

# ACTON ACADEMY MARIETTA



## TRAIL GUIDE



**What if the purpose of education was to guide children  
to find a calling and change the world?**

**Everything would look different.**

Acton Academy Marietta is more than a place to learn.  
It's a quest to begin a Hero's Journey -  
to discover one's greatest gifts and the grand wonders of the world.

## **What Is Acton Academy Marietta?**

Acton Academy Marietta is 'school' reinvented. It's a 21st century place of learning where young heroes cultivate the skills needed for the real world among peers of mixed ages, learning from and teaching each other.

Through our blended learning model, instruction is tailored to each individual student, but delivered with the camaraderie and collaboration of learning within a community of peers.

We believe every child is a genius with unique strengths and potential.

At Acton, we encourage the pursuit of goals, dreams, and a calling in life. We create an environment that inspires joyful learning, cultivating the habits of lifelong learners.

**CALLING: where gifts, joy, and a burning need connect**

# Why Acton Marietta?

1. Acton Academy uses the latest technology in a self-paced learning environment that is designed to foster responsibility, goal-setting, and teamwork.
2. We believe children learn best by doing, whether it's launching a startup business, creating a tidepool habitat, playing a musical instrument, painting a mosaic, or programming a robot.
3. Adults in our program are 'Guides' not teachers, who offer insightful questions and facilitate hands-on learning. Guides use the Socratic Method, always responding to learner questions with questions or choices.
4. Acton Academy is "learned-driven." This means young people take ownership of their learning and peer relationships. Acton learners think independently, take responsibility, and embrace challenge.
5. We believe in the power of real-world experiences and the importance of exploring your passions to find your calling. Beginning in Middle School, our Eagles obtain apprenticeships in a field of their interest.
6. We encourage our learners to develop personal virtues such as honesty, hard work, responsibility, kindness, and empathy.





## What is The Hero's Journey?

Acton uses the classic story structure of The Hero's Journey to illustrate and explore the adventure of learning. There are multiple stages of The Hero's Journey. Some stages involve big challenges and trials the Hero must overcome. Other stages are new and exciting, but it's all one big adventure!

The biggest takeaway from Acton's Hero's Journey is embracing the idea that out of failure comes our greatest learning.



## Packing List

A Growth Mindset

A Sense of Adventure

A Creative Spark

A Desire for Something Different

Courage to Begin a Hero's Journey



# Learning Squads

## The Explorers (typically ages 5-7)

The Explorer Studio is a nurturing environment that fosters learning through play. The focus is on cultivating the belief that learning is FUN!

The program and approach are designed to inspire curiosity, develop collaborative habits, and build independence.

Abundant time for learning through play and choice in high-interest activities grow curiosity and wonder.

Focus on empowerment and problem-solving builds independence and a growth-mindset.

Collaboration and character development help learners learn how to work and play with others.



# Learning Squads

## The Adventurers

(typically ages 8-11)

*"At Acton, you get to be very independent. At Acton, we do not judge each other when we make mistakes. Acton is the best school ever."*

- Henry, age 10



The Adventurer Studio is the first environment where learners work both independently on self-paced Core Skills acquisition and collaboratively on developing community covenants and participating in real world projects.

Socratic discussions, self-pacing, and growth mindset development equip students to be lifelong learners.

Hands-on learning through projects and challenges primes students for real world demands.

The Hero's Journey and community covenants transform difficult decisions into virtuous habits.



### Tech Talk

Acton Marietta believes in balancing the use of technology with other vital activities. Our Explorer studio is low tech, where our youngest learners interact with technology for few yet meaningful activities.

Our older Eagles typically use technology for only a portion of their learning day. This looks different daily but may include using adaptive software for delivery of personalized core skills instruction, researching for a group project, composing a summary of a current events article, or practicing keyboarding skills.

# Learning Squads

## The Navigators (typically ages 11-14)

Learners in the Navigator Learning Squad participate in the design of their learning plan, take control of their work and project schedule, serve as community leaders, and engage in real world apprenticeships.

Designing their individualized learning plan and managing their work and projects empowers students to take charge of their learning.

Learners participate in difficult real world Quests and learn to analyze, calculate, read, write, and think more critically.

Students earn leadership badges through community mentoring and explore their gifts and talents through apprenticeships.



*"I have learned at Acton to embrace change. Also, I have learned to defend my point... Acton is the biggest change in my life and I love it. The people are great and the community is loving."*

*- Cooper, age 13*

# What are parents saying about Acton Marietta?

Our family was absolutely thrilled to find this school! It checked all our boxes for what we had hoped to find in a school for our kids. We love the thoughtful approach to learning that blends so many meaningful educational models. The balance of progressive with tried and true practices is well planned and crafted. We've watched our daughter thrive, developing and strengthening the innate curiosity of childhood and cultivating a love of learning. We love the Acton Academy model and are so grateful to find it here in Marietta. We wholeheartedly recommend to all!

