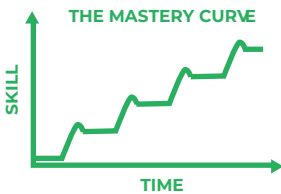


FOR ACTON ACADEMY ONLY. DO NOT COPY OR DISTRIBUTE.

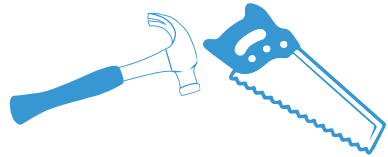
## 21st Century Learning

What is included in Acton Academy Learning Design?



Self-paced mastery of reading, writing and math skills through deliberate practice and the latest in educational technology

Real-world tools and skills through hands-on project-based Quests



Critical thinking and powerful writing and speaking through deep Socratic discussions about heroes, history, and self-governance

Authentic relationships through written promises and covenants that form a tightly bound community led by Eagles\*



\*Acton's young heroes-in-the-making call themselves "Eagles" in honor of the Acton mascot.

## Typical Daily Schedule



Core Skills



Quests



Socratic Discussions



Free Time, etc.

\* For details see the Systems Handbook.

## Learn to Do, Be, and Learn

If Learn to **Do**, Learn to Be, and Learn to **Learn** challenges are accepted, young heroes will absorb amazing amounts of Learn to **Know** information — but in context, and in a way they can use and won't soon forget.

### Learn to Do

Conquer real-world challenges that matter to Eagles such as:

- **Diagnose patients** in the Medical Biology Quest
- **Deliver a speech** in the shoes of Winston Churchill
- **Design a floor plan** for a new Acton Academy in the Architecture Quest

### Learn to Learn

Develop the heroic habits of lifelong learners, such as:

- **Curiosity** to dig into new subjects and compelling questions
- **Perseverance** through “stuck spots” in self-paced math
- **Rigor** to analyze questions and facts with clarity
- **Resourcefulness** to find the tools, mentors, and peers that help you learn best

### Learn to Be

Practice warm-hearted and tough-minded character traits while searching for a calling that will change the world:

- **Servant Leader Badges** celebrate character milestones from Elementary through Launchpad.
- **Socratic Discussions** hone critical thinking and speaking abilities.
- **Relational covenants** and real-world consequences transform difficult decisions into virtuous habits.

## Overarching Question

**An Overarching Question is a deep philosophical question** that helps an individual explore what it means to be a hero and focuses attention for the year.

### AA Austin's Overarching Questions:

- 2009-10:** What is the Hero's Journey?
- 2010-11:** What does it mean to be human?
- 2011-12:** Does power corrupt?
- 2012-13:** Does the past determine the future?
- 2013-14:** What motivates a hero?
- 2014-15:** When does a hero submit to authority?
- 2015-16:** Must a hero conquer fear to find true love?
- 2016-17:** Is truth discovered or created?

**Every component of the Learning Design ties back to the Hero's Journey and the Overarching Question.** For example:

- **Entrepreneurship Quest (2013-14):** Am I motivated by making money, building something I'm proud of, or gaining the respect of my friends?
- **Socrates Trial (2014-15):** Is truth or power my ultimate authority?
- **Entomology Quest (2015-16):** Must I conquer my fear of insects to unleash a love of nature?
- **Data Visualization Quest (2016-17):** Is truth discovered through data analysis and visualization, or can data be massaged to create truth?

## **Acton Academy Mission, Promises & Beliefs**

### **Our Mission**

We believe each person who enters Acton Academy will find a calling that changes the world.

### **Our Promises**

We promise through Socratic guiding and experiential learning to encourage each member of our community to:

- Begin a Hero's Journey;
- Discover precious gifts and a commitment to mastery;
- Become a curious, independent, life-long learner;
- Embrace the forging of a strong character;
- Cherish the arts, the physical world, and the mysteries of life; and
- Treasure economic, political, and religious freedom.

### **Our 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 in a closely connected family of lifelong learners.
- We believe in economic, political, and religious freedom.

### **Our Educational Philosophy**

We believe that:

- clear thinking leads to good decisions,
- good decisions lead to the right habits,
- the right habits forge character, and
- character determines destiny.

