
- Online Dashboards from learning software programs
- S.M.A.R.T. Goals Tracking
- Peer Review & Apprenticeship References
- Student Portfolios
- Standardized Tests

There are also studio systems to measure effort, character, and excellence. Eagles are empowered to prove their worth to the real world.

Accreditation & Qualifications

Acton Academy is accredited by the **International Association of Learner Driven Schools (IALDS)**.

Acton Launchpad graduates receive **an accredited US high school diploma**. They also researched their Next Great Adventure — a list of stepping-stone apprenticeships, desired college, or a real-world adventure like starting a business. They adapt and take the qualifications necessary to serve their journey and calling.





acton learners will:

- **Begin a Hero's Journey.**
- **Learn to be a curious, independent, lifelong learner.**
- **Develop a deep respect for economic, political and religious freedoms.**
- **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.**

the family experience

Attending Acton is not just a new path for students, but for families as well. The Acton mindset is one of open-mindedness, fearlessness, and the ability to own failures and celebrate successes. Being part of the Acton community means a devotion to a growth mindset: one that cherishes mistakes as learning opportunities. We highly encourage you to explore our Facebook and Instagram Page, website, Acton Academy Parent blog and the book *Courage to Grow*. These will help you get a fuller picture of the Acton experience and decide as a family it is the right fit for you.

You May be an Acton Family if...

YOU TRUST YOUR CHILD

Once children are free from the worry of disappointing a parent, they are able to experiment through trial and error without fearing negative feedback.

CELEBRATE MISTAKES

Children learn to walk by failing, talk by making sounds, and ride a bike by crashing. At Acton Academy we encourage mistakes! In our Entrepreneurship Quest, we often say, "Fail early, cheaply, and often."

GROWTH MINDSET

At Acton Academy, none of us started out doing something brand-new perfectly. We quickly gain understanding, practice, and get better. We add the power of "Yet". I am not able to build that yet!

WARM HEARTED -TOUGH MINDED

Acton learners and parents often meet roadblocks on their journey. Being warm hearted enough to love through the trails gives support, while being tough-minded encourages courage to push through challenges and mistakes.

COMMITMENT TO YOUR OWN HERO'S JOURNEY

At Acton Academy, the Hero's Journey is not a cute cliché. It's what our Studios are built and based on. We ALL have a calling to change the world. Our calling to live a Hero's Journey is not just the learners, but for parents as well.



Our Mission

Each person who enters our doors will find a calling that will change the world.

Our Promises

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

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

Our Core Beliefs

- 1.We believe each child has a gift that can change the world in a profound way.
- 2.We believe in a closely connected family of lifelong learners.
- 3.We believe in learning to learn, learning to do, and learning to be.
- 4.We believe in economic, political, and religious freedom.

Frequently Asked Questions

What do you mean by “a hero’s journey”?

We believe that each of us has a special calling in life, and a series of trials and tests that must be faced with integrity and purpose in order to live a satisfying and fulfilled life. Our mission is to prepare your child for his or her special journey.

Is Acton Academy Merrimack Valley 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.

What grades do you offer?

For the 2023-2024 year, Acton Merrimack Valley is accepting young learners ages 4 (Pre-kindergarten) through 11 (6th grade). Accepting ages 12-14 (7th -8th) for a waiting list pending Middle School Studio opening. As the founding group matures we will grow into middle school and high school studios.

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 a “running partner”?

Running Partners are classmates who meet together regularly to set goals and hold each other accountable for meeting those goals. Running Partners encourage and inspire each other by asking good questions, listening and providing affirmation.

What is your calendar schedule?

School begins at 9:30 am each day (drop-off starting at 8:00 am) and finishes at 3:00 pm.

Our school year is divided into 6 learning sessions (Quests) each with a theme, such as Edison’s Lab, Entrepreneurship, Robotics, Marine Science, Community Garden, Survivor to name a few. Each Quest is a grand adventure, culminating in a public Exhibition Night for family and friends to come celebrate the learning process from that session. We operate on an 10-month calendar, but our flexible program allows your family to travel or vacation during the year, without sacrificing any learning. Seven sessions, followed by 1 to 2 weeks off to refuel and for holidays, make up the school year.

What does an average school day look like?

School begins at 9:30 am each day (drop-off starting at 8:00 am) and finishes at 3:00 pm. Our learning time is broken into morning Socratic discussions, Core Skills time, PE, Art & Music. The afternoon focuses more on collaborative learning through Quests/projects, STEM projects, field trips, and guest speakers. Multiple outside recess breaks are an important part of each day. Using the incredible 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 collaborative learning.

