

EMPOWERED MINDS  
AN ACTON ACADEMY

• LEARN • DO • BE •

# FAMILY PLAYBOOK

2024 - 2025

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# Empowered Minds

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An Acton Academy

Learn to **LEARN**. Learn to **DO**. Learn to **BE**.

## FAMILY PLAYBOOK

### WELCOME

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

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# INTRODUCTION

*The “Acton Way” is best thought about as a game.*

## THIS PLAYBOOK IS INTENDED TO:

- Offer your family a valuable resource to return to when you have questions about how/why we do things a certain way.
- Clarify how we play this game, and 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 owners.
- 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 Panthers (and parents 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 a great 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.

# THE OBJECT OF THE GAME

All players work together to build a powerful learning community. Together, this community upholds the mission (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 ask question and uphold Guiding at EMA***
- > ***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 this is not the game for them. If you have questions, please speak to our Head of School.

The purpose of this living document is **not** to promote rule-following or bureaucracy but rather the opposite: to draw clear boundaries to encourage innovation between our learners, parents and guides through commitment and action to show support for the creation of a world-class learner-driven academy.

## OUR MISSION IS TWO-FOLD

- 1 We are a learning community that empowers families to **GROW...** and **GROW TOGETHER.**
- 2 We prepare learners to **hear a call** to adventure, **start a hero's journey** and ultimately **FIND A CALLING & CHANGE THE WORLD.**



## NOTES

## 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 Panthers and their families **learn to intentionally grow and contribute powerfully to society**. This is what education is all about at Empowered Minds.

*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

They will:

- Begin a S/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 each person has a gift that can change the world in a profound way.
- We believe in learning to **learn**, learning to **do**, and learning to **be**.
- We believe that Empowered Minds is a closely connected family of lifelong learners.
- We believe that clear thinking leads to good decisions, good decisions lead to the right habits, that the right habits lead to character and that character becomes destiny.
- Unique to Empowered Minds - We believe that by uncovering, reclaiming, and reconnecting with our truth (by reaching back – “Sankofa”) we will better understand who we were, who we are, and who we must be.



# COMPONENTS OF THE GAME

At Empowered Minds, we promise that Panthers 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

## **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

However important the tasks of Learning to LEARN and Learning to DO, the most important part of finding the reward in the Hero's Journey is not the reward itself, but how the hero is changed in the process. This is the essence of Learning to BE.

## **Component 3: LEARNING TO BE**

*(Character & 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?






# Parent Agreement of Participation

## As parents at Empowered Minds:

- 1. We long for our Panther to discover a calling that will change the world**, as promised in EMA’s mission. We will allow our Panther to fail early, cheaply, and as often as necessary without intervening, and in the event our Panther struggles, we will refer to the Hero’s Journey for Parents note for counsel before reacting.
- 2. We welcome Empowered Minds as a self-paced environment** where Panthers run the studios through the delegation of certain rights by owners and parents, with access to dozens of experts for instruction, allowing guides to focus on challenges and questions.
- 3. We will celebrate our Panther’s progress in earning Weekly Points, Badges, and Positive 360 Degree Peer Coaching Reviews** according to a learning plan we create. If needed, we will remove distractions like gaming, video, or social media; lessen resistance, or overcome feelings of victimhood so our Panther can soar.
- 4. Further, for our own Hero’s Journeys as parents:**

- We will remain lifelong learners and will have an active learning project (such as a book or self-improvement project) at all times to discuss with our children.

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



**Our family will develop and post a Family Plan or Family Badge 3 months after acceptance into EMA, and have Family Meetings at regularly scheduled intervals.**

- At least one of us will attend at least two of the three Parent Meetings each year, where discussions will focus on our Hero’s Journey as parents.
- We will deliver our Panther to campus by 8:30 am and understand that Panthers who arrive late may not be able to participate in that morning’s activities.

Please sign and date below.

---

Parent’s Name

---

Date

---

Parent’s Name

---

Date



# Guide-Panther Agreement of Participation

## As a Guide, I promise to:

- Deliver on Empowered Mind Academy’s promises to Panthers and parents. Provide challenges, mileposts, rewards, and guardrails to inspire and equip each of our heroes.
- Present processes, frameworks, examples, recipes, and hard questions for Panthers to use.
- Allow Panthers to learn from failure and natural consequences, when necessary.
- Hold up a mirror so you can see yourself (and your impact) and insist you live up to the promises you have made to each other, your parents, and guides.
- Affirm your gifts, listen to you and praise your effort, especially when the path is difficult.
- Celebrate as you take on more and more of a guide’s responsibilities as you move from being an Independent Learner to Running Partner, Kemeti Dialogue Leader, Project Leader, and Organization Leader.
- If I fail to deliver on these promises, I invite Panthers to comment on the surveys, which are taken very seriously by all guides and the owners of the school. Guides who continually fail to uphold these promises will no longer be allowed to serve at Empowered Minds.



## As a Panther, 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 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 community, being asked to stay home for some period of time, or even being asked to leave the community.



Please sign and date below.

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*Panther’s Name*

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*Date*

---

*Guide’s Name*

---

*Date*

# FIELD OF PLAY

How the game is played depends on the studio you are playing in. ***Each Learning Studio fulfills our mission in distinct ways and has their own contract or covenant*** (created and signed by the Learners during Session 1).

## STUDIO ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW

### SPARK STUDIO *Generally, Ages 3-6*

***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 Montessori manipulatives. All learning in Spark happens through play.

### DISCOVERY 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 natural love of learning.

### JOURNEY STUDIO *Generally, ages 10-13*

***Guiding Belief:*** The love of learning must be protected through a delicate balance of challenge and choice. Too many requirements kill the love of learning, and not enough challenges or expectations kill the love of learning and undermine 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.

# GAME SETUP: LOCATION

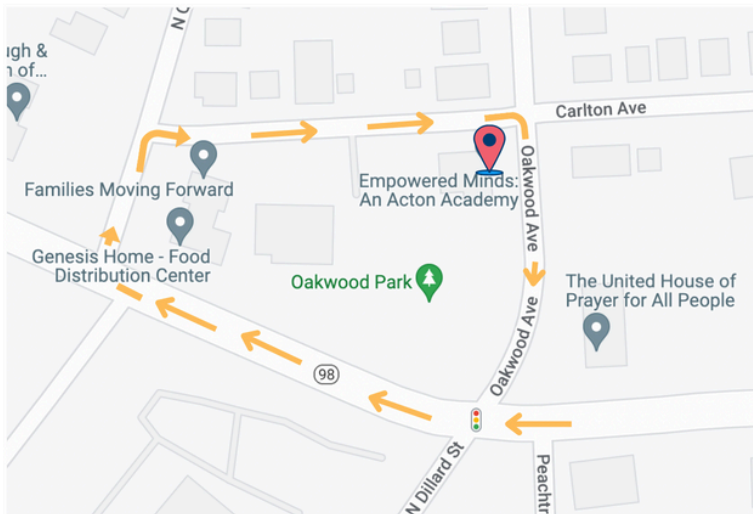
## WHAT TO BRING

- Book to read for DEAR (we have a collection of books as well).
- Computer/Chromebook - No specifications except for cloud-based capability. NOTE: See the “Electronics” section for details about in-studio use and your parent responsibilities for safety measures.
- Headphones - Please label these.
- Computer mouse, if desired.
- Healthy lunch and snacks.
- Water Bottle - We have a clean drinking water system in each studio and water bottles can be refilled. Cups ARE NOT provided.