### **Our Economic Model**

We believe self-directed, peer-to-peer learner-driven communities built by our young Heroes will deliver transformational learning at a cost all parents can afford.

## Accountability & Measurement

Eagles hold themselves as accountable as anybody in a high-performing organization or company.

### Accountability to the world:

1. **Public exhibitions** at the end of each Quest allow Eagles to subject work to a real-world test in front of family, friends, and customers.
2. **Portfolios** show personal growth and prove what an Eagle can do.
3. **Competitions outside the studio** allow Eagles to compete against world-class peers.

### Accountability in the Studio:

1. **Badges** showcase *excellent work* or mastery of useful skills.
2. **Points** track *effort* doing focused work.
3. **360 Reviews** measure *leadership* and warm-hearted and tough-minded contributions to the studio.

### Accountability to yourself:

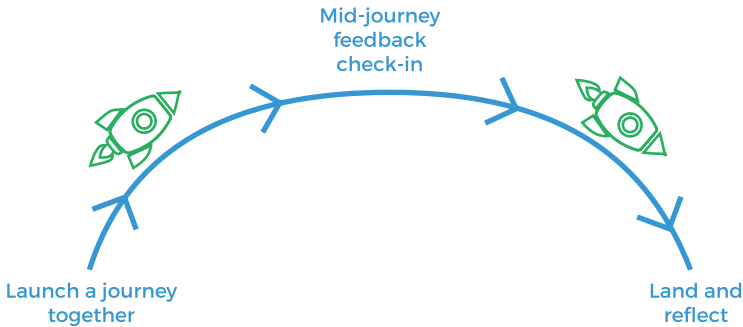
1. **Goal Setting** measures progress through daily, weekly, and longer-term goals.
2. **Servant Leader Badges** celebrate transformation into an independent learner and a purposeful leader.

### Tools:

1. **Acton Journey Tracker** documents progress in goal setting, points, badges, Quest deliverables, Eagle Bucks, and 360 Reviews.
2. **Online dashboards** provide feedback and analytics for Core Skills mastery.
3. **Standardized tests** benchmark progress year to year in math, reading, writing, and critical thinking.

## Learning Arcs

**Learning at Acton follows the narrative arc of any heroic story.** Just like a rocket blasting off, on its journey, and returning to earth, each year and session have a storyline with a rise and fall of energy and a return home to reflect.



To make Arcs work, remember this:

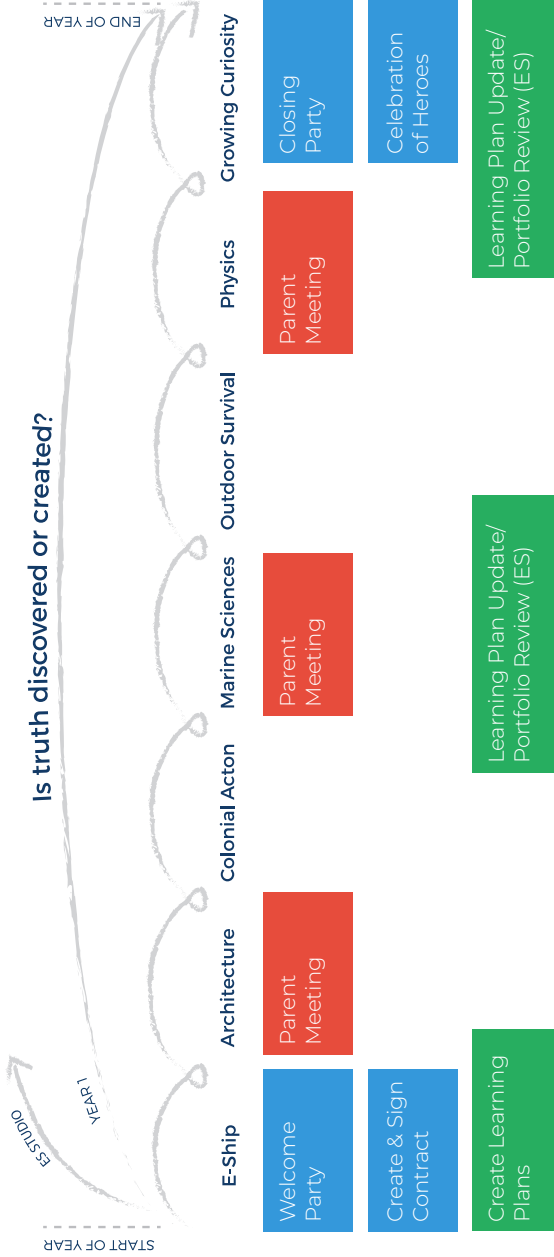
- **Keep energy up:** Just like a trip to space, the key is energy management on the journey. At each point in the arc, what systems, tasks, and events will you call on to maintain the right energy?
- **Nail take-offs and landings:** A good start and landing are just as important as the journey itself. If successful, each person will carry an ever-growing toolbox from one journey to the next.
- **Collect feedback:** Gather feedback through recommitments at the mid-point of an arc.
- **Focus attention:** Focus on the smallest Arc at hand, such as today's Core Skills goals, unless you need to boost energy or commitment by calling on a longer Arc, such as weekly goals, the Exhibition, Badge progress, or the Hero's Journey.

