INDEPENDENCE

PREPARATORY ACADEMY

# FAMILY HANDBOOK

## 2026 - 2027

4411 Lloyd Noland Parkway, Fairfield, AL 35064

205.898.7505| info@learnatiprep.com | www.learnatiprep.com

**Dear iPrep Families,**

Welcome to **Independence Preparatory Academy**!

We are honored that you have chosen iPrep as your school community and entrusted us with your scholar's education. At iPrep, we are committed to providing a safe, joyful, academically rigorous, and character-driven environment where every scholar is challenged to reach their highest potential and equipped with the knowledge, skills, and habits needed to choose their destiny and create a fulfilling life.

We believe that exceptional schools are built through strong partnerships between home and school. Families play an essential role in a scholar's success, and we are committed to working alongside you throughout your child's educational journey. Together, we will cultivate a community grounded in high expectations, mutual respect, open communication, and a shared commitment to excellence.

This Family Handbook serves as a guide to the policies, procedures, and expectations that help our school operate effectively and ensure every scholar has the opportunity to thrive. We encourage you to read it carefully and discuss its contents with your scholar. After reviewing the handbook, please complete and return the acknowledgment form as directed.

While this handbook answers many common questions, it cannot address every situation that may arise. If you ever need clarification or support, please do not hesitate to reach out to our team. We are here to partner with you and are always happy to help.

Thank you for choosing **Independence Preparatory Academy**. We look forward to partnering with your family as we Launch, Excel, and Soar together.

**Welcome to the iPrep family!**

**With Eagle Pride**,
Dr. Calandra Sales
Founder & Executive Director

# WELCOME TO INDEPENDENCE PREPARATORY ACADEMY!

## OUR MISSION

We are on a mission to equip all students with the academic tenacity and strength of character to choose their destiny and create a fulfilling life.

## OUR VISION

All children deserve the highest-quality education that prepares them for college and the career of their dreams. Through freedom within limits, we commit to a world-class, scholar-driven environment that cultivates character and builds the community that makes dreams come true.

## OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUITABLE ACCESS

**Independence Preparatory Academy** believes that all children deserve access to quality education that prepares them for college and careers. We recognize that as long as race, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, learning diversity, orientation, religion, and identity continue to predict the future outcomes of our scholars, we must better understand systems of inequity and, in particular, understand ourselves, and our own identities, cultures, and roles in these systems as an essential step in our quest for equity. We leverage the lived experiences of our scholars to increase opportunities to see their culture valued, integrated, and represented to challenge the status quo of current educational institutions. Our scholars' backgrounds do not limit our expectations of their outcomes. We are relentless in our pursuit to identify and remove barriers in our current policies, procedures, systems, or practices that limit opportunities for our scholars. By embedding cultural competency, cultural responsiveness, restorative justice, and trauma-informed practices, we work to build an anti-biased, anti-racist institution that disrupts the cycle of oppression and promotes academic and civic excellence for every scholar every day.

## THE iPREP WAY

At iPrep, our mission is clear: to empower all students with the academic tenacity and strength of character to choose their destiny and lead fulfilling lives. Our model is based on three key outcomes we aspire for our scholars that are proven to promote long-term independence: **Agency**, **Purpose**, and **Tenacity**.

These graduate aims serve as guiding principles in our mission to equip scholars with the tools and mindset necessary to navigate complex challenges, pursue their passions with determination, and advocate for themselves and others in their pursuit of excellence. We embrace our mission by designing a model based on **scholar-centered learning**, **character and culture building**, and **college and career exploration**.

At iPrep, we help scholars discover who they are, where they come from, and what they can become. Our program builds strong character, connects learning to real-life values like responsibility and citizenship, and encourages a deep sense of purpose. With personalized lessons and small group support, scholars tackle challenging work, build confidence, and learn how to bounce back from setbacks. Most importantly, we teach them to take ownership of their learning—so they can move at their own pace, grow independently, and build the future they dream of.

1. **Agency:** In their quest for lifelong independence, scholars must build the capacity to define goals, recognize steps needed to attain them, and use the available resources to accomplish them. **Student Portfolios** and **Academic Choice Blocks** cultivate agency in our scholars.
2. **Purpose:** Scholars must deeply understand themselves and where they fit into the world to chart their path. At iPrep, we define purpose as self-awareness (Know Me), connection to community (Know Where I am From), and college and career awareness (Know Where I am Going). While these attributes are developed through much of our culture, they are intentionally produced in two key ways: **Eagle Habits** and **Eagle Quests**.
3. **Tenacity:** Scholars must master core content at the highest levels to create the broadest range of options for their futures. More importantly, they must think critically and demonstrate intellectual resilience when learning new things. We employ **mastery-based grading** and **problem-based learning** to foster critical thinking and resilience in scholars.

## OUR CORE BELIEFS

**iPrep** prepares scholars to become proficient readers, writers, and thinkers to succeed in high school and beyond by ensuring that all our scholars can read on grade level by the end of third grade. We believe that a rigorous, high-quality college preparatory education is deserved by all scholars, regardless of socioeconomic status, household income, ethnicity, native language, household educational level, or race. Eight core beliefs guide all our work:

1. **College Begins in Kindergarten**: All scholars receive dedicated intervention time, are challenged with complex tasks in their core classes, and are provided with the support they need to be successful now and in the future.
2. **Literacy is Everything**: We expect all scholars to read at or above grade level by the end of the year. Scholars receive specialized, extended literacy instruction based on their needs to ensure they can access the high school and their chosen colleges.
3. **Every Minute Matters**: We believe instructional time must be protected and maximized. Therefore, we meticulously plan and pace our lessons to maximize every minute. As a result, our scholars receive 1,100 minutes of instruction compared to other schools.
4. **A Joyful, Structured Culture Supports Learning**: Scholars cannot learn in chaos but thrive in a structured and joyful environment. Therefore, we promote reliable routines, predictable practices, and consistent expectations to ensure scholars know what to expect and what is expected of them.
5. **Community Builds Character**: School is not just a place for academic growth, but should also address character, social-emotional wellness, and life skills. Aligned with our mission to provide a predictable and nurturing environment, we support scholars in being self-directed and facilitate their success through school-wide practices, Eagle Habits, and a multi-tiered system of supports.
6. **Data Drives Decisions**: The stats on college opportunities for scholars from economically disadvantaged families show that only one in ten will graduate from college. Yet, we are relentlessly trying to improve those odds by using real-time, specific, and individualized data to design our daily instruction and school initiatives.
7. **Exemplary Teachers Get Exemplary Results**: Every classroom must be led by engaging, high-quality, strategically supported, and exemplary teachers. Therefore, we recruit, train, support, and retain the most sought-after teachers who will transform our scholars' lives.
8. **It Takes a Village**: We are grounded in and by our community. Therefore, we deeply respect, acknowledge, and welcome families as partners in ensuring every scholar's academic and leadership development.

# GENERAL SCHOOL INFORMATION

## ENROLLMENT POLICY

**Independence Preparatory Academy** is committed to enrolling and serving a diverse population of scholars. We strictly follow the provisions of the Alabama Constitution and all applicable federal civil rights laws, which prohibit discrimination based on race, national origin, gender, marital status, ethnicity, or disability. Every scholar at **iPrep** is welcomed, valued, and given equitable access to a high-quality education in a safe and inclusive environment.

All children having legal residence, as defined herein, within the state limits of Alabama and meeting the legal entrance age requirements shall be eligible to attend **Independence Preparatory Academy** as stipulated by **Section 16-6F-5** of the Alabama School Choice and Student Opportunity Act. First-time enrollees shall be required to furnish proof of residence and age. Residents who are five (5) years old on or before September 1 are eligible for kindergarten enrollment. Residents who are six (6) years old on or before September 1 are eligible for enrollment in the first grade.

**Independence Preparatory Academy** will accept applications annually during an open enrollment period and continuously maintain capacity in each grade level. Aligned with **Section 16-6F-5**, if the number of applicants exceeds capacity, **Independence Preparatory Academy** conducts a public lottery to ensure a random selection process places students into the school. Preference is given to:

1. Students residing within the Fairfield City Schools attendance zones
2. Students enrolled in the previous school year
3. Siblings of students enrolled in the last school year
4. Students of **iPrep** employees, the Board of Directors, and the founder aligned with the 10% of the total student population mandate

### Lottery Process

1. The following terms are defined as:
    a. All dates refer to the **close of business** on the date indicated.
    b. **Lottery** refers to the process whereby all eligible applicants are assigned a random number and sorted by grade in order of the randomly assigned number.
2. Only applications received before the enrollment deadline can participate in the lottery.
3. All applicants offered a seat shall be required to affirmatively respond to an offer for acceptance within the designated time. Those not responding (excluding declines) will be moved to a pool for the subsequent lottery.
4. If the number of applicants is less than the seats anticipated, no public lottery shall be conducted for that grade. All applicants shall be offered admission.
5. All registration offers shall be made in the order of the lottery results.

## NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

**Independence Preparatory Academy** does not discriminate based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or age in any of its programs, activities, or employment. It also provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

It is against the policy of the **Independence Preparatory Academy** Board of Directors to have different rules or regulations based on sex in employment, including recruitment, hiring classification, and other terms, conditions, or privileges of employment.

The Board, per Title IX (20 U.S.C. S1681, et seq.), strictly prohibits discrimination based on sex or gender in its programs, activities, or any employment matters. The prohibition includes sexual harassment based on sex and sexual assault, as defined by law and Board policy. Sexual harassment and sexual assault complaints should be filed and reviewed under the Board's sexual harassment policies (G-32, J-49). All other complaints under Title IX will be filed and reviewed according to the Board's general complaints and grievance procedures (G-34, J-41).

The Executive Director is authorized and directed to designate a Title IX Coordinator, whose duties will include, but not be limited to, receiving and responding to Title IX inquiries and complaints.

## MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT

Under the **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**, **Independence Preparatory Academy** ensures that all scholars experiencing homelessness have equal access to a free, appropriate public education. Homelessness should never be a barrier to enrollment, attendance, or success in school.

**Who Qualifies as Homeless?**

Scholars may be considered homeless without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes:

- Living in shelters, transitional housing, or motels
- Living in cars, parks, campgrounds, or public spaces not meant for housing
- Staying temporarily with others due to loss of housing or financial hardship
- Living in substandard housing without basic utilities
- Being an unaccompanied youth (not living with a parent or legal guardian)

**Rights of Homeless Scholars**

Scholars who qualify under McKinney-Vento have the right to:

- Enroll immediately, even without normally required documents (e.g., proof of residence, immunizations, school records)
- Attend their school of origin, if it is in their best interest, or enroll in the school closest to where they are currently living
- Receive free transportation to and from their school of origin if requested and feasible
- Access the same programs and services offered to all scholars, including school meals, tutoring, special education, gifted services, and extracurriculars
- Participate fully in school activities, free from stigma or discrimination

**Support and Contact**

If your family is experiencing homelessness or housing instability, please contact our Student Support Coordinator for support with enrollment, transportation, school supplies, and other services. All conversations are confidential. Our goal is to remove any barriers to your scholar's education.

