



# INFO KIT

FIND A CALLING | CHANGE THE WORLD

# OUR STORY

## MEET THE OWNERS



## Hello!

We are Michael and Emily Koska, founders and co-owners of Odyssey FM.

Emily is a nurse practitioner with a passion for entrepreneurship and a big love for her community. She successfully owned a profitable wedding photography business and photographed over 300+ weddings.

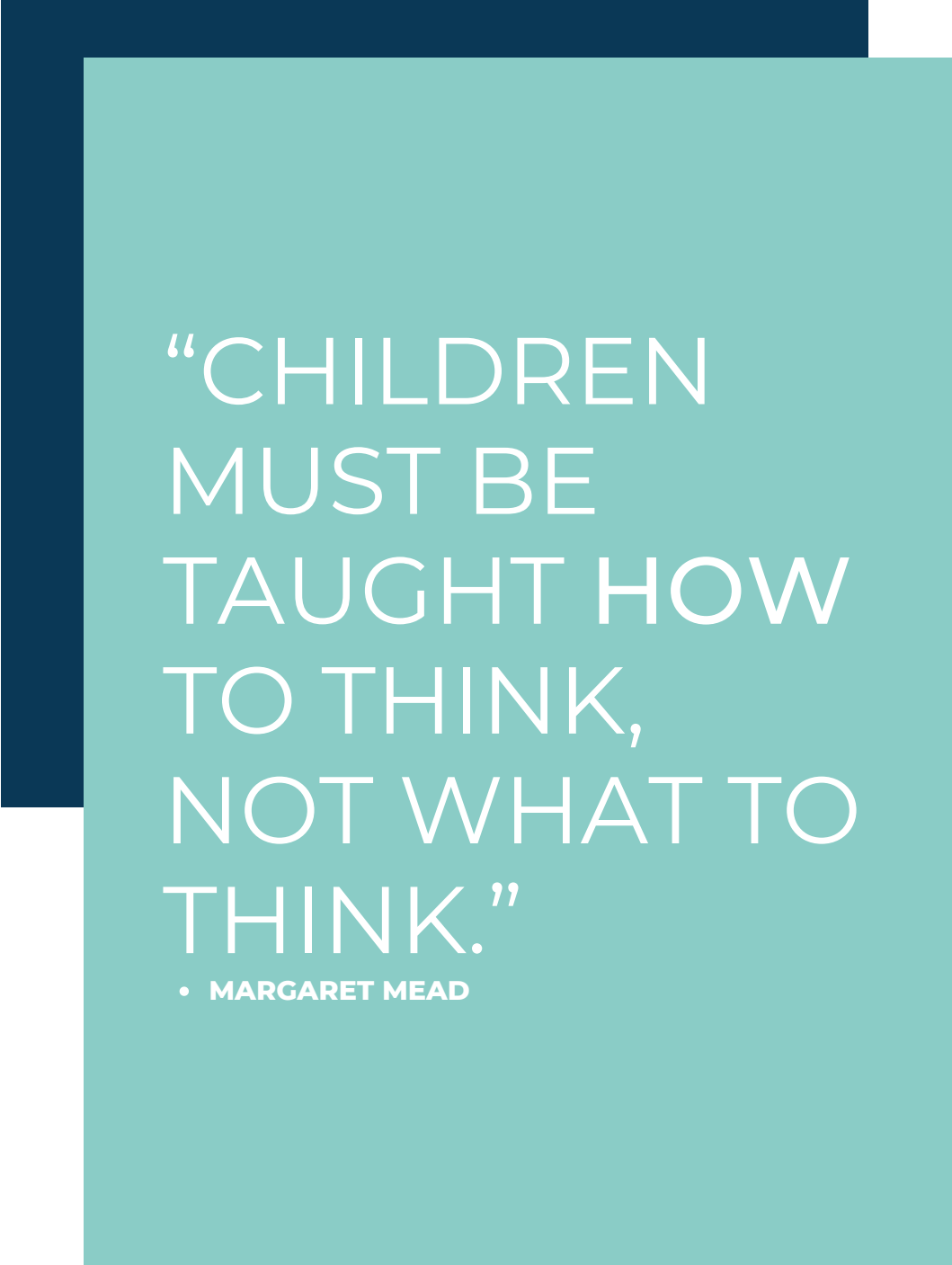
Michael has an education degree and currently works as a project manager for a software company. Working in education he learned first hand how education, as we know it, needs a real change.