\* See detailed Arcs in the Systems Handbook.



# Example Yearly Arc



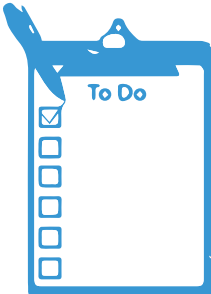
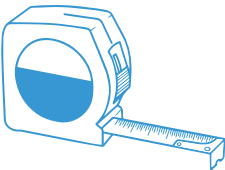
AUSTIN ES: 2016-17







## Core Skills Overview

	<p><b>What is Core Skills?</b></p> <p>In Core Skills, an Eagle masters a foundation for a life of learning. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Math</b></li> <li>• <b>Reading</b></li> <li>• <b>Writing</b></li> </ul>
	<p><b>When does Core Skills happen?</b></p> <p><b>Each morning</b>, Eagles dedicate <b>2 ½ - 3 hours</b>.</p> <p>* Younger Eagles have dedicated time for each Core Skill; more advanced Eagles organize their own Core Skills time.</p>
	<p><b>How are Core Skills goals set?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Guides</b> offer: (A) a menu of challenges; (B) <u>points</u> and <u>badge</u> requirements for each; (C) dedicated time for each Core Skill for younger Eagles.</li> <li>• <b>Eagles</b> set goals each morning and report on them each afternoon.</li> <li>• <b>Eagle Running Squads</b> meet at the beginning and end of each week to support each other.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>How is progress measured?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Points</b> for incremental progress</li> <li>• <b>Badges</b> for topics mastered</li> <li>• <b>Online dashboards</b> for analytic feedback</li> </ul>

## Math

The goal is for Eagles to master basic math skills through one of many cutting-edge adaptive programs, such as:

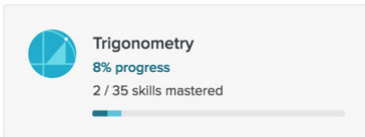
- Khan Academy
- Dreambox
- ST Math
- ALEKS
- Manga High

Eagles measure progress by:

- **Points** for each skill mastered  
ex: 10 pts / skill
- **Badges** for completing a collection of skills  
ex: “6th Grade Math”



Online Dashboards measure detailed progress  
ex: screens from Khan Academy



Math by subject	Math by grade
Early math 4%	K-2nd 4%
Arithmetic 22%	3rd 7%
Algebra 4%	4th 7%
Geometry 5%	5th 5%
Trigonometry 8%	6th 9%
Statistics & probability 1%	7th 6%
Calculus	8th 4%
Differential equations	High school
Linear algebra	
Math for fun and glory	

Specifics for each Studio:

### Nesting Quest

- **Hands-on Montessori manipulatives** to build number sense

### Elementary

- **Self-paced** through interactive online tools
- **Badges** include Levels 1-5 Math

### Middle School

- **Self-paced** through interactive online tools
- **Badges** include 6th Grade Math through Algebra I

### Launchpad

- **Self-paced** through interactive online tools
- **Badges** include Geometry through Calculus

## Reading

**The goal is for Eagles to love reading.** Eagles start by reading anything they enjoy — even comic books. Over time, Eagles read more and more challenging books, and increase skills through practice on online platforms.