## ARRIVAL PROCEDURE

Arrival starts at 8:30 am. From 8:30-8:55 am, Panthers engage in free time, reading, socializing and getting organized for the day. We ask you to stay in your car and to refrain from socializing with the guides in order to make this process go as quickly as possible for all involved.

## THE LOOP



## IF YOU PARK...

At any time, if you choose to park on the east side of Oakwood Ave., please cross the street **with** your Panther. Please do not allow them to exit themselves from the curb and cross on their own.

If you choose to park on east side Oakwood Ave for pickup, please cross the street and wait for your Panther on/around the sidewalk directly in front of the school.

## SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Prior to beginning the school year, families will submit a \$250 annual registration fee that will cover basic studio setup, online curriculum, and supply needs such as (but not limited to): quest supplies, printing paper, pencils, notebooks, craft supplies, and Panther Buck Store inventory.

## DISMISSAL PROCEDURE

Dismissal is at 3:15 pm. Please wait in your vehicle and follow THE LOOP for efficiency and safety. If you are more than 15 minutes late on three or more occasions, you will be issued a charge of \$25 for each late pickup. Late arrival is after 3:30 pm.

If you are picking up your child at any time other than dismissal, please park and wait near/at the schoolhouse door.

**A PANTHER MUST NOT LEAVE WITHOUT  
CONFIRMED ACKNOWLEDGMENT  
BETWEEN THE PARENT AND HEAD OF  
SCHOOL.**

Your child should be confident and knowledgeable about the people who are allowed by you to drive them home. This is not a guide’s nor EMA’s responsibility. It is a family responsibility. If your child is ever confused about who is there to drive them home, they should go immediately to the guide to request help.

## NOTES

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

In general, the schedule consistently includes the following activities: Kemet/Socratic discussions; Individual work time – Math, Reading, Writing, etc. Collaborative work time: Projects, Quests and Civilization (our term for “World History” including economics, politics, art, geography, philosophy) & Number/Math Lab; Creative Time, PE; Baraza/Town Hall Meetings and Running Partner Meetings.

## SAMPLE SCHEDULE

**Daily Launch Discussion**

**Core Skills: SMART Goals, Math, Reading, + Writers' Workshop 2xs/Week**

**Lunch/Free Time**

**Quest Launch Discussion**

**Quest Time: Hands-On Collaboration + Civ. 2xs/Week**

**Studio Maintenance/Running Partner Mtgs**

**Closing Circle**

## AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Fueled by family interest, there may be after-school programs on the EMA campus during parts of the year. At this point, this type of programming may be organized by parents or other community groups. Parents interested in offering/organizing after-school programs may contact our Head of School. We would LOVE to support you in doing so.

These may include, sports, film-making, speech-making, running, chess, Spanish, and Lego/Robotics. You will receive an email notifying you of any after-school offerings and can sign up for those in which you are interested. These programs are not a part of the EMA curriculum, and by participating, you will be asked to sign a waiver and pay any fee associated with these activities.

*Fun Chat:* What program would you enjoy facilitating? What experiences would you love to open up for your child.



# GAME SETUP: ELECTRONICS

With a world of distractions, it can be difficult to take time to wonder, discover, and experience things that help one find their passions and start on their personal Hero's Journey. We feel that empowering Panthers to use technology well will set them up for a lasting life-balance now and in the future. This challenge is one that we feel passionately about, and we aim to help equip you as we navigate it together. **In short, we feel it is most beneficial for Panthers to use electronics as "tools not toys," but we encourage your family to be mindful, do research and determine how electronic devices can best serve the family that you are purposefully building.** Please see the list of information and resources that we have compiled at the [EMA Parent Website](#).



## ELECTRONICS POLICY

**All materials used at EMA are to enhance education and are not for entertainment purposes. This is the standard that will be upheld (and returned to) when there is a question. EMA is a video game and recreational video viewing FREE campus.**



This standard is set and upheld based on much thought, testing, and research. In the words of a seasoned Acton owner, "[The use of video games and YouTube at school] simply drains the energy from the studio." We feel confident that in upholding this ideal we are taking a step towards improving the safety and health of our sacred learning environment.

## ELECTRONIC RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

1. Heroes are encouraged to not post anything they wouldn't want friends, parents, guides, or a future employer to see.
2. Follow the EMA's code of conduct when writing online. It is acceptable to disagree with someone else's opinions; however, do it in a respectful way. Make sure that criticism is constructive and not hurtful. **What is inappropriate in the studio is inappropriate online.**
3. Be safe online. Never give out personal information, including, but not limited to, last names, phone numbers, addresses, exact birthdates, and pictures. Do not share your password with anyone besides your guides and parents.
4. Linking to other websites to support your thoughts and ideas is recommended. However, be sure to read the entire article prior to linking to ensure that all information is appropriate.
5. Do your own work! Do not use other people's intellectual property without their permission. It is a violation of copyright law to copy and paste other's thoughts. When paraphrasing another's idea(s) be sure to cite your source with the URL. It is a good practice to hyperlink to your sources.
6. Be aware that pictures may also be protected under copyright laws. Verify you have permission to use the image or if it is under Creative Commons attribution.
7. How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity.
8. If you run across inappropriate material that makes you feel uncomfortable, or is not respectful, tell your guide and parents right away.
9. Logging in to another Panther's program or account is a violation of EMA's code of conduct.

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



Heroes who do not abide by these terms and conditions will receive an Honor Code Violation.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Parents are encouraged to thoroughly investigate which social media outlets they feel are appropriate for their Panther to utilize. Google Hangouts is considered Social Media, and conversations about how to appropriately use it are encouraged. Limiting distractions from social media has been linked to more productivity in the studio and in life, as well as decreased risk of anxiety, depression & pornography use. This is a personal family decision that must be discussed and addressed at home. During school hours, Chromebooks and phones shall not be used for personal social media usage.



## EMA PROPERTY AND COMPUTERS

Utilizing advanced and adaptive online core skills learning platforms is an integral part of our studio learning. EMA families must provide a Chromebook or laptop (or functioning equivalent) for daily in-studio use. These are the sole responsibility of the family and Panther to care for. Each Panther is expected to have a charged, fully-functioning device each day for core skills (and other research). On a case-by-case basis, EMA will provide a Chromebook and require the signing of a Computer Use Contract. If one is damaged or lost by a Panther, the family is responsible for reimbursing the school in the amount of \$170-200 that will be added to the tuition bill. Additionally, each Panther will need headphones.

*Fun Chat:* Would you like your child to leave their computer at EMA each day or bring it home?



If any part of the school campus is damaged by a Panther, they will assist in the cost of the repair.