## IMPORTANT SCHOOL CONTACTS

| TOPIC | CONTACT PERSON | CONTACT INFORMATION |
|---|---|---|
| **Attendance/Punctuality** | **Mrs. Rhondraya Streeter**<br>School Operations Manager | rhondraya.streeter@learnatiprep.com |
| **Health, Wellness, & Medication** | **Ms. Selena Miller**<br>School Nurse | selena.miller@learnatiprep.com |
| **Scholar Progress, Grades, Classroom Behavior** | **Your Scholar's Teacher** | ParentSquare |
| **Curriculum, Testing, Teacher Concerns** | **Mr. Malcolm Taylor**<br>Curriculum & Instruction Manager | malcolm.taylor@learnatiprep.com |
| **Schoolwide Discipline, Scholar Culture** | **Jamal Ware**<br>Scholar Culture Manager | jamal.ware@learnatiprep.com |
| **Special Education Services (IEP, 504, GATE)** | **Mr. Jamaris Coleman**<br>Learning Diversity Specialist | jamaris.coleman@learnatiprep.com |
| **Child Nutrition (Meals, Allergies)** | **Mrs. Rhondraya Streeter**<br>School Operations Manager | rhondraya.streeter@learnatiprep.com |
| **Volunteering, Partnerships, Donations** | **Mrs. Rhondraya Streeter**<br>School Operations Manager | rhondraya.streeter@learnatiprep.com |
| **Enrollment, Registration** | **Mrs. Rhondraya Streeter**<br>School Operations Manager | rhondraya.streeter@learnatiprep.com |
| **General Information** | **Ms. Sharrell Wilson**<br>Office Manager | sharrell.wilson@learnatiprep.com |
| **Escalated Concerns, Unresolved Issues** | **Dr. Calandra Sales**<br>Executive Director | calandra.sales@learnatiprep.com |

# 2026 - 2027 Academic Calendar | Independence Preparatory Academy

| JULY | | | | | | |
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| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | |

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| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 | | | | | |

| SEPTEMBER | | | | | | |
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| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | | | |

| OCTOBER | | | | | | |
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| NOVEMBER | | | | | | |
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| 29 | 30 | | | | | |

| DECEMBER | | | | | | |
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| JANUARY | | | | | | |
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| 24/31 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |

| FEBRUARY | | | | | | |
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| 28 | | | | | | |

| MARCH | | | | | | |
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| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
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| APRIL | | | | | | |
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| MAY | | | | | | |
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| JUNE | | | | | | |
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| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | | | |

| Holidays/Breaks | |
|---|---|
| July 3rd (observed) | Independence Day |
| September 7th | Labor Day |
| October 30th | Fall Intermission |
| November 11th | Veterans' Day |
| November 23rd - 27th | Thanksgiving Break |
| December 21st- January 1st | Winter Holiday Break |
| January 18th | MLK Jr. Day |
| February 15th | Presidents' Day |
| March 22nd - 26th | Spring Break |
| May 31st | Memorial Day |
| June 18th (observed) | Juneteenth |

| Teacher Professional Development | |
|---|---|
| July 27th - August 7th | Teacher SOAR Academy |
| October 12th | Fall Planning Day |
| January 4th | Winter Planning Day |
| March 15th | Spring Planning Day |
| May 24th | EOY Close-Out |

| Grading Periods | |
|---|---|
| Quarter 1 | August 10th - October 9th |
| Quarter 2 | October 13th - December 18th |
| Quarter 3 | January 5th - March 12th |
| Quarter 4 | March 16th - May 28th |

| Total Instructional/Work Days | |
|---|---|
| Students | 180 days |
| Teachers | 195 Days |

| Calendar Key |
|---|
| Teacher PD (Students Out) |
| First/Last Day of School |
| End of Grading Period |
| Holidays (Students/Teachers Out) |
| Report Cards/Progress Reports |
| Parent/Teacher Conferences |
| Weather Days |

February 12 and April 2 are designated as weather make-up days. If these days are not needed to make up instructional time due to school closure, they will be observed as school holidays.

# FAMILY AND SCHOOL AGREEMENT OF MUTUAL SUPPORT

**Independence Preparatory Academy** is grateful for the ambitious choice that its parents and guardians have made to enroll their scholars in our college and career preparatory environment. To provide that excellent education, we ask quite a bit of our scholars daily, such as their energized participation in a flexible learning environment, commitment to a positive school culture, and efforts to pursue excellence in academics and character outside the school.

We are honored to support our scholars when they are with us during the school day, but we know that support must come just as much from the home setting as it does from **iPrep** for our scholars to be in the best position to truly pursue success in college, careers, and life.

## Family Commitments

**For this reason, we ask our families to commit to the following guidelines to help us provide your scholar with the best education possible this year:**

### Attendance & Promotion

1. I commit to supporting **iPrep'**s rigorous academic program and high scholar behavior expectations.
2. I commit to ensuring my scholar arrives at school on time and in the proper uniform each day for a full day of learning. Exceptions are made if the scholar is sick or unable to participate in daily instruction due to a family emergency.

### Lifework and Academic Support

1. I commit to reviewing and monitoring my scholar's Lifework assignments, academic progress, and behavior report regularly.
2. I commit to ensuring a calm and quiet place for my scholar to complete Lifework and read each night.
3. I will sign my scholar's Lifework, daily behavior log, and/or weekly Eagle Reports, and support them when they need help and encouragement.
4. I commit to communicating and asking questions of iPrep when I need clarification about my scholar's educational experience.

### Behavior and Dress Code

1. I understand my scholar will have consequences and/or loss of privileges if my scholar does not comply with the rules and expectations of the school.
2. I understand my scholar's behavior will be managed through the MTSS behavior process, and a suspension may be issued for offenses outlined in our Code of Conduct.
3. I understand **iPrep** ensures a safe environment for all scholars, and bullying will not be tolerated in any form.
4. I understand my scholar will participate in a character development program.
5. I commit to ensuring my scholar is in the proper uniform each day.