### Eagles measure progress by:

- **Points** for each page they read  
ex: 1 pts / pg Deep Book; 1 pt / 10 pgs other book
- **Points** for practicing deep reading using online tools  
ex: Lexia, ReadTheory, Newsela
- **Badges** for pitching, reading, and analyzing a Deep Book  
ex: a book that is proven to be world-class

**Celebrate and honor reading with tradition.** Eagles are intrinsically motivated by curiosity and inspired by what their peers are reading and talking about. In Austin, the ES Studio has 30-60 minutes of **DEAR** — Drop Everything And Read — each day, where Eagles find a cozy nook and enjoy a good book.

**Add rigor with Deep Book Badges.** ES creates a studio a list of “Badge Books,” while MS and LP Eagles pitch their individual choices to studiomates for approval as (a) world-changing; and (b) in that Eagle’s **challenge zone**. After reading, they lead a “Between the Lines” literary critique.

### Specifics for each Studio:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Nesting Quest</b></p> <p>- <b>Reader Island</b> deepens foundational reading skills using BOB books</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Elementary</b></p> <p>- <b>Deep Books</b> determined by the Studio in a unified list</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Middle School</b></p> <p>- <b>Deep Books</b> must be approved by fellow Eagles each individual time. - <b>Between the Lines</b> literary discussion required for Badge</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Launchpad</b></p> <p>- <b>Deep Books</b> must be approved by fellow Eagles each individual time. - <b>Between the Lines</b> literary discussion required for Badge</p>

## Writing

**The goal is for Eagles to become powerful communicators.** Eagles practice clear thinking and effective communication in writing convincing speeches, biographies, stories, research articles, journals, sales conversations, emails, videos, thank you notes, etc.

**Eagles measure writing progress by:**

- **Points** for completing writing challenges  
ex: Civilization, Quests, Genre/Writers Workshop projects
- **Badges** for peer-critiqued work brought to an excellent level  
ex: Writers' Workshop in ES, Genre Badge in MS/LP
- **Badges** for mastering writing mechanics  
ex: Spelling City, Typing Club, No Red Ink
- **Portfolio** showing writing progress from draft to final

**Peer critique and revision allow Eagles to learn from world-class processes and examples.** Eagles will become powerful writers if they are motivated to write, have a world-class example or process to follow, and share their writing publicly for critique.



**Socratic Rules of Engagement sharpen the persuasive toolbox.**

In each Socratic discussion, Eagles choose focus ROEs and improve through deliberate practice and holding each other accountable.

**Specifics for each Studio:**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Nesting Quest</b></p> <p>- <b>Handwriting</b> practice and daily <b>journal prompts</b> form the foundation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Elementary</b></p> <p>- Dedicated time for a <b>Writers' Workshop</b> project each session</p> <p>- Weekly <b>journal reflection</b> is an important part of goal setting</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Middle School</b></p> <p>- <b>Genre project</b> accompanies each Quest</p> <p>- <b>Quest &amp; Civilization</b> deliverables include writing challenges</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Launchpad</b></p> <p>- <b>Genre project</b> accompanies each Quest</p> <p>- <b>Quest &amp; Civilization deliverables</b> include writing challenges</p>







## Quests Overview



### What are Quests?

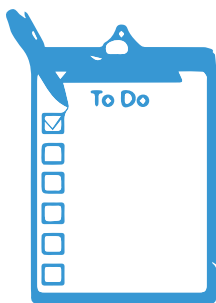
Quests are a four- to six-week series of challenges bound by a compelling narrative and designed to **deliver 21st century skills**.

- ES Quests: broad explorations of science and curiosity.
- MS/LP Quests: dive deeper and add rigor.



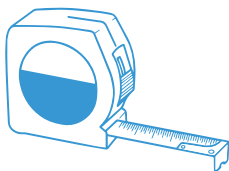
### When do Quests Happen?

**Each afternoon**, Eagles dedicate roughly **2 ½ hours**.



### How are Quest goals set?

- **Guides** offer: (A) a narrative, using Socratic discussions, decorations, role plays, etc.; (B) a series of challenges; (C) points, badge requirements, and rules of the game.
- **Eagles** then lead Quests as Guides step back.