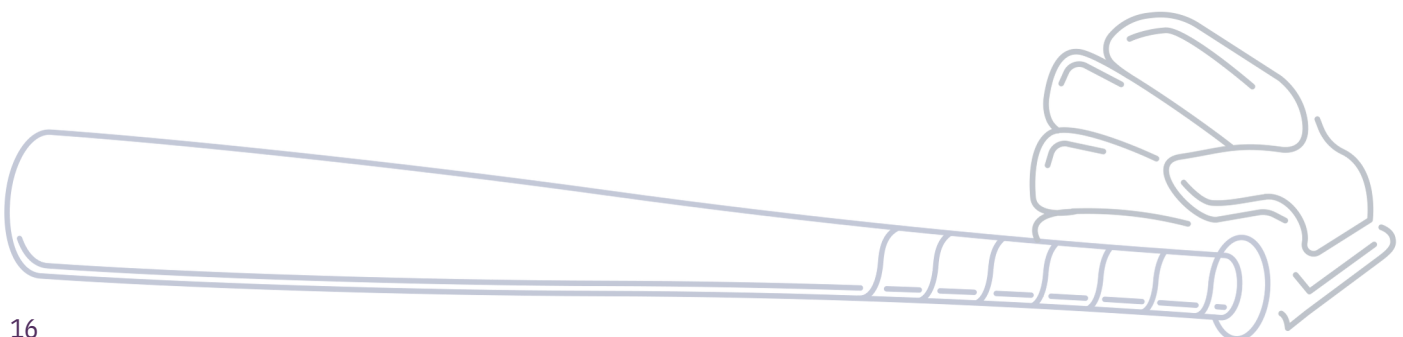
## COMPUTER FILTERING & EMAIL

It is a requirement that all laptops/devices brought into the studio from home have safety measures enabled. SafeSearch or another program that has at least the same level of safety measure must be enabled on your Panther's device. It is up to parents to verify that SafeSearch, or equivalent, is enabled on incoming devices before they arrive at EMA. Additionally, EMA may use a filtering system.

## CELL PHONE USAGE

Living in an age of technology and smartphones, Panthers must learn to manage their time and communications effectively. Panthers may bring phones to school; however, each studio has specific guardrails for use. While at EMA, cell phones and personal technology must be kept in a box or backpack at all times. EMA is not responsible for what Panthers view on their personal technology. If the electronic device continues to be a distraction, Panthers may be asked to leave the device at home. The school is not responsible for misplaced or damaged electronic devices brought on campus.

*Fun Chat:* Birthday celebrations are a special event at Empowered Minds! The birthday child is celebrated with a Celebration of Life Ceremony and by receiving handmade notes from Fellow Panthers. Talk with your hero about fun ways to celebrate with their studio (other than treats), such as donate a copy of your child's favorite book to the EMA library. Parents are welcome to have lunch with their Panther to celebrate.



# GAME SETUP: HEALTH/ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Please visit the [EMA Parent Website](#) to get the most up-to-date policies regarding COVID-19 and other communicable diseases.



## HEALTH FORMS & SCREENINGS

Please provide a copy of your child's health/immunization records or state exemption from your pediatrician's office in case of emergencies. You may email, mail or hand deliver this information. Upon admission to EMA, each family assumes the responsibility for vision, hearing and spinal curvature screenings.

## MEDICATION

Should a Panther need medication during the day, parents must complete the [Dispensing Medication Form](#), also found on the [EMA Parent Website](#). Parents must hand the medicine and instructions to the Head of School. For prescription medicine, please send the medicine in the original container from the pharmacy with the child's name on it and a dated note listing the times and amounts to be given that day. Staff will not administer medication, internal or topical, unless it has been submitted by the Panther's family. In case of an emergency, staff will contact 911, then contact the family. We have minor first aid materials and some homeopathic remedies that may be administered by a guide as needed.

## ILLNESS POLICY

A Panther with any of the following symptoms must be isolated and the parents notified and asked to remove the learner from EMA as soon as possible:

- Fever of 100.5°
- Unusual color to skin or eyes
- Diarrhea
- Stiff neck or headache
- Vomiting (with one or more of the symptoms listed above)
- Nausea
- Difficulty breathing or wheezing
- Severe cough
- Complaints of severe pain

If your child develops any of these symptoms while at EMA, we will call you immediately to pick up your child.

## WHEN TO KEEP YOUR CHILD HOME

Do not send your child to EMA...

- if they have had a fever (temperature of 100.5° F or higher) within the last 24 hours.
- if they have vomited within the last 24 hours.
- if they have had diarrhea in the last 24 hours.
- with 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 themselves), nasal or lung/chest congestion, coughing that is constant or persistent, or recurrent sneezing that is not allergy related.
- with untreated head lice, nits, scabies, etc
- with an atypical rash until a physician has examined the rash and has cleared your child to return to school.
- Children diagnosed with Strep, Pinkeye, or any other bacterial illness must stay home until they have been properly treated for a minimum of 48 hours.

If your child is not feeling well in the morning, please observe them carefully before sending them to EMA and risking the health of the others. Take their temperature. Children must be free of symptoms for 24 hours before returning.

## GAME SETUP: ATTENDANCE / ABSENTEEISM

It is EMA's philosophy that traveling with family and engaging in family experiences is fruitful and educational. While away, your Panther will be able to access their online programs and the Journey Tracker for goal setting and challenges; it is ultimately the Panther's responsibility to fulfill their goals and projects.

At the same time, consistent attendance will help your child be fully engaged and connected with the community and with project/quest learning. Parents need to be aware that EMA's curriculum includes much group work and studio discussions, both of which are impossible to recreate or replicate. If you know in advance that you will be taking your child, it is helpful for other Panthers in the studio to be informed so they can make alternative work plans. If they are not in attendance (or know that they will be gone), they should arrange in advance how to move forward with their studio mates. They may also coordinate to meet virtually with their group during quest time.

**For unexpected absenteeism**, please send an email to EMA Guides ([guides@empoweredsacademy.org](mailto:guides@empoweredsacademy.org)).

## GAME SETUP: "PLAY" CLOTHES & DRESS CODE

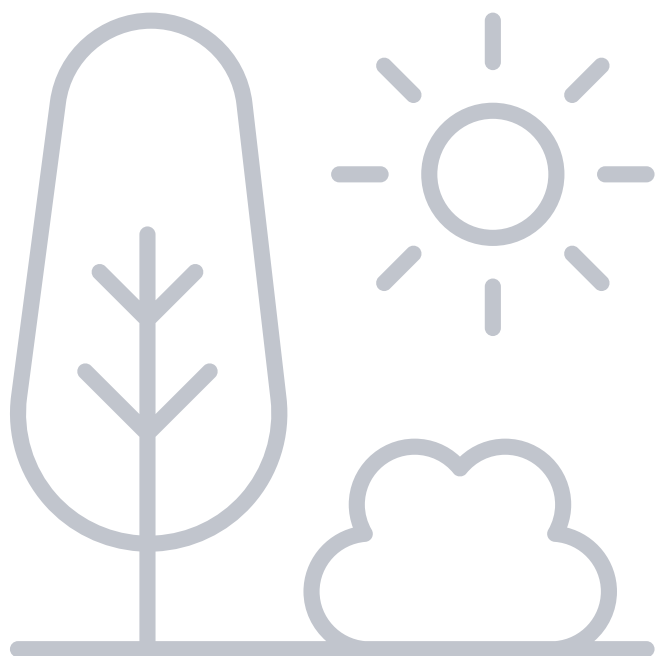
### DRESS CODE

Panthers may not wear clothing that advertises alcohol, firearms/weapons, tobacco products, or other drugs or that is overtly profane, sexual, or revealing in nature.

Panthers are expected to come dressed in a manner seasonally appropriate each and every day. Panthers who wear clothing deemed inappropriate by their studio mates, a guide or owner for the aforementioned reasons may be given a warning and may be sent home or asked to put on a school sweatshirt/sweatpants. Recurrence of inappropriate dress will result in an Honor Code Violation.

### WORK/PLAY CLOTHING

Panther work/play is sometimes messy. If Panthers are afraid of "messing up" their clothes, they cannot participate fully. Please send children to EMA in work/play clothes that can be stained or discolored. In addition, Panthers should wear clothes that allow them to play outside in all kinds of weather. Especially for Spark Panthers, send one extra set of clothes/shoes in case they become uncomfortable after an adventure. Clothes should be labeled with your Panther's name and replaced as needed. Items will be placed in a cubby or other accessible storage area.