### Family Support and Communication

1. I commit to communicating and working as a team to ensure my scholar excels academically and behaviorally. I will review and sign daily behavior logs, progress reports, report cards, and any correspondence sent home by the school.
2. I have read and understand the Code of Conduct.
3. I commit to giving my effort to these commitments and giving my scholar the opportunities they deserve and need.

## Student Commitments

**As co-creators of their educational experiences, we expect our scholars to honor these commitments:**

1. I understand the core values: Service, Optimism, Agency, Resilience, and Pride, and I will always do my best to exhibit them.
2. I commit to attending school daily unless I experience sickness or an emergency.
3. I commit to completing all my assignments excellently, always giving my best.
4. I commit to completing my Lifework every night. The work will be neat, placed in my folder, and submitted to my teacher daily.
5. I commit to adhering to the Eagle Code of Conduct at iPrep at all school functions.
6. I commit to following the **iPrep** uniform policy and dress code.
7. I commit to communicating regularly with my parents/guardians about my progress, including grades, assignments, goals, and behavior.
8. I have read and understand the Code of Conduct.
9. I commit to making my best effort to fulfill these commitments and give myself the opportunities I deserve and need.

## Independence Prep Commitments

**As a partner in your scholar's educational experiences, iPrep makes the following commitments:**

### High-Quality Instruction and Rigorous Academics

1. We commit to thoroughly preparing for each day by completing weekly prep, anticipating scholar misconceptions, and reviewing data for Tier I, II, and III instruction (MTSS).
2. We commit to continuous professional development and desire to refine practices to provide scholars with an excellent education.

### Respect and Equity

1. We commit to respecting every scholar and being responsive to their needs. We will ensure scholars always respect each other.
2. We commit to teaching **iPrep** values to develop each student's character. I commit to communicating with families on each scholar's progress toward our core values.
3. We commit to recognizing and rewarding scholars excelling through our program and providing interventions for those struggling.
4. We commit to providing a consequence for behaviors that warrant one, as outlined in our code of conduct.

### Homework (Lifework)

1. We commit to providing daily Lifework to reinforce new learning.
2. We commit to communicating with families if a scholar needs more support or fails to complete Lifework.

### Communication

1. We commit to communicating with families about each scholar's academic and behavioral progress regularly.
2. We commit to returning parent phone calls, emails, and conference requests promptly.

### Safety

1. We commit to providing a safe school environment that includes all scholars.
2. We commit to adhering to ADA compliance and regulations annotated in Alabama law regarding charter schools.
3. We commit to making our best effort to provide a high-quality education that gives all scholars opportunities, regardless of demographics.

# ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

Consistent attendance and punctuality are critical to a scholar's academic success and sense of belonging at **Independence Preparatory Academy**. Every minute of learning matters, and missing even a small portion of the day can impact a scholar's progress. We expect all scholars to be present and on time daily, building the habits that will prepare them for college, career, and life. At iPrep, we maintain a 97% or higher daily attendance rate, recognizing that strong attendance and punctuality are essential to academic success.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

State law requires all children between the ages of six and seventeen to attend school for the minimum number of days prescribed by the Alabama Department of Education. **Independence Preparatory Academy** fully complies with all state attendance laws and regulations.

### Attendance Communication

1. Parents or guardians must contact the attendance hotline at 205.898.7505 as early as possible, but no later than 8:00 AM, if their child will be absent for any reason. Advance written notification is welcome and appreciated whenever possible.
2. If a scholar is absent by 8:15 AM and the school has not been notified, the parent or guardian will be contacted at home and/or work.
3. Absence notifications may be made by phone call, voicemail, or written note, and must include the scholar's full name, your relationship to the scholar, the reason for the absence, and the date(s) of the absence.

## EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

For an absence to be considered excused, scholars must return to school with a written note explaining the reason for the absence **within three (3) business days**. Excused absences may be supported by a parent's or doctor's notes; however, parent notes are limited to **five (5) per academic year**.

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) defines the following reasons as acceptable for an excused absence:

- Personal illness of the scholar
- Death in the immediate family
- Legal quarantine or subpoena
- Scholars receiving healthcare or hospitalized
- Official religious holidays
- Military deployment date of a scholar's parent

**Final approval of all excused absences rests at the discretion of the Executive Director.**

### Absences for Medical Reasons

If a scholar misses more than ten days for medical reasons per semester, the parent or legal guardian may be required to provide written medical verification for subsequent absences from a licensed physician stating that the absence

was a medical necessity. If written medical verification is not received, the absence will be unexcused unless the absence is due to excused reasons other than illness.

### Non-School Sponsored Events

Scholars may receive an excused absence for participation in a non-school-sponsored event or activity at the discretion of the Executive Director. To request this type of absence:

1. Parents or guardians must submit a Formal Request for Excused Absence Form to the School Operations Manager **at least seven (7) business days** before the anticipated absence.
2. The School Operations Manager will review the request and notify the family in writing of the decision.

To ensure that scholars receive the learning and support necessary for success, the school may limit the number of non-school-related activities approved as excused absences. **No more than ten (10) absences** annually will be excused for participation in such activities.

### Frequent Unexcused Absences

Any absence that does not meet the above criteria for excused absences will be considered unexcused. Per **Ala. Code §16-28-15**, "every parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of any child required to attend public school, private school, or church school, shall as soon as practical explain the cause of any absence of the child under his control or charge which was without permission of the teacher. Failure to furnish such explanation shall be admissible as evidence of such child being a truant with the consent and connivance of the person in control or charge of the child unless such person can show to the reasonable satisfaction of the court that he had no knowledge of such absence and that he had been diligent in his efforts to secure the attendance of such child."