As parents with a child in the public school system we quickly realized that maybe traditional school wasn't the best option after all. We know our children would be just fine attending public school, but would it prepare them for a successful and fulfilling life in the 21st century?



## OUR STORY

One day we stumbled upon a family on social media who were launching their very own Acton Academy in their community. We were intrigued, so we read "Courage to Grow". From there we fell in love with the mission behind Acton Academy. We discovered that Acton Academy was founded by parents Jeff and Laura Sandefer in 2010 in Austin, TX. They also wanted something more for their children, just like us! We loved that Acton Academy has a high standard of excellence and that each learner was on their own "Hero's Journey" to discover their purpose. No more standardized tests, busy homework, and learning only to memorize facts. At Acton Academy our children can fall in love with learning, spark their curiosity, and strengthen their character through trials and triumphs.



“CHILDREN  
MUST BE  
TAUGHT HOW  
TO THINK,  
NOT WHAT TO  
THINK.”

• MARGARET MEAD

# KEY ELEMENTS TO KNOW

## HERO/OWL

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.

## HERO'S JOURNEY

We believe each of our students will discover 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 DRIVEN

Acton Academy is student 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. They are responsible for setting their own goals, tracking their progress, navigating relationships, and reflecting on their experiences.

## GUIDE

Acton employs Guides (our word for 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 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.

## TRIBE

We are very intentional about building trust and deep friendships between all of the Owls 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 math are the foundational academic subjects that all Owls 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.

## JOURNEY TRACKER

The proprietary Learning Management System (LMS) built by and for the Acton network. Think of it like an Owl's educational plan, calendar, and record of work.

## 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 a deeper understanding.

# CORE BELIEFS

01

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

02

We believe in a closely connected family of learners

03

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

04

We believe in economic, religious, and political freedom

# OUR MISSION

Odyssey FM's mission is to inspire each person who enters our doors to find a calling and change the world.

# 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?



## 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

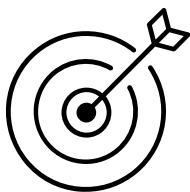


## LEARNING TO DO

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?

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.

# HEAR FROM THE FOUNDER OF ACTON ACADEMY



LAURA SANDEFER, CO-FOUNDER OF ACTON ACADEMY

What happens when you take a school and remove all but three adults? You get Acton Academy.

Laura Sandefer, co-founder of the Acton Academy school network and author of "Courage to Grow," is an academic entrepreneur who believes that children need to be empowered to make mistakes, fail, grow, and improve on their own. Sandefer works to enable other parents to establish new Acton Academies to serve the educational needs of their families and local communities. Acton Academy is a radical model of schooling that puts as much power as possible directly into the hands of students, giving them the opportunity to take ownership of their choices and capabilities from an early age.

# 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.

## 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.

Most learning in Spark Studio happens through play.

## SPARK STUDIO

(generally ages 5-7)

current  
studios

## DISCOVER STUDIO

(generally ages 7-10)

## 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 a natural love of learning.

(not yet available)

## JOURNEY STUDIO

(generally ages 10-13)

future  
studios

### 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. "Work Hard. Play Hard"

### 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. 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.

### 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.

(not yet available)

## LAUNCHPAD

(generally ages 13-18)