### How is progress measured?

- **Points** for challenges earned
- **Badges** for completed Quests
- **Exhibitions** showcasing finished work
- **Portfolios** for work they're especially proud of

## Ingredients of a Successful Quest

**Exhibition:** A great Quest starts with a powerful Exhibition as the goal.

Ex: In the **World-Changing Speech Quest**, Eagles know on day 1 that during the Exhibition they will stand on stage for 6 minutes in front of their family and friends, no matter what.

**Real-world skills:** Quests focus on real-world skills, rather than memorizing facts for a test.

Ex: In the **Medical Biology Quest**, Eagles learn to diagnose diseases and interpret MRIs and X-Rays. At the Exhibition Eagles test these skills on their families in a simulation.

**Narrative and motivation:** Eagles role play a real-life hero at a critical moment in history, solving a problem the Eagles care about deeply.

Ex: In the **Electricity Quest**, Eagles develop patents for new electrical devices in Thomas Edison's Menlo Park lab.

**Real-world measurement:** A Quest should have some way to measure and track outcomes, in a way that mirrors as closely as possible the real world.

Ex: In the **Bridge Building Quest**, Eagles measure weight supported by the bridge vs. cost to build to determine a winner.

**Eagle-led:** A Guide may play a role setting the stage and facilitating discussion to launch each day and then call for Lessons Learned, but Eagles are largely on their own to navigate the challenges of the Quest.

Ex: In the **Detective Chemistry Quest**, Guides leave clues for Eagles to then solve a crime on their own, using forensic science.





## Integration



### What is Integration?

**Integration brings together many aspects of learning** at Acton Academy for an integrated experience.

**Note:** This “*integrity*” is a Jungian concept related to the Hero’s Journey — bringing the shadow back into yourself, healing the fissure, the final act of the Hero’s Journey.



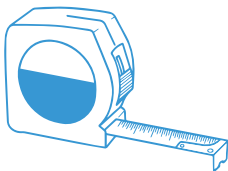
### When does integration happen?

**Dedicated time each week** can be blocked off for specific activities, such as PE and art. Other activities can happen after school, during free time, or during the day.



### How are integration goals set?

- **Guides** or **Eagles** identify integration opportunities.
- **Guides** offer: (A) points and badge requirements; (B) dedicated time, if applicable.
- **Eagles** then lead Integration as Guides step back.



### How is progress measured?

- **Badges** for completed projects
- **Portfolios** for work Eagles are especially proud of
- **Journals** for reflection

## Examples

**Core Integration:** At AA Austin, the following core activities are the glue that tie together many different parts of learning:

- **Socratic Discussions:** Each morning, mid-day, and afternoon, Eagles circle up for mini-Socratic discussions focused on priorities for the day, studio needs, and new processes or heroes to introduce.
- **Apprenticeships:** Starting in middle school, Eagles learn to find an apprenticeship they're passionate about, pitch themselves for it, perform great work, and follow up appropriately.
- **Civilization:** Twice a week, Eagles dive into history, politics, and economics by putting themselves in the shoes of historical figures at critical turning points in history and debating real-life decisions.
- **Visual art:** Twice a week, a local artist leads art projects, usually related to the Quest.
- **PE:** Twice a week, Eagles dive into athletics and fitness in PE, followed by a Socratic discussion on sportsmanship, endurance, etc.

**Additional Integration:** Many other activities strengthen and unify the Learning Design. For example, other Actons may include or specialize in:

- **Music**
- **Theatre**
- **Yoga & Mindfulness**
- **Community Garden**
- **Sports Teams**
- **Field trips or excursions**