**Independence Preparatory Academy** follows all state-mandated protocols regarding unexcused absences:

- **Three Unexcused Absences in a Semester:** Parents will receive an Early Warning Letter indicating the school's concern regarding the student's missed instructional time and the potential impact of continued unexcused absences.
- **Five Unexcused Absences in a Semester:** Parents or guardians will be required to attend a mandatory meeting with the School Operations Manager to discuss the impact of these absences and develop an attendance intervention plan. Failure to attend this conference may result in a truancy complaint against the parent or the student under **Ala. Code §16-28-12(c)**.
- **Seven Unexcused Absences in a School Year:** The school must legally report the student to the Executive Director **at seven unexcused absences**. The School Operations Manager will investigate and may initiate a formal truancy process through the Juvenile Court system. A more intensive attendance plan will be created to address the issue.
- **Nine Unexcused Absences in a School Year:** The student is considered habitually truant **at nine unexcused absences**. The School Operations Manager will meet with the family to determine the next steps, including additional interventions or legal action.

### Excessive Absences

**Excessive absences**, whether excused or unexcused, may be considered in **promotion decisions**. Retention due to missed instructional time is at the school's discretion.

If a student is absent for the **first five (5) days of school**, or has **ten (10) consecutive unexcused absences** during the year with no successful contact from the family, the scholar may be considered withdrawn and lose their seat at **Independence Preparatory Academy**.

### Make-Up Work Policy

Scholars can make up tests or assignments missed during an excused absence. It is the scholar's responsibility to complete all missed work promptly. If your scholar is absent, make-up assignments will be provided through the Office Manager.

Scholars with unexcused absences are not entitled to credit for tests or assignments missed during the absence unless authorized by the Executive Director or designee.

## PUNCTUALITY AND TARDINESS

At **Independence Preparatory Academy**, we believe punctuality is more than just being on time—it's a key life skill and a sign of respect. Just as staff are expected to arrive on time and be fully prepared to serve scholars, families play a crucial role in ensuring that scholars begin each day ready to learn.

From the moment a scholar walks through our doors, learning begins. Morning responsibilities and brainwork are provided before and after breakfast to help scholars transition into a focused, productive day. Late arrivals disrupt the classroom and cause scholars to miss valuable instruction.

Scholars arriving at or after 8:05 AM are considered **tardy**. Parents or Guardians must escort late scholars to the Main Office to sign in before they proceed to their classroom.

Per our attendance policy, **three late arrivals equal one unexcused absence.**

### Consequences for Repeated Tardiness

- **Three Tardies in a Month:** Three tardies within a month are considered serious concerns. The school will send a **Tardy Concern Notice** to families to address the issue early and prevent it from escalating further.
- **Five Tardies in a Month:** Five tardies in one month represent a severe concern. In this case, the School Operations Manager will contact the parent or guardian to discuss the pattern of lateness. Together, they will develop an **"On Time" Plan** to support improved punctuality.
- **Nine Tardies in a Semester:** If a scholar is late nine times a semester, it is considered a significant issue. The tardiness will be documented on the scholar's report card. During the semester's parent-teacher conference, the School Operations Manager will meet with the family to review and revise the **"On Time" Plan** to ensure progress.

## ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

**iPrep** opens its doors at 8:00 AM each school day—no earlier. Scholars may begin arriving at this time to eat breakfast, complete Brainwork, and engage in independent reading. Scholars may not enter the building before 8:00 AM unless a

prior appointment has been arranged with a specific staff member. Early drop-offs are not permitted for the safety and security of all scholars.

Scholars are dismissed daily at 2:45 PM. Parents and guardians who arrive before dismissal must wait outside the school building until scholars are dismissed. If parents or guardians need to speak with a teacher or conduct any other school-related business, this should occur after dismissal, when staff are available and instructional time is not disrupted. All visitors must first report to the Main Office to sign in and may be asked to schedule an appointment to ensure the appropriate staff member is available. Unscheduled visits during instructional hours will not be permitted.

### Dismissal Tags

Dismissal tags are critical to ensuring scholars are dismissed safely and efficiently. Each family will receive two dismissal tags at the start of the school year or upon enrollment at no cost. Tags must be displayed clearly in your vehicle during carline dismissal. Duplicating tags is strictly prohibited. Unauthorized copies—including digital versions—will not be accepted for pickup.

If you forget your dismissal tag, you may present a photo ID up to twice weekly. This should not become a routine alternative, as it slows dismissal. If more than two ID-based pickups are needed weekly, you must purchase a replacement dismissal tag. If a new tag is required, you must request a new one in the main office and **s**ubmit a $5.00 replacement fee.

## EARLY DISMISSAL

Scholars may be dismissed from school before the end of the school day, provided that the following conditions are met:

1. The reason for leaving school is appropriate; the Executive Director or his or her designee will make such a determination.
2. The parent or legal guardian provides written notice to the school. Such notice should be given at or near the beginning of the school day during which the absence will occur.
3. A scholar is picked up by his or her parent, guardian, or documented pick-up person at the school office.

### Illness

If a student becomes ill before the end of the school day, he or she may be dismissed early per the following procedures:

1. The school shall verify by telephone that the student's parent or guardian is aware of the student's dismissal and can take responsibility for his or her supervision.
2. His or her parent or guardian must pick up the student at the office.

### Parent Designee

An individual who is not the parent or legal guardian of a scholar or a parent who no longer retains legal custody of a student may not verify the early dismissal of said scholar and will not be permitted to pick up the scholar unless the school receives written permission from the legal custodian of the scholar or the leader takes appropriate action to ensure that the legal custodian authorizes such dismissal from school.