## SAFETY AT SCHOOL

- The entire staff will be trained in first aid and (CPR).
- We perform fire & safety drills.
- “Safe zones” are outlined and explained to Panthers during Session 1.

*Additional outside expertise is welcome in this area.*

## NEST CAMERA & PHOTO WAIVER

As part of the Acton Academy Trademark License agreement entered into between Empowered Minds: An Acton Academy, and Acton Academy, it was stipulated that NEST live video feed capabilities be installed in the interior of the schoolhouse. All Actons around the world are linked to provide accountability, share best practices, and ensure high-quality services. Parents acknowledge the use of the NEST Camera system.

Occasionally we use photos of our Panthers on the newsletter, school displays, projects, blogs, social media, BAND App., or the website. The [media waiver](#) is found on the [EMA Parent Website](#).

## NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY

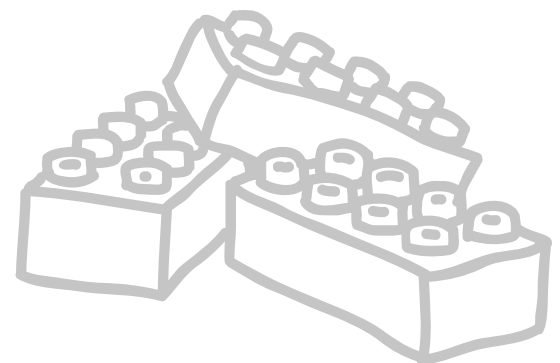
EMA values, respects, and benefits from the unique identity of each Panther and community member, regardless of age, ability, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. As an intentional learning community we expect all faculty, staff, administrators, parents, and caregivers to embrace and foster this inclusiveness.

# OUT OF BOUNDS: HONOR CODE

## HONOR CODE VIOLATION (HCV) SYSTEM BRIEF OVERVIEW

The HCV is an accountability system for choices or events that are too serious for the Panther Buck System. These boundaries are the lines that the EMA community will not tolerate being crossed.

- Harassment/bullying of any kind, including hitting, pushing, threatening, or other physical aggression.
- Purposefully/Defiantly refusing to do Core Skills, participate in collaborative work, not showing up to circle times.
- Defiant disregard for EMA Agreements and Covenants.
- Cheating, plagiarizing or misreporting of accomplished work.
- Destruction of EMA Property.
- Inappropriate language, sexual innuendo, and verbal abuse.
- Use of computers to look up explicit and/or inappropriate photos or content (see Electronic Rule of Engagement).



NOTE: See the [EMA Parent Website](#) for the detailed list of honor code violations.

## HONOR CODE SYSTEM

Community Notice: The Honor Code Language has been altered to avoid confusion. "Marks" are a preliminary accountability measure that are usually given prior to an Honor Code Violation.



### **FIRST "MARK"** *against the Honor Code*

***Panther is removed from the group until they choose to participate again within the community guard rails.***

- Using the Guide Conference Form, the Guide speaks with the Panther to ensure they understand why they are receiving a "mark".
- Guide points Panther to Contract and asks "Can you see how holding you accountable for your actions (by issuing the "mark") is operating within your Studio Contract of Promises?"
- Guide works with the Panther to brainstorm specific strategies to prevent a second HCV "mark".
- Guide Conference Form will be emailed to parents and sent home with the Panther. Parents acknowledge via email that they have read and received before beginning the following day.

### **SECOND "MARK"** *against the Honor Code*

***Panther is removed from the group for the rest of the day, and does not participate in any group activity, including Quest, Discussion, etc. Panther will be allowed to come to the Exhibition.***

- Everything from First "Mark" process above

### **THIRD "MARK"** **= 1ST HCV**

*(Honor Code  
Violation)*

***Panther is sent home. When returning to EMA the following day (or the day after if the HCV occurs toward the end of the day), the Panther will share at morning launch 2-3 strategies they will use to help them make better choices moving forward.***

- Everything from First/Second "Mark" process above
- If the "mark" occurs at the end of the day, the Panther stays home the following day. When returning to EMA the following day, Panther will share at launch 2-3 strategies they will use to help them make better choices moving forward.
- If they are unprepared or unwilling to do this, they should remain at home and are placed on a probationary contract.
- Guides will schedule a Honor Code Violation Conference with parents and Panther.
- The studio will celebrate the Panther's return and honor the process of learning from failures.

## 2ND HCV + 3RD HCV

***Generally, if a Panther receives two honor code violations within an academic year, they are electing to leave the community. This will be decided according to the Head of School's discretion.***

**A Family Journey Check-In (Pre-"Mark") may be offered and/or given prior to receiving their first "Mark". This is a parent-led reflection with the Panther about their choices that acts as an opportunity to create an action plan for improvement.**



### **HONOR CODE VIOLATION CONFERENCE**

An Honor Code Violation conference is held when an Honor Code Violation has been issued. The parents, the Panther, Head of School, and guide may be invited to a conference where a plan is agreed to. The plan will challenge the Panther to make s/heroic choices in order to not commit additional infractions and may include but is not limited to community service, apology, behavior conferencing, restricted freedoms, and community give-back. Failure to comply with a plan may, at the Head of School's discretion, result in choosing to leave the community.

### **HONOR CODE VIOLATION RESET**

Marks and HCVs are tallied over the academic year and reset at the beginning of a new academic year. Generally, if a Panther receives two Honor Code Violations within an academic year, they are electing to leave the community. This will be handled according to the Head of School's discretion. A Panther who requires constant redirection and continually dismisses their studio contract has chosen to not be successful within the Acton learner-driven model.

The Head of School has the right to exit a Panther immediately from EMA if a behavior is deemed extreme without reaching their second or third HCV.

### **PROBATIONARY CONTRACT**

Empowered Mind's Panther drafted and ratified studio contracts provide a framework for Panthers to learn self-management and self-governance. When the studio is functioning well with leaders who are committed to the Tribe and positively working towards a Hero's Journey, the learning is powerful and occurs at an exponential rate. However, due to the realistic and real-world nature of such a framework, there is always the possibility of heroes making poor choices, and the emergence of sub-tribes (small groups of socially powerful cliques) can overwhelm and exhaust the healthier parts of studio culture. Further, because we trust Panthers to work out many of their interpersonal conflicts and don't report every detail of every struggle, parents can feel blindsided when problems arise that have been building for some time.

As a result, we may offer a Probationary Contract that signals a Panther will be asked to leave the studio permanently if certain behaviors are continued, even if Council has yet to act.

The Probationary Contract will offer a short period of time to cure problem attitudes/behaviors and a period of one to six months to measure long-term success. (Owners reserve the right to ask a Panther or family to leave immediately for behavior that is dangerous or especially damaging.)

Most of the boundaries in this contract mirror the EMA studio contracts, but each probationary contract will outline strict conventions that need to be followed in word and deed during the probationary period for a Panther to remain at EMA.



## TRANSITION CONTRACT

*(Often used when a hero is planning to transition to another school)*

If a Panther is following the letter of the Studio Contracts but damaging the community by sabotaging its values, we will create a personalized Transition Contract with clearer guardrails and more immediate consequences.

A Transition Contract is particularly helpful for “agreeable takers” who outwardly act politely but poison the culture with hidden or passive-aggressive acts of sabotage or defiance. Transition Contracts are designed for “Agreeable Takers.”