- Acton Marietta Parent

We cannot say enough about AAM and the impact it has had on our son and family. Our son started one year ago, struggling with severe anxiety towards school, tests, and homework. He always felt behind and that he was never going to be smart enough. AAM's individualization and customized learning completely changed his feeling about school. The structure is challenging, self-motivating, and encourages him to think outside the box. He is taught accountability and responsibility, while being built up as a leader. The teachers are full of compassion and empathy and have created an amazing family environment. We are so thankful for AAM. It has completely transformed our son and his view of himself.

- Acton Marietta Parent

I have two very different children learning at AAM right now. I have the extroverted people-pleaser and the shy, quiet charmer. While separated by only two years, their needs in education feel as if they are from two different decades. The oldest, the people-pleaser, was easily able to get through required classes in public school because he inherently knew how to check boxes. You forced him to slow down and appreciate the "why" of language and science. This allows him to understand authors' intent and to press forward with personal insights based on his comprehension. He isn't memorizing the words any longer; he is internalizing them. He is now on the path to becoming a lifelong learner.

The other child has always let his older brother speak and do for him. He started school this year and the change in him has been the most dramatic. He no longer lets his brother articulate his intent. He speaks up and makes sure his voice is heard. He is bringing home books to read to us and beams with pride when he quietly tells us to "check his backpack." He solves his own problems now and tells me that he doesn't want help as he becomes more independent each day. His shyness is turning into quiet confidence and I now believe there may be a leader hiding behind his reserved nature that you are helping to unlock.

We are looking forward to the time when you can teach our third. He is completely different than the other two, but I have confidence that AAM can accommodate any learning style with ease and grace.

- Acton Marietta Parent

# FAQs

## **What grades does Acton Academy Marietta serve?**

Though we don't organize learners in traditional grade groupings, we currently serve what is commonly known as Kindergarten through 8th grade with plans to eventually add a high school studio.

## **Will children be grouped into grades?**

We believe that children learn best when working with both younger and older peers rather than being split into grades based on age. Multi-age learning and activities are purposeful and frequent.

## **What is a typical day like?**

All studio schedules are similar in that the day is broken into independent work cycles, collaborative work or play cycles, free time, and community building activities.

Friday Schedules are flexible and created weekly based on studio needs and add in the following activities: Art, Music, Destination Imagination, Town Meeting, Chef for a Day, Monthly Celebrations, and more.

## **What kind of learner thrives at Acton Academy Marietta?**

An Acton Academy Marietta Eagle loves to learn and is curious, self-motivated, and respectful. Our environment is an accelerator for the independent learner who embraces challenging questions, can follow directions, and shows grit in solving problems.

## **Does Acton Academy Marietta serve children with special needs?**

We believe that all children are gifted and bring unique strengths and challenges to their learning journey. While we are not trained to serve learners with profound learning disabilities, we welcome the opportunity to discuss individual learning differences to see if we may be a mutually fitting educational setting.

## **How does Acton Academy Marietta measure and monitor student progress and performance?**

We do this in a number of ways:

1. We set, review, and reflect on daily, weekly, and session goals. These goals are reviewed and discussed among learners, guides, and parents.
2. We utilize robust real-time data for each of our online learning tools. At any given time, any learner, parent, or Guide can see exactly what a student is learning. Since these tools are adaptive to the learner, they do not move on with content until mastery is demonstrated, and provide review and remediation where needed.
3. We utilize individual learner portfolios to collect pieces of work that showcase learning and progress.
4. Though we never 'teach to the test' nor spend any student learning time preparing for a test, standardized tests are given each year to provide useful benchmark data.

## **How much homework do Acton learners have?**

None! We believe that children of all ages need time to relax, play, and spend time with family and friends. Therefore, all work is completed during the school day in the studio, and no homework is assigned. All learners are strongly encouraged to read for fun in their free time at home.

## **Do you have any other resources that will help me better understand the philosophies and methods of Acton Academy?**

We recommend this [list of resources](#) to anyone interested in learning more about Acton and its methodologies.

# ACTON ACADEMY MARIETTA

## Learning turned **UPSIDE DOWN!**



### Follow Our Journey!

52 Moore Avenue, Marietta, GA 30060  
(centrally located just west of the Big Chicken)

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[www.actonmarietta.org](http://www.actonmarietta.org)