# 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



# DAILY SCHEDULE SAMPLE\*

SPARK STUDIO	DISCOVERY STUDIO
8:00 - 8:30AM	8:00 - 8:30AM
drop off / free time	drop off / free time
8:45 - 9:15AM	8:45 - 9:15AM
team challenge	launch circle / socratic discussion
9:15 - 9:30AM	9:15 - 11:00AM
launch circle	core skills
9:30 - 11:00AM	goal setting, math, reading, writing, civilization discussions, gamified learning *brain breaks throughout*
core skills / project work	
11:00AM - 12:00PM	11:00AM - 12:00PM
outdoor free time	outdoor free time
12:00 - 12:30PM	12:00 - 12:30PM
lunch	lunch
12:45 - 1:15PM	12:30 - 1:00PM
D.E.A.R time	quest launch
1:15 - 1:45PM	1:00 - 2:45PM
afternoon circle / game	quest / reading time
1:30 - 2:15PM	hands on work, team based challenges, sciences, entrepreneurship, art, music, history, report on goals with running partner
spark play	
2:15 - 2:45PM	2:45 - 3:00PM
studio maintenance	studio maintenance
2:45 - 3:00PM	3:00 - 3:15PM
chapter book	closing circle
3:00 - 3:15PM	3:15 - 3:30PM
closing circle	
3:15 - 3:30PM	
pick-up	pick-up
	weather permitting we will spend as much time outdoors as possible

# IS THIS THE **RIGHT FIT**

FOR YOUR FAMILY?

Odyssey FM 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 ODYSSEY FM AFFILIATED WITH ACTON ACADEMY?

Odyssey is part of the network of over 300+ 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?

Odyssey is a mixed-age one-room schoolhouse and offers one studio currently. For our founding 2024-2025 year we will enroll ages 5 (kindergarten) through 10 (4th 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 KIND OF LEARNER THRIVES AT ODYSSEY FM?

Students who are curious, self-motivated, respectful, and love to learn! Our environment is an accelerator for the independent learner who can tackle challenging questions, follow instructions, and solve problems. Acton Academy is not ideal for students who require 1:1 assistance or that have significant learning disabilities.

## WHAT IS YOUR TUITION?

Our tuition is \$850/month with a yearly \$500 supply fee. This fee covers the cost of a chromebook (required) and materials needed throughout the school year. This price is subject to change.

## IS ODYSSEY FM 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, hand-on projects, and the Socratic method for discussions.

# READY TO DEEP DIVE?

WE RECOMMEND YOU CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING BOOKS FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR PHILOSOPHY OF LEARNING.

Courage to Grow, Laura Sandefer  
Nurture Shock, Po Bronson  
The Gift of Imperfection, Brene Brown  
The One World School House, Salman Khan  
Mindset, Carol S. Dweck  
Daring Greatly, Brene Brown  
Unschooling Rules, Clark Aldrich  
Your Three Year Old, Louise Bates Ames, Ph.D. (Each book for each age) The 3 Big  
Questions for a Frantic Family, Patrick Lencioni  
A Thomas Jefferson Education, Oliver DeMille  
The Talent Code, Daniel Coyle  
Choice Words, Peter H. Johnston  
The Price of Privilege, Madeline Levine, Ph.D.  
Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius, Angeline Stoll Lillard  
10 Conversations You Need to Have With Your Children, Shmuley Boteach An Ethic of  
Excellence, Ron Berger  
The E-Myth Manager, Michael E. Gerber  
The Smartest Kids in the World and How They Got that Way, Amanda Ripley Mastery: The  
Keys to Success And Long-Term Fulfillment, George Leonard 2002 Ways to Show Your Kids  
You Love Them, Cyndi Haynes  
Free Range Kids, Lenore Skenazy  
Influencer, Kerry Patterson, et al  
Crucial Conversations, Kerry Patterson, et al  
The Dream Manager, Matthew Kelly



# NEXT STEPS

We'd love to connect with you!

Begin your Hero's journey!



EMAIL US WITH QUESTIONS



SCHEDULE A DISCOVERY CALL

[www.odyssey-fm.com](http://www.odyssey-fm.com)