	<b>Agreeable</b>	<b>Disagreeable</b>
<b>Givers</b>	<i>Says “YES” to Everyone</i>	<i>More Cautious, Forthright</i>
<b>Matchers</b>	<i>May Go Either Way</i>	<i>May Go Either Way</i>
<b>Takers</b>	<i>Seems Nice, But Will Cross You</i>	<i>Selfish, Removed</i>

Reference: **Give and Take: Why Helping Others Drives our Success** by Adam Grant

# OUT OF BOUNDS: STUDIO GUARDRAILS

## EMA COMMITMENTS

These are guardrails that are in place to ensure that the Panthers are free to struggle, grow, and work in an environment that IS and CAN REMAIN an Acton Academy. All parents and heroes recognize that **these Guardrails are in place to work within and are not boundaries that are intended to be pushed against** by EMA Panthers.



## A SACRED STUDIO IS CREATED THROUGH...

1. **STEWARDSHIP** — The careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care — "We will take care of our studio."
2. **RESPECT & KINDNESS** — "Treat others how they/you want to be treated."
3. **INTENTIONAL GROWTH** — "Never distract myself or others."

# EQUIPPING PARENTS WITH HERO GOAL SETTING



EMA is a family journey. We are committed to helping parents help their Panthers. As needed we can give support regarding Journey Tracker, badge plans, and Journey Meetings.

## MINDSET MILESTONES & HABITS

Each Studio will have a structure of progression in place. As powerful habits are practiced and proficiency is proven, Panthers will be granted additional privileges and responsibilities. Should a learner choose to not progress towards proficiency, they may be choosing to exit EMA. These habits may include (but are not limited to): time management, honoring the studio schedule, personal accountability, work ethic/grit, and goal finishing. This also upholds the real-world application that “freedom is earned” and protected by hard work, responsibility, and sacrifice.

*Fun Chat:* We often discuss this quote in the studio: “Freedom misunderstood leads to captivity.” Agree or disagree?

- **Failure: Your child will fail.** This is built into the system so that they can learn from it, improve their processes and grow. When session 3 comes around and milestones have not all been accomplished, it is okay and is part of the learning.
- **Honor the Schedule:** At EMA, we have many liberties. Panthers work at their own pace and drive themselves. 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 WANT 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.

## 2-3 YEAR BADGE PLAN AVAILABLE

All Panthers will have a 2-3 year span of badges available to empower them to work more effectively at their own pace. This should help eliminate the illusion of “I am done with all of my work”.

### NOTES

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## BADGE PLAN SUBSTITUTION

Primarily for upper studios, CHANGES TO BADGE PLANS MUST BE MADE IN ADVANCE and not “after the fact” or close to a deadline to avoid the consequences of procrastination, laziness or distraction.

## PROGRESS IN EACH OF THE LEARNING CATEGORIES (LEARN TO BE / LEARN / DO) WILL BE REFLECTED IN EVERY LEARNER’S BADGE PLANS

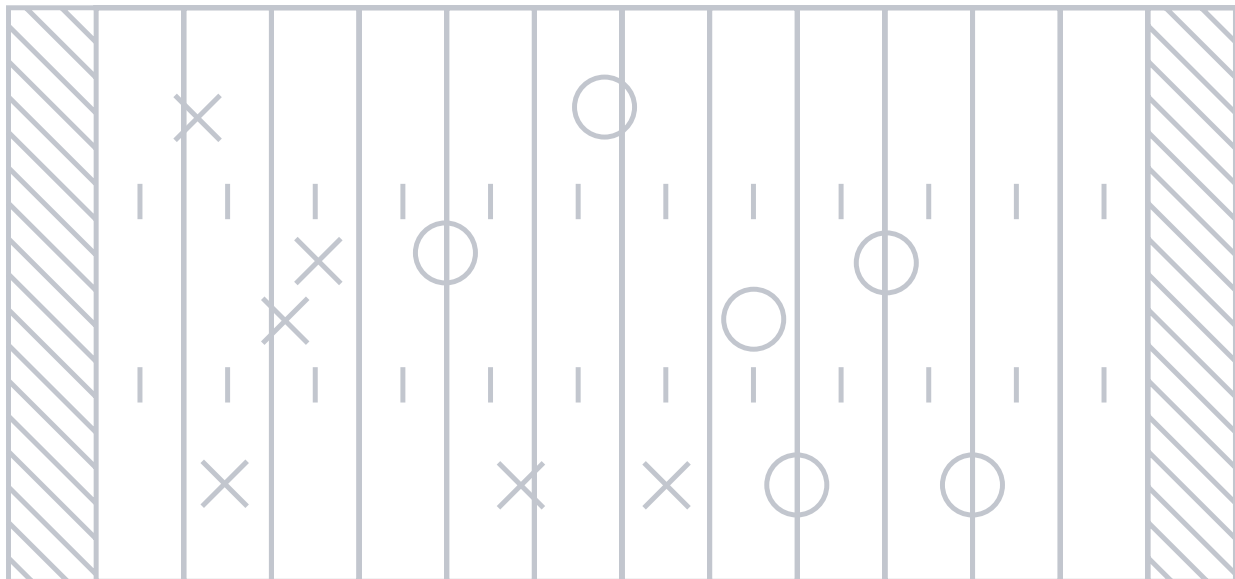
Annual badge plans are set with parent and guide input and take each individual learner into account. When a Panther chooses to disregard/follow-through with their plan (for whatever reason), it indicates to us that “something is going on” and may put a Panther in consideration for an exit contract. As we allow for badge plans to adjust throughout the year (with parent & guide approval), this should be an unlikely scenario and may signify that a Panther is choosing to leave EMA by *not* upholding the contract and intentionally growing.

## PROBATIONARY/EXIT CONTRACTS

A Panther may be offered a probationary contract when they are not living up to their commitments and promises. This contract will outline specific, measurable results that will be expected in order for a Panther to continue at EMA, once a probationary contract is entered into. An Exit Contract is entered into when the probationary contract is not kept.

## CIRCLE IS REQUIRED FOR ALL LEARNERS

Circle is sacred and EVERY learner is expected to participate EVERY TIME. If a Panther is late or asked to leave the circle, they will sit behind the circle and continue to participate through listening and taking "notes". Panthers should not leave the circle until it has finished and should arrive at circle having taken care of anything (such as bathroom use) ahead of time. Panthers are expected to uphold decisions made in circle, even if they are unable to participate. It is a Panther’s responsibility to know what is being discussed in circle. Disregarding Circle is a violation of promises made to participate at EMA.



## THE PROCESS FOR GUIDES UPHOLDING GUARDRAILS:

- 1 Guide may hold up a mirror for a hero leader and challenge them to assess the situation and “take a stand” using tough A/B questions.
- 2 Guide may point out the following list (which may also be posted in the studio) of potential ways to help hold one another accountable and remind fellow travelers of guardrails and contracts. The Panther leader may attempt several ideas (perhaps 3) or come up with their own.  
  
Some possible options:
  - Ask for a Panther Buck (follow up with questions about the impact of this)
  - Ask the distracted Panther to address the studio with a plan for being intentional.
  - Stop ALL activities in the studio (emergency meeting to “declare the impact” on the studio).
  - Ask the “distracted Panther” to remove themselves from the studio or sit at a desk on their own to do silent core skills only.
  - Request that the distracted Panther sends an email to the studio (with parents and guide cc'd on it) with a renewed commitment to the studio and strategies for improvement.
  - Request that the Panther goes home for the day to reset.
  - Invite another Panther (or a group) of leaders to help resolve.
  - Create your own strategy.
- 3 The Panther-Leader shares with the guide and a peer their lessons learned.
- 4 Guide may encourage the Panther-Leader to initiate a Journey Check-In with their peer. The Journey Check-In Form is available on the [EMA Parent Website](#).