## Learning to Be

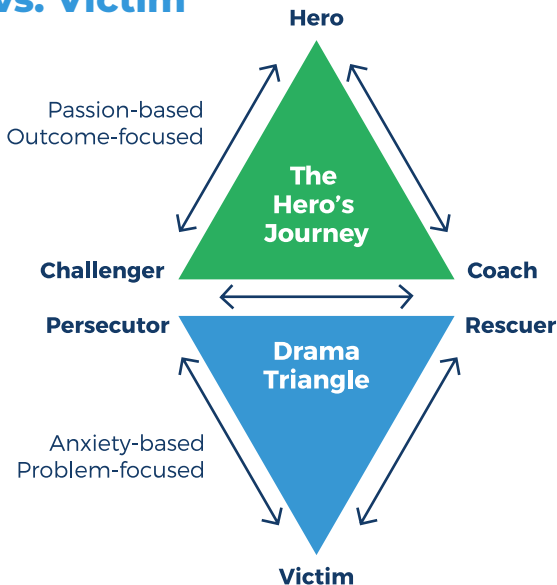
	<p><b>What is Learning to Be?</b></p> <p>The victorious moment of any Hero's Journey is <b>the realization that the greatest change has occurred within oneself</b>. This growth is the ultimate goal of Acton's learning design.</p>
	<p><b>When does Learning to Be happen?</b></p> <p>Learning to Be experiences are <b>woven into all parts of a <u>Hero's Journey</u></b> at Acton. (See opposite page.)</p>
	<p><b>How are Learning to Be goals set?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Guides</b> offer: (A) a call to a Hero's Journey to <u>building the Tribe</u>, find an <u>apprenticeship</u>, etc.; (B) a series of challenges; (C) points and badge requirements, if applicable.</li> <li>• <b>Eagles</b> then lead in creating relational <u>covenants</u>, calling a conflict resolution, seeking an <u>apprenticeship</u>, etc.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>How is progress measured?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Servant Leader Badges</b> for major milestones</li> <li>• <b>Journals</b> for weekly reflection</li> <li>• <b>360 Peer Reviews</b> for heroic character in the studio</li> </ul>

## Examples

Eagles are called to develop the character and habits of a Hero through all parts of the Acton experience, for example:

- **The Hero's Journey** emphasizes the archetypal narrative all humans long to experience
- **Socratic Discussions** challenge Eagles to think clearly, listen intently, and speak precisely
- **Real-world choices and consequences** prepare Eagles for life in a top-performing organization or company
- **Relational covenants and contracts** equip Eagles to govern their community and follow through on promises
- **Goal setting and accountability** are an Eagle's opportunity to learn time management
- **Conflict resolution** equips Eagles with the skills to create healthy lifelong relationships
- **Peer feedback** invites Eagles to practice giving, receiving, and incorporating feedback from others
- **Apprenticeships** test Eagles' progress in the real world










## Hero vs. Victim



\* Adapted from David Emerald's "Empowerment Dynamic" triangle

## Servant Leader Badges

Servant Leader Badges celebrate the development of heroic character. They showcase the habits, skills, and attitudes needed to accelerate your Hero's Journey and earn more freedom and responsibility at Acton Academy.

	Badge	Goal	Example Challenges
ES		Foundation of <b>heroic habits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give <u>Character Call-outs</u></li> <li>• Set/track <u>SMART Goals</u></li> <li>• Participate in <u>discussion</u></li> </ul>
		The <b>curiosity</b> and <b>discipline</b> to learn without direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set and track goals</li> <li>• research questions</li> <li>• solve problems</li> </ul>
MS		Approach life as a <b>hero, not a victim</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth Mindset praise</li> <li>• Acts of kindness</li> <li>• Holding <u>boundaries</u></li> </ul>
		Act as a heroic <b>role model</b> or <b>coach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen empathetically</li> <li>• Provide a critique</li> <li>• Resolve a conflict</li> </ul>
		Design, execute, and critique a <b>Socratic Discussion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver <u>Launches</u></li> <li>• Pose great questions</li> <li>• Give and receive critique</li> </ul>
LP		Improve the <u>studio</u> by <b>leading a major project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cast a vision</li> <li>• Project management</li> <li>• Reporting results</li> </ul>
		<b>Lead a group</b> and drive long-term improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-Guide ES/MS studio</li> <li>• Major/long-term studio projects</li> </ul>
		<b>Lead an organization</b> and drive improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-Guide entire campus</li> <li>• Design major trips</li> <li>• Oversee major initiative</li> </ul>
		<b>Consult other organizations</b> and drive improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult Acton Owners, for pay</li> <li>• Life coaching</li> </ul>



