

# How do Guides Inspire, Equip & Connect?

At Acton Academy, the role of a guide is fundamentally different from that of a traditional teacher. The phrase “inspire, equip, and connect” encapsulates the core responsibilities of a guide in fostering a learner-driven environment.

What does that mean?

## **Inspire**

- Spark Curiosity: A guide inspires learners by asking powerful, open-ended questions that ignite their natural curiosity and desire to learn.
- Model a Growth Mindset: By embodying perseverance, humility, and a love of learning, guides inspire learners to embrace challenges and see failure as an opportunity to grow.
- Celebrate Individual Journeys: Encouraging learners to see themselves as heroes on their own journeys, capable of greatness, builds intrinsic motivation and purpose.

## **Equip**

- Provide Tools and Resources: Rather than delivering knowledge, guides equip learners with access to high-quality resources, tools, and frameworks for problem-solving.
- Teach Skills for Independence: This includes showing learners how to set goals, track progress, and reflect on their growth, empowering them to take ownership of their learning.
- Facilitate Mastery: Guides support learners in building the habits and skills needed to earn their badges and achieve mastery in academic, social, and emotional areas.

## **Connect**

- Build Relationships: A guide connects with learners by showing genuine interest in their passions, respecting their individuality, and fostering trust.
- Create Community: Guides cultivate a sense of belonging and collaboration within the studio, helping learners connect with one another and support each other.
- Link Learning to Life: By connecting studio experiences to real-world applications, guides help learners see the relevance of their work to their personal goals and future contributions.

## Why This Matters

The purpose of inspiring, equipping, and connecting is to empower learners to take charge of their education, discover their passions, and develop the character traits they need to thrive in life. Rather than directing or instructing, guides act as mentors and facilitators, helping learners unlock their potential and find meaning in their journey.

What are some practical ways a guide will inspire, equip and connect in the studios?

## **Inspire: Sparking Curiosity and Motivation**

### *1. Ask Thought-Provoking Questions:*

Start Socratic discussions with questions like:

- “What would you do if you knew you couldn’t fail?”
- “What makes someone a hero?”
- “How can we use math to solve real-world problems?”

*These questions encourage learners to think deeply and connect their learning to personal goals.*

### *2. Share Stories:*

- Tell stories of real-life heroes, innovators, or people who overcame challenges to inspire learners. This is usually done in a launch setting.

### *3. Create Challenges:*

- Design quests that excite learners, such as creating a business, solving a mystery, or building something tangible like a bridge or a robot.
- Encourage learners to do their best work, by creating games and challenges to motivate them internally and externally.

### *4. Use Growth Mindset Praise vs Fixed Mindset Praise*

- Praise learners for their courage, effort, and persistence.  
For example: “I noticed you stuck with that project even when it was hard—what kept you going?”

## **Equip: Providing Tools for Independence**

### *1. Goal Setting:*

- Help learners set SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) for their day, week, or session.
- Provide tools like poster boards, binders, stickers or online journey tracker to help them manage their progress.

### *2. Model the Tools:*

- Show learners how to use materials effectively, like Montessori math beads, Waseca drawers, or online learning platforms like Khan and Lexia.  
(In older studios this is more learner to learner. In the SPARK studio initially the guide will present a learning material, but the goal is for the learner to self direct, or to get help from an older friend who understands)
- Offer help during collaborative work times, staying in the role of a Socratic guide.

### *3. Foster Reflection: by asking questions like:*

- “What are you proud of today?”
- “What could you do differently next time?”
- “What was harder for you?”
- “What monster did you face?”
- “How did you overcome this monster or challenge?”

### *4. Offer problem solving strategies:*

- Introduce tools like “The Hero’s Journey” to help them approach challenges with resilience.

- Offer strategies for conflict resolution, such as the peace table, or role-playing scenarios to practice empathy and listening.

## **Connect: Building Relationships and Relevance**

1. *Character Callouts:* Encourage the learners to find unique things about each other to notice and give “character callouts” for. Practice this together so it becomes a habit.
2. *Foster Collaboration:*
  - Create opportunities for teamwork through group projects, peer critiques, or mentorship opportunities between older and younger learners.
  - Facilitate meaningful studio agreements that learners create together to foster a sense of community. Examples would be the studio contract, studios ROE’s and studio maintenance.
  - When asked a question, pointing them to fellow learners who can help.
3. *Bring Learning to Life:*
  - Connect academic work to real-world applications:
    - Use budgeting to teach math.
    - Tie history quests to solving modern-day problems.
    - Bring in guest speakers, such as local entrepreneurs or scientists, to share their real-world experiences.
4. *Celebrate Studio Wins:*
  - Highlight collective accomplishments, like completing a quest or resolving a conflict as a group.

Interested in a more in-depth look at what this looks like in the studio? Reach out to [hello@amarilloacton.com](mailto:hello@amarilloacton.com) to schedule a time to observe!