### NOTES

# GAME PLAY SYSTEMS

Acton Systems are implemented based upon studio needs and wants. ***Not all systems may be “in place” in each studio and will vary at times.***

## PANTHER BUCKS

Panther Bucks are the learner-directed accountability system. As learners produce work, they get paid Panther Bucks. Panthers can hold one another accountable by requesting Panther Bucks for contract infractions. At that point, the Panther who made the alleged violation may do one of the following:

1. Agree that an infraction was made and pay the bank 1 Panther Buck, or...
2. Take the matter to the Panther Buck Council to seek guidance on how to resolve the matter. The Panther Buck Council is a group of elected Panthers who have agreed to fairly and without partiality help fellow Panthers resolve their conflicts.

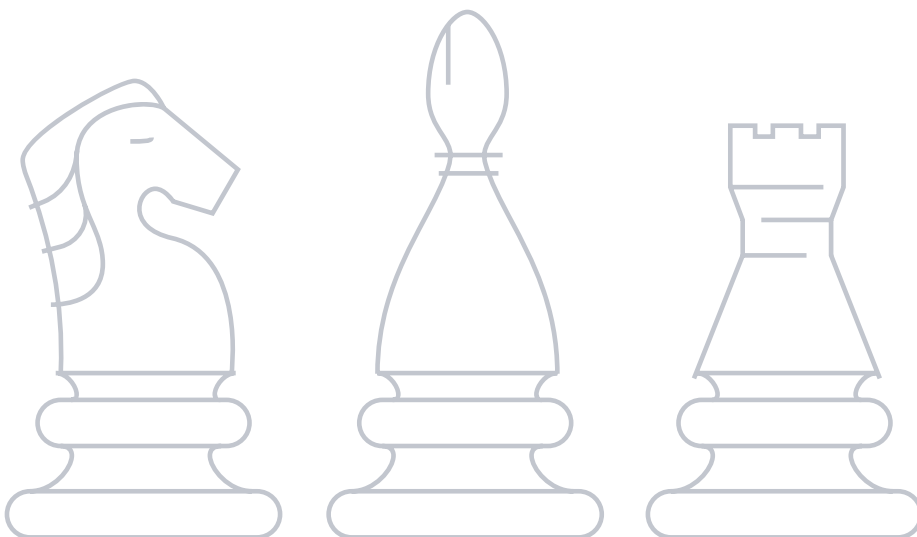
If a Panther is in debt to the bank for longer than a two-week period, they will receive an Honor Code Violation (At times, “community service” may be available to heroes who are in debt.). Panther Bucks are used to purchase items in the Panther Buck Store. Parents may choose to use Panther Bucks earned at EMA as incentives in their home as well.

**Families are encouraged to plan one family event each session for their learner to earn with Panther Bucks. A family event is up to the discretion of each family, some suggestions are a family game night, hiking, a football game, movie night, taco night, etc., Please see the Panther Bucks section under the Studio Systems area for additional details.**



## BARAZA MEETINGS

Weekly Baraza (aka Town Hall) meetings are held whereby Panthers can propose new rules for the studio, encourage each other through character callouts, or bring up concerns and potential solutions using sociocratic and consensus-building frameworks, and voting/majority rules, less often. This is a Panther-led meeting that typically occurs weekly.





## RESOLVING PANTHER CONFLICT

It is an important part of the Acton learning model to allow Panthers 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.



If your Panther has a conflict within the studio, we encourage you to calmly talk through it with them and empower them to use one of the systems below to handle the matter.

## SYSTEMS FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT

**Panther Bucks:** A Panther may request a Panther Buck and follow the process for appropriately doing so as designated in their studio.

**Peace Table:** A Panther/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 learners to:

1

*Express their feelings  
& define the problem*

2

*Identify possible  
solutions*

3

*Make a plan  
to move forward*

## STUDIO MAINTENANCE

Panthers are required to help maintain their studio through daily Studio Maintenance. This encourages stewardship, organization and cleaning habits.

## MILESTONES / FREEDOM LEVELS

The Acton environment encourages Panthers to learn time management and self-governing of tasks to be completed within a certain projected time-frame. When a Panther at EMA 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.

### *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?



## FULL CIRCLE (AKA 360 DEGREE) FEEDBACK

Periodically, typically each session, Panthers 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 the ability to write constructive feedback. The feedback can be either positive or an area for growth. The review measures leadership, intentionality, and contribution to the studio.

## BRAINS, BOOKS, BUDDIES

Empowered Minds is a Panther-led and independent learner environment. Guides do not serve as Teachers. Panthers learn to teach themselves by developing problem-solving skills. Should a Panther run into difficulty, they are encouraged to use their 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? Panthers 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 learner but to jointly work to understand how to solve the problem for yourself.

Lastly, if a Panther 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 they could solve the problem.

***A foundational principle within the Acton learning model is to provide opportunities for learners to learn to collaboratively solve hard problems.*** Perseverance and creativity are developed through this process. Acton Academy discourages the use of tutors or adults “helping” s/heroes solve problems. Guides never answer questions nor do they teach in the conventional sense. Encourage your Panther to take ownership if they are facing a hard question and/or challenge, but always point them in the direction of problem-solving and perseverance.

## PANTHER ACCOUNTABILITY

One of the most powerful opportunities a s/hero has within the Acton learning model is the chance to learn self-governance, problem-solving, discipline, and perseverance.

As parents of an EMA s/hero, you play a very important part! We encourage parents to use the Guiding questions at home which furthers the learning opportunities of problem-solving and mastery of self. If your child is choosing not to work at EMA or has made decisions that could result in an Honor Code Violation, we encourage you to allow natural consequences to come to fruition.

**Some parents have found it helpful to tie privileges at home to hard work at school. We respect the role of parenting while also embracing each s/hero’s journey toward self-governance and responsibility. Helping your child do their work or shielding them from negative consequences takes away the power of the Acton learning model. Additionally, if your child is encountering a problem within the studio, encourage them to handle the situation for themselves. Without an opportunity for practice, a s/hero will struggle to develop these lifelong skills.**





# KEEPING SCORE

We don't "keep score" in the same sense that other schools or sports games do. Your Panther will set goals and track progress as a tool to help them grow and improve their skills. Panthers 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 trust parents to take the initiative to be involved in their child's weekly goals. This is a large part of your journey as an EMA parent. Most importantly, we encourage you to talk with your child about learning goals and to share your OWN learning goals with them as well. We encourage parents to ask their children about their goal setting at the beginning of the week and follow up at the end of the week. This is an important part of your role as an Acton parent. NOTE: You may find sample check-in questions on the [EMA Parent Website](#).

*Reflection Question:* It is helpful to ask: 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? Everyone has an off-week now and then. Is there something you need a break from to get back to a strong start for next week?



## JOURNEY TRACKER

Points, Panther badge plan, work submitted, weekly tracking, SMART Goals, and Panther Bucks details can all be viewed in Journey Tracker. While the Journey Tracker is a powerful tool, it is only a small measure of the learning that your child is experiencing at EMA.

**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 EMA, we do **not** use letter grades.*

Milestones of achievement at EMA are Learning Badges which prove success in completing a long-term series of learning challenges. These Learning Badges will document the entire EMA learning journey with evidence appropriate for college applications and job interviews of the authentic accomplishments of each EMA graduate.