### Early Dismissal Procedures

1. Due to our dismissal operations, no early dismissals will be granted after 2:00 PM Monday through Friday.
2. Parents or guardians must sign out scholars in the Main Office before departure. Dismissals will not be honored without a parent or guardian present.
3. Proof of ID is required for any individual picking up a scholar. Only individuals listed in the scholar's approved pickup list can sign out the scholar.
4. Appointments such as doctor or dentist visits should be scheduled outside school hours whenever possible.
5. If a scholar is dismissed without prior notification, their Lifework folder may not be updated and ready. However, families may return to the school after dismissal to retrieve the folder.
6. Any scholar present for less than 3.5 hours of instructional time will be marked absent for the entire day.

We urge families to plan ahead and respect these policies to ensure consistency, safety, and the uninterrupted education of all iPrep scholars.

## ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

To ensure a smooth and safe arrival and dismissal process, all families must follow the designated carline route and the instructions below. These procedures are designed to provide an efficient experience while prioritizing scholar safety and minimizing neighborhood disruption.

#### Step 1: Carline Entry Point

All vehicles must enter the carline via Lloyd Noland Parkway, approaching the school from the east side. Please ensure you are in the rightmost lane and remain in a single line.

#### Step 2: Turn Right into the Designated Carline Zone

Upon reaching the school entrance (Point #2 on the map), turn right into the carline queue that runs along the designated lane adjacent to the school building. Staff will be present to guide you.

#### Step 3: Scholar Pick-Up Area

Proceed forward and pull into the designated loading zone (Point #3). Please remain in your vehicle. A staff member will escort your scholar to and from your car. Display your carline tag visibly on your dashboard to help staff quickly identify your child.

#### Step 4: Exit the Campus

After your scholar is safely in the vehicle or safely dropped off, continue to 44th Street and turn right (Point #4). This exit ensures a smooth flow of traffic and minimizes congestion on school grounds and nearby roads.

#### Important Reminders:

1. Remain in your vehicle at all times. Walk-ups are not permitted during arrival or dismissal.
2. Follow staff instructions and signage for everyone's safety.
3. Always be courteous and patient during the arrival and dismissal window.

1
Independence Preparatory Academy
Lloyd Noland
Pkwy
2
Lloyd Noland Pkwy
3
4
44TH ST

# THE iPREP LEARNING EXPERIENCE

## CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENTS

**Independence Preparatory Academy** is committed to providing every scholar with a high-quality, rigorous, engaging learning experience. To this end, we have selected proven curricular programs and developmentally appropriate assessments that align with state standards and support deep learning across all subjects. Our curriculum and assessments help us fulfill our promise to develop independent thinkers, strong readers, and problem solvers, and equip scholars to lead lives of purpose.

### High-Quality, Rigorous Curriculum

We use research-backed and content-rich programs that build foundational skills and challenge scholars to think critically. Our core curricular resources were chosen because they align with Alabama standards, support culturally relevant and rigorous instruction, and include tools to differentiate learning.

- **Amplify CKLA** for early literacy and phonics is designed to build strong readers and thinkers through rich texts and knowledge-building content.
- **HMH Into Math** supports deep mathematical conceptual understanding through problem-solving and real-world application.
- **STEMScopes** is **iPrep**'s chosen science curriculum, providing young scholars with a strong foundation in scientific concepts, vocabulary, and inquiry skills.
- **Charter Strong** for social-emotional learning ensures scholars develop curiosity, character, and emotional intelligence.

### Standards-Aligned Assessments

At iPrep, assessments are not administered for the sake of testing—they are purposeful tools used to guide instruction, support scholar growth, and ensure mastery of essential skills. We use assessments to:

1. Monitor scholar learning and ensure mastery of core skills
2. Identify areas where additional support is needed
3. Celebrate academic growth and tailor instruction to each scholar's needs

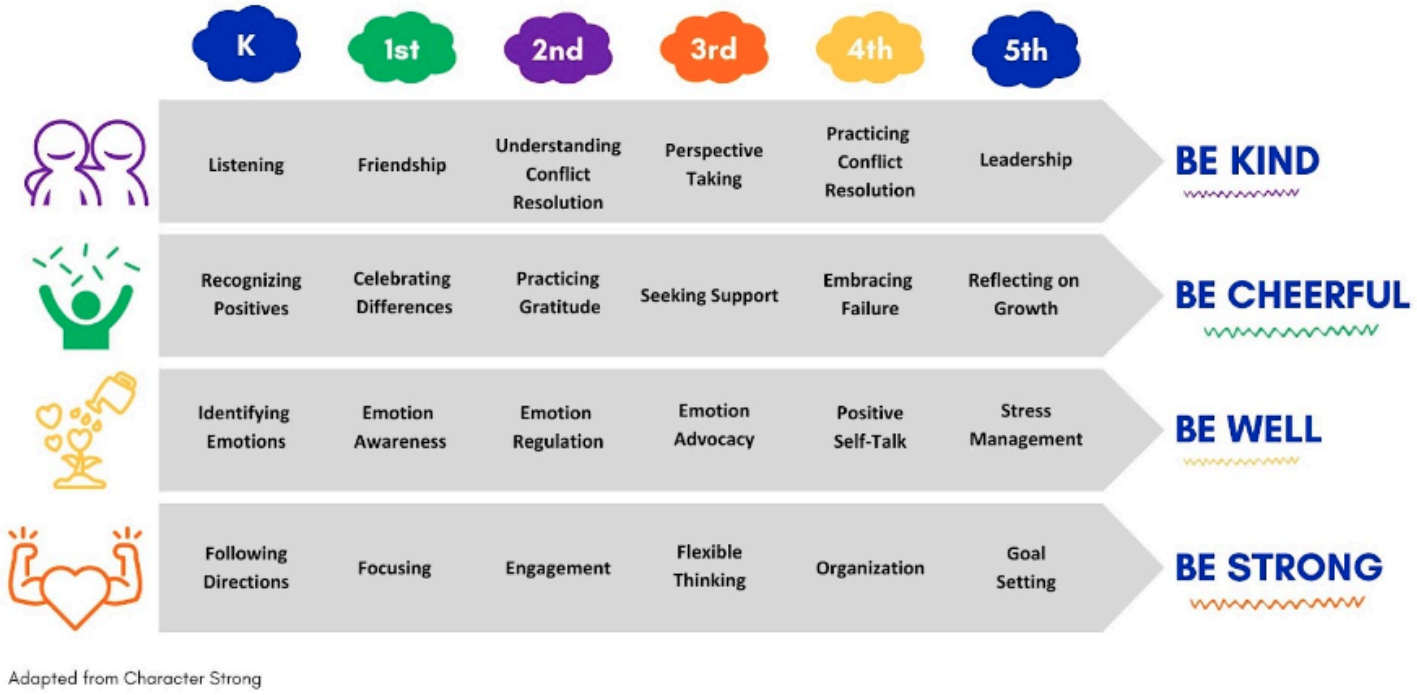
Our assessments are developmentally appropriate, aligned to our curriculum, and designed to inform instruction. In addition to traditional classroom assessment measures, we use a standard assessment system to determine scholars' reading levels. DIBELS will be administered three times a year in grades K-2. This assessment gives teachers and parents important information regarding reading fluency, phonics development, and comprehension. These results will determine the reading grade level noted on the report cards. Mastery checks in reading, writing, and math are administered four times a year. The i-Ready Diagnostic is administered 3 times annually, in the fall, winter, and spring. Families will receive regular updates on scholar progress through report cards, conferences, and ongoing communication.

## CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EAGLE HABITS

**Eagle Habits** help guide scholars to grow into kind, capable, and responsible individuals. These habits are closely tied to our SOAR with Pride values and the qualities we hope all **iPrep** graduates will develop.

Eagle Habits teaches scholars how to be good citizens by showing empathy, respecting others, and positively impacting their community. They also encourage strong study habits, a love of learning, and a commitment to doing their best in school. Most importantly, Eagle Habits help scholars build character by promoting honesty, responsibility, and integrity. By practicing these habits every day, our scholars not only grow academically, they also develop the confidence and independence needed to succeed in school and in life.

## Eagle Habits Learning Progression



### Eagle Habits in Action

Scholars engage 30-45 minutes weekly of formal instruction of Eagle Habits during Time to S.O.A.R. Daily lessons are structured to build life skills and character development. Each module centers around one Eagle Habit and allows opportunities to practice and apply skills and traits beyond the lessons.

Scholars will earn Eagle Habit stickers after showing evidence of each trait throughout the year. This evidence is based on observable indicators outlined in each module. **Scholars must master at least 10 out of 12 Eagle Habits each year.**

## COLLEGE AND CAREER EXPLORATION

**Eagle Quests** give scholars exciting, hands-on opportunities to explore the world beyond the classroom. These learning expeditions introduce scholars to various careers and college pathways while encouraging them to think deeply about their interests, strengths, and future goals. Through each Quest, scholars work toward creating a final product or performance that reflects what they've learned. The process builds independence, creativity, and self-awareness—not just academic knowledge. While we value high expectations and strong work, the primary goal of an Eagle Quest is exposure to new ideas and possibilities that can shape a scholar's future.

- In grades K–2, Eagle Quests focus on career awareness, helping young scholars begin thinking about the world of work and what excites them.
- In grades 3–8, the focus shifts to career exploration, giving scholars more clarity about possible future paths and helping them connect their purpose to long-term goals.

In addition to larger Quests, scholars also participate in **Career Choice Blocks**—smaller, interest-based learning opportunities that allow them to discover new passions, strengthen leadership skills, and build a sense of community. By participating in Eagle Quests, iPrep scholars gain the confidence, curiosity, and real-world insight needed to begin shaping the life they want to lead.

# LIFEWORK

Lifework (**iPrep**'s version of homework) is a vital extension of our academic program and reinforces what scholars learn in the classroom. At **iPrep**, scholars must complete Lifework every night, including weekends, holidays, and vacations. This daily practice builds independence, responsibility, and strong academic habits.

## Lifework Expectations

- All scholars will receive an iPrep Lifework Folder, which includes nightly assignments and a Reading Log.
- Scholars must complete 20 minutes of reading every night and log it with a parent or guardian's signature.
- Completed Lifework should be neat, thorough, and aligned with **iPrep**'s high standards for effort and presentation.
- Lifework Folders must be turned in each morning upon arrival in the classroom.

## Lifework Accountability

- Parents/guardians will be notified if Lifework is missing, incomplete, consistently late, or poor quality.
- Lifework completion will be tracked and reflected in progress reports and report cards as part of a scholar's academic grade.
- Participation in extracurricular activities is contingent upon consistent completion of Lifework.
- Repeated or excessive incompletion may result in a meeting with the scholar's teacher and loss of certain privileges.

## Lifework Roles and Responsibilities

### Teachers will:

- Assign meaningful, purposeful tasks aligned to daily instruction
- Record Lifework in the scholar's daily log
- Provide a variety of assignment types
- Use Lifework to check for understanding
- Offer timely feedback on completed assignments

### Students will:

- Show parents or guardians the daily Lifework Log to keep them informed about assignments
- Complete all assignments on time, with accuracy and neatness
- Make up any missed assignments after an absence
- Read every day at home
- Always put forth their best effort

### Parents will:

- Create a quiet space and set aside time each day for your scholar to complete homework
- Check the Lifework Log daily, review assignments, and help your scholar as needed
- Make sure all work is finished and meets iPrep's expectations
- Read with or to your scholar for 20 minutes each night and sign the reading log
- Stay in touch with your scholar's teacher if help is needed

# SCHOLAR PERFORMANCE

## Mastery-Based Grading

**Independence Preparatory Academy** uses **mastery-based grading** because learning is about growth, not just earning points. Our mastery-based grading approach reflects what scholars know and can do related to specific learning goals. It is grounded in clearly defined performance standards and proficiency-based expectations. Scholars are given access to grading criteria and learning targets in advance, so they know what success looks like from the start. Grades reflect academic achievement only—not behavior, effort, or participation—and place the most significant weight on a scholar's most recent and consistent demonstration of understanding.

Scholars' grades may look different on their report cards compared to methods you experienced in the past. At **iPrep**, grading reports focus on:

1. Showing scholar performance over time
2. Providing feedback on strengths and areas of growth
3. Measuring scholars against Alabama's academic standards
4. Reflecting on the scholar's level of performance and progress toward meeting standards

### Mastery Levels on Grading Reports

Scholars' progress toward mastery of standards will be reported on standards-based grade reports using the established grading scale.

**4** - Demonstrates extensive mastery of concepts and skills within taught standards at this time
**3** - Demonstrates sufficient mastery of concepts and skills within taught standards at this time
**2** - Demonstrates partial mastery of concepts and skills within taught standards at this time
**1** - Demonstrates emerging mastery of concepts and skills within taught standards at this time

## Scholar Promotion and Retention Policy

**Independence Preparatory Academy** believes that promoting a scholar who has not mastered the content in all classes contributes to that scholar's continued struggle in future grades. Therefore, scholars demonstrating **sufficient or extensive mastery** of grade-level concepts and skills outlined in our mastery-based grading process are promoted to the next grade.

At the end of the 2nd 9-week grading period, teachers notify families of scholars maintaining partial or emerging mastery for the first and second 9-week periods of the need for additional support to ensure scholar promotion. In this event, parent-teacher conferences in the Spring are to define other structures and supports to move scholars closer to mastery.

When considering retention, the scholar support team, including general education teachers, school leadership, the scholar, and their family, meets to ensure all efforts to provide interventions and services to support the scholar in meeting the benchmarks required to transition to the next grade successfully have been exhausted. The scholar support team must unanimously agree that retention is the best option for the scholar's development.

If retention is considered, the scholar support team focuses on the following:

1. Scholars mastering less than 50% of the academic benchmarks for their grades

2. Scholars not reading on grade level by the end of the academic year, or not reading more than half a year below grade level, according to the final assessment results
3. Scholars who accumulate more than nine absences during the school year

If a student's family disagrees with the school's retention decision, the family may appeal the decision to the Executive Director for further review. Following the review process, the Executive Director will make the final determination regarding the student's grade-level placement. Families may be required to sign documentation acknowledging the school's recommendation and any academic concerns discussed during the review process.

### Progress Reports, Report Cards, and Conferences

At **iPrep**, strong communication between school and home is essential to every scholar's success. We are committed to informing families about their scholar's academic progress, behavior, and overall development. Through regular updates, progress reports, and parent-teacher conferences, we ensure that families have the tools and information they need to support learning at home.

Teachers and staff at **Independence Preparatory Academy** are committed to keeping families informed about each scholar's academic progress and behavioral growth. We use SOAR Reports, mid-quarter progress reports, and mastery-based report cards to provide clear, ongoing educational and character performance communication. Report cards are issued at the end of each grading period and must be signed and returned to the school to ensure families have reviewed them. A parent-teacher conference is required if a scholar is at risk of academic failure in any subject. During this meeting, the teacher and family will collaborate to review data, identify challenges, and develop a targeted support plan to help the scholar get back on track.

## SCHOOLWIDE REWARDS AND INCENTIVES

At **Independence Preparatory Academy**, scholars earn rewards for demonstrating excellent behavior, academic growth, and good citizenship. Our end-of-the-year awards ceremony celebrates scholars and families for achievements throughout the year, including perfect attendance, high honor roll, honor roll, and core value awards.

### Daily Praise/Stickers/Notes/Eagle Bucks

Teachers will recognize students who follow the code of conduct by giving praise and sometimes providing students with stickers, notes, or Eagle Bucks.

### Eagle Jubilee Awards

Eagle Jubilee celebrates how we live our core values and perform academically. We intentionally recognize scholars and classes living our SOAR with Pride values through academic and behavioral excellence to perpetuate positive behavior and alignment with our school culture. **iPrep** scholars gather weekly on our early release Friday for a time of ritual and connectedness. Eagle Jubilee allows for celebration, zest, and recognition of achievement as aligned with our core values. Scholars and classes are rewarded for displaying Eagle Habits, our core values, and meeting academic goals.

- **iPrep Stars:** Awarded students aligning behaviors to Eagle Habits and our core values
- **Top Nest:** Awarded to the Nest with the highest total of Eagle Bucks for the week
- **Goal Diggers:** Awarded to students meeting reading and math goals for the week

- **Highflyers:** Awarded to one class per grade level for the highest average on mastery checks in reading and math

## Eagles Of The Month

**Eagle of the Month** is one of iPrep's highest scholar recognitions. Presented during the final Eagle Jubilee of each month, this award honors scholars who consistently demonstrate academic achievement, responsibility, strong attendance, and scholarly behavior.

To earn **Eagle of the Month**, a scholar must meet all the following criteria during the month:

1. Demonstrate proficiency in reading and mathematics.
2. Have no more than one excused absence.
3. Have no more than two tardies or early dismissals.
4. Demonstrate scholarly behavior every school day.
5. Complete at least 90% of assigned LifeWork.

Teachers and school leaders review academic, attendance, behavior, and LifeWork records to confirm eligibility. Scholars who meet the criteria are celebrated during Eagle Jubilee and recognized as examples of what it means to SOAR with Pride.

Eligibility is reviewed fresh each