Is it really possible for students to complete core skills in only 90 minutes each day?

Yes, we promise it is! An unbelievable amount of time is wasted in traditional education because of discipline distractions, disengaged students, and inefficient learning methods. Acton Academy approaches learning radically different from the traditional model of a one-size-fits-all lecture with passive students who are required to move at the same pace of the class. Using a learner-driven model, we allow each student to set their own goals, choose learning platforms that work for them, and provide a consistent atmosphere of reward and accountability. While we do not believe standardized assessments are important, we do administer standardized tests at the beginning and end of the year to measure baseline data on core skills. Based on these test results nationwide, Acton Academy students have been advancing far faster than in traditional schools, averaging as much as three grade levels gained each year. By using a more efficient learner-driven model, we are able to free up massive amounts of time for students to pursue their own learning interests through collaborative projects, apprenticeships, and life-integrated learning.

How do you track a student's progress?

Heroes at Acton Academy Merrimack Valley demonstrate progress through student portfolios, learning exhibitions, peer reviews, goal monitoring, online dashboards, learning badges, and a once-a-year optional standardized test. In place of traditional letter grades, we use a system of badges that are not earned until a learner has reached mastery in that specific area, thus ensuring students successfully learn and process what they are studying.

Badges are translatable as transcripts to other academic institutions. Completion of 80% of the required badges at 100% mastery translates to a grade of 80%.

Do students have homework?

While there will be work that needs to be completed on days Heroes are at home, we believe it is important that learners do not have any evening or weekend homework. We believe that young people need time to play, relax, and be with family and friends, and are committed to ensuring plenty of learning during studio hours so that time outside the studio can be free for other important pursuits. We also believe family time is sacred and those relationships need to be nurtured on evenings and weekends without the distraction and conflict that homework can bring.

How does Acton Academy Merrimack Valley ensure a high-quality learning environment?

Deep at the core of Acton Merrimack Valley is our commitment to serving customers and receiving transparent feedback. Because of this, we ask families to participate in a monthly Customer Satisfaction Survey, where we ask them to rate us 1-5 on how well we accomplished our promises. We then share the results with the community. These surveys are our most important metric to measure the success of the learning community.

Why a learner driven classroom?

At Acton Academy Merrimack Valley we believe in learning to be and learning to do and an important part of this is encouraging kids to take responsibility for their own behavior and hold those around them to a high standard. When something isn’t working, we want our students to work together to solve the problem, not look for an adult to solve it for them. This creates a sense of independence and confidence that will serve them well in all areas of life.

What do you mean by "every child can change the world"?

We believe each of our students will find a passion —something they love and have a gift to do. They will use this gift to serve others and fulfill a need they are passionate about in the world. This may be by becoming a shoe-shiner who tells stories and makes people's day just by doing his job with love and vigor; it may be by becoming a coach who sees the light in a child’s eyes and guides her to pursue a dream; it may be by becoming a father or mother who leads a family on aHero's Journey; it may be becoming an entrepreneur or business leader guided by compassion and integrity; or it may be by becoming an artist or writer who brings beauty to people's lives.

How much is tuition for Acton Academy Merrimack Valley?

For the 2024-2025 school year, our Full-Time Monday -Thursday tuition is \$7000 per year. We are able to divide that up into 10 monthly payments of \$700 per month. Below are other enrollment options for the 2024-2025 school year including enrollment fees and tuition. Currently, we can offer such low tuition because Acton Academy is a **Learner-Driven** environment, which means we don’t need dozens of adults hovering around and “maintaining order” all day. Learners are able to organize and learn on their own, track and evaluate each other’s work, all without interruption and interference from adults. Because we do not want or need excessive faculty and staff, we are able to serve more families. Scholarships are available through the [New Hampshire Children’s Scholarship Fund](#) as well as the [Education Freedom Accounts](#) .

Full Time (M-TH)	
Admission Fee	\$300
Monthly Tuition Payment	\$700
Total	\$7300
Part Time (M-W)	
Admission Fee	\$300
Monthly Tuition Payment	\$600
Total	\$6300
Half Day (M-TH)	
Admission Fee	\$300
Monthly Tuition Payment	\$500
Total	\$5300

2024-25 Calendar

JULY 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		