Panthers will receive feedback on 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 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 EMA have the opportunity to work at their own pace to complete academic badges, but are expected to be working. We recognize that each child learns at different speeds, and we are watching for consistent and diligent progress. Some EMA learners complete multiple grade badges in an academic year while others might take a bit 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, Panthers are provided the privilege and respect of being held to an expectation of excellence and mastery. Panthers will not be awarded badges simply by completing tasks, but by mastering them or by working to attain excellence. An expectation of mastery may mean that a learner needs more than an academic 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.

## PARENT / GUIDE JOURNEY MEETINGS

Twice a year, parents will be offered Journey Meetings. Parents may also schedule an optional meeting with the guide and their Panther to review progress and address any concerns, if necessary.

All meetings must be scheduled in advance, and guides may request that parents come with a Journey Meeting Checklist Form Complete.

# WHOLE CHILD DEVELOPMENT

WATCH FOR IMPROVEMENT & PROGRESS IN YOUR CHILD’S OVERALL DEVELOPMENT. Be on the lookout for growth in the following imperative skills (See Also: Parent/Guide Journey Meeting):

<i>Learning to Be &amp; Learning to Learn</i>			
<i>Think, speak, and write clearly</i>	<i>Time management</i>	<i>Goal setting and tracking</i>	<i>Navigating gray area when something seems unclear</i>
<i>Ask hard questions, which challenge prevailing assumptions</i>	<i>Being a friend</i>	<i>Organized workspace</i>	<i>Taking responsibility for actions</i>
<i>Quickly assimilate needed data from irrelevant info</i>	<i>Persevering through struggle</i>	<i>Following a schedule</i>	<i>Being a proactive team member</i>
<i>Persuade others that your course is the right one</i>	<i>Finding joy</i>	<i>Making peace</i>	<i>Understanding instructions (written/verbal)</i>
<i>Take initiative and work independently</i>	<i>Keeping promises</i>	<i>Discussion participation</i>	<i>Project planning</i>
<i>Define problems without a guide</i>	<i>Self-motivation</i>	<i>Holding to Studio Contract Guardrails</i>	<i>Creativity</i>
<i>Finding focus</i>	<i>Modeling kindness</i>	<i>Communicating clearly</i>	<i>Meeting deadlines</i>

## EXCELLENCE AT EMA

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

At Empowered Minds, we feel the same way about excellence. Excellence is a deliberate practice. While every studio is measuring and watching for excellence in different ways (See Studio Environment Overview), here is an example of how it may be measured by Panthers:

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>To ask/consider/prepare</b>
<b>BEST WORK</b>	<i>If this is the first time someone has attempted a task, have they certified it as their “best work?”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you agree this is their best work?</li> <li>• Your best work is achieved after multiple drafts - ask how many drafts they have worked on.</li> <li>• How much time was spent on this?</li> <li>• Ask if they could improve any areas of the badge</li> </ul>
<b>SHOWS IMPROVEMENT</b>	<i>If this is a task or skill that has been tried before, is this better than last time?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In order to show improvement, you will need both pieces of work.</li> <li>• Is improvement obvious, or did you have to really search for it?</li> <li>• Is there a detailed critique favorably comparing their work this time to last time?</li> </ul>
<b>COMPARISON TO WORLD-CLASS EXAMPLES</b>	<i>As work quality soars and plateaus: How does it compare to a world-class example?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a detailed critique favorably comparing the work to a world-class example?</li> </ul>
<b>WINNER OF A CONTEST</b>	<i>Did Panthers select this as a “best of” example in a vote by the studio, or has it been approved for a public exhibition?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have they recorded what contest they won?</li> <li>• Are they competing against peers at the same level?</li> </ul>

## ASSISTANCE FROM GUIDES

EMA Panthers are encouraged to discover their own solutions to academic challenges. If a Panther has exhausted 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 are not to provide one-on-one tutoring or lessons to assist with Core Skills progress.



# 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

### [EMA PARENT WEBPAGE](#)

This is the central hub for all information. Links to important information, calendars, and community updates are housed here. Please attach it to the app section of your phone for easy reference.

- Links to calendars, the BAND app, surveys etc. will be on the homepage for easy access.
- Family Badges (and Submissions) plus other resources to empower your family growth can also be found here.

### **BAND APP**

Upon joining the community, you will be sent an invitation to BAND. The BAND calendar will help you manage dates/times for learning exhibitions, field trips, parent meetings, parent coffees/teas, end-of-the-year celebrations, Open Houses, and other EMA events. We also use Band to highlight daily studio “goings-ons.” After downloading the app, be sure to take a moment to change your notification settings so that you may receive BAND notifications.

## CONTACTING GUIDES

Because guides move between studios and have contact with all Panthers, communication with parents is through a common email - [guides@empoweredmindsacademy.org](mailto:guides@empoweredmindsacademy.org). If you wish to direct your email to a particular guide, simply address your note to them in the subject line, but use the common email address. The information on the emails is kept strictly confidential between the guides & owners.



**Be prepared:** Adults at EMA are Guides 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 fully available or have the capacity to talk with you during the morning drop-off, during school, or during afternoon pick-up times.



## EMAIL COMMUNICATION

Email is the most effective communication. Guides only have phones for emergencies and cannot take calls or texts during the day. Emails with questions for a guide may be sent to [guides@empoweredmindsacademy.org](mailto:guides@empoweredmindsacademy.org). These requests and questions will be sent to the appropriate guide when appropriate. For any emergencies, text Valine at 919-949-0147. In case of an emergency, you will receive a group text through What's App (see the [EMA Parent Website](#) to get connected).

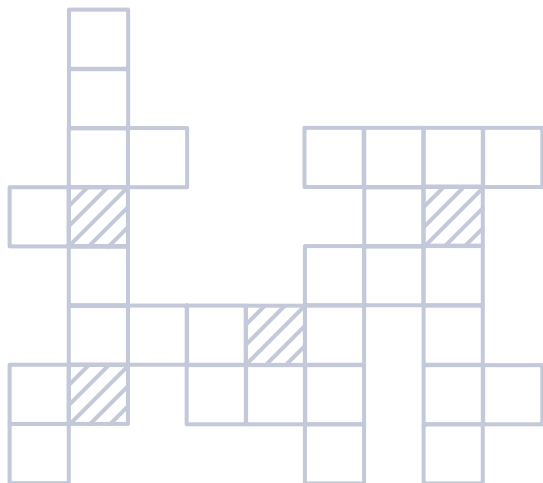
- 1. Emails should be kept short and focused with a clear subject line** (For example, “ATTN: Name-Subject”)
- 2. Emails should never contain negative, derogatory, or inflammatory statements.**
- 3. Emails should never debate/explain emotional or challenging topics.**

If an email is sent that is inappropriate, the EMA team member will use the generic response outlined below that asks the sender to set up a meeting in person or by phone:

*Thank you for your feedback. It is clear that this is a strong concern for you. As per our parent playbook, please schedule a meeting or phone call to discuss this type of feedback. Contact me at your earliest convenience to set up a follow-up phone conversation or a meeting. I am available at the following times...*

## WHEN TO CONTACT A GUIDE

- Early Pickup/absence
- Journey Meetings or badge plan review
- To arrange a Studio Observation day
- Emergencies



## STUDIO OBSERVATION

We welcome parents to visit and observe the studio experience to gain further understanding of the learning journey. The studio, however, is a very special environment for the Panthers, and we want to protect their personal space and privacy. The following guidelines will help ensure that the studio experience does not become diluted by interruptions:

- Submit a request to visit at least 24 hours in advance. Please note that parent visits will not be offered during the first session.
- Include the time of your arrival and your expected length of stay.
- Please inform your child that you will be visiting to observe and that you will just be watching the group at work.
- During your observation time, you may, if you so choose, quietly greet your child, and then find a comfortable place to sit. Enjoy taking it all in! Please do not initiate interaction with your child, the guide, or other Panthers. If a Panther initiates with you, it is fine to interact.
- Parent visitors are asked to abide by the Guiding practice, never providing answers to their child or other learners.
- When you are leaving, please say a quiet goodbye and make a quick departure.

## WEEKLY 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 Panther. The summary of these surveys will be shared with EMA 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 EMA can better serve your family. Survey access is available at the EMA parent website.

## SURVEY FAQ

1. Participating in the survey is not required but greatly appreciated!
2. To remain affiliated with Acton Academy, we must have a yearly average of 4.5 or higher.
3. We ask that you include your child in the survey process.
4. 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 EMA better is greatly appreciated!

## BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS FOR ADULTS

While on campus or interacting with members of the Empowered Minds Academy community, all adults are expected to adhere to the following values: respect, calm communication (no yelling or cursing), compliance with this Playbook, 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 the 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, EMA reserves the right to prohibit visits to the campus and/or reconsider the enrollment of the child(ren) in the school.

## NOTES

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# FORMING A TEAM: PARENT JOURNEY

## PARENT MEETINGS

Each year we host three parent 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. Should a parent desire to host/organize one of these events please contact the Head of School to arrange this.

## PARENT/FAMILY FELLOWSHIP

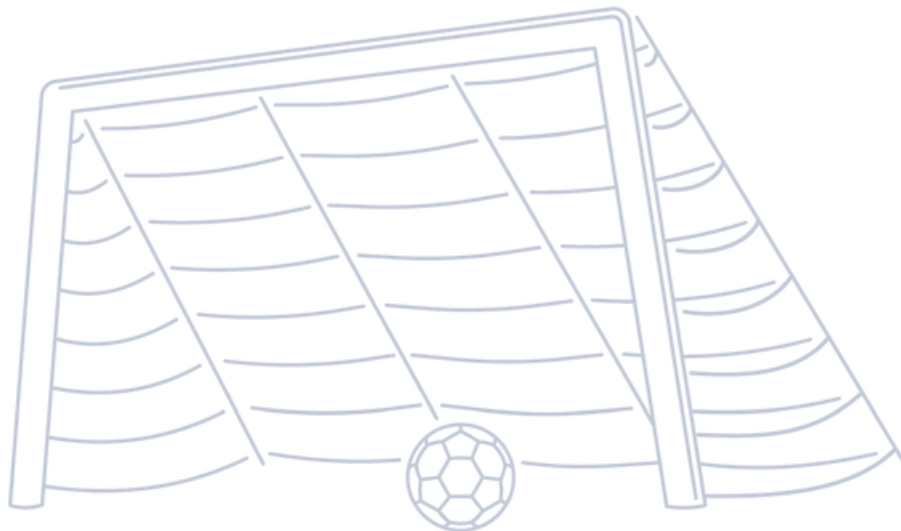
Feel free to socialize! We want our parents to be highly involved in creating a positive community of family support and friendship. As a micro-school we will offer occasional gatherings, but feel that each family can positively contribute by planning their own activities/gatherings and reaching out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

## FAMILY TEA

Family Tea happens on the last Friday of each month. These are casual gatherings that occur during morning arrival for families to get to know one another and learn more about their Panther's learning experience. We encourage you to arrive at 8:30 am, drop off your Panther and stay for an easy cup of tea, and to observe in the workspace of your choice.

## YOUR ACTON JOURNEY

The life of an Acton parent is not always easy, as we are committed to let struggle help our children to grow and become independent and confident learners. As such, EMA has a deep core belief that parents need to also be diligent in being on their own journey. While this can take on many forms, we strongly encourage that you continue to read and study the suggested books as part of your growth. The more you learn about why we chose Acton Academy and why our systems work, the more meaningful this journey will be for you. You will be better able to notice the "small" victories and feel confident in your Panther's (and your own!) ability to Find a Calling and Change the World!



# TO "UP" YOUR GAME

## ACTON READS FOR OWNERS, GUIDES, AND PARENTS

### FOUNDATIONAL

***Courage to Grow*** by Laura Sandefer  
***Raising Free People*** by Akilah Richards  
***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  
***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

### IMPORTANT

***The End of Average*** by Todd Rose  
***Ungifted: Intelligence Redefined*** by Scott Kauffman  
***12 Rules of Life*** by Jordan Peterson  
***Parenting for Liberation: A Guide for Raising Black Children*** by Trina Greene Brown  
***Opening Minds: Using Language to Change Lives***  
by Peter Johnston  
***Frantic Families*** by Patrick Lencioni  
***He, She, We and Inner Work*** by Robert Johnson  
***Education for Judgment: The Artistry of Discussion Leadership*** by C. R. Christensen, D. A. Garvin, and A. Sweet  
***Tribe*** by Seth Godin  
***The Collapse of Parenting*** by Leonard Sax  
***Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*** by Carol Dweck

***NutureShock: New Thinking About Children***  
by Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman  
***The Power of Moments*** by Chip and Dan Heath  
***Flow*** by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi  
***Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*** by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen  
***Mindfulness*** by Ellen J. Langer  
***The War of Art*** by Steven Pressfield  
***E-Myth*** by Michael E. Gerber  
***Antifragile*** by Nassim Taleb  
***Build a School in the Cloud*** (TED talk by Sugata Mitra)  
***Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*** by Steven Covey  
***Designing Your Life: How to build a Well Lived and Joyful Life*** by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans  
***Grit*** by Angela Duckworth

## OPTIONAL

***The One World Schoolhouse: Education Reimagined***

by Salman Khan

***The Price of Privilege*** by Madeline Levine

***The Artist's Way*** by Julia Cameron

***Pirates, Prisoners, & Lepers*** by Paul Robinson

***Beautiful Tree*** by James Tooley

***How to Win Friends and Influence People*** by Dale Carnegie

***The 5 Love Languages of Children*** by Gary Chapman & Ross Campbell

***The Empty Bag: Non-Stop, No-Prop Adventure-Based Activities for Community Building*** by Dick Hammond & Chris Cavert

***Sources of Social Power*** by Michael Mann

***The Lazy Teacher's Handbook: How Your Heroes Learn***

***More When You Teach Less*** by Jim Smith

***Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*** by Stuart Brown

***The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom*** by Don Miguel Ruiz

***The Path to Purpose: How Young People Find Their Calling in Life*** by William Damon

***The New Circles of Learning: Cooperation in the Classroom and School*** by D. W. Johnson, R. T. Johnson & E. J. Holubec

***The Seven Basic Plots*** by Christopher Booker

## 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 child'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? Schedule a chat with the Head of School.

- 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 s/hero. We define s/heroes as: Someone who gets up you 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 unlimited potential, and you can more readily trust them. Your family grows...and grows together.

**Reflection Question:** What do you recall about childhood? What was important to you? When was a time that you were tempted to give in to frustration because your child wasn't thinking like an adult? What can you do in those moments to cheer them on with love and to foster meaningful connection?



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# **Empowered Minds**

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An Acton Academy

Learn to **LEARN**. Learn to **DO**. Learn to **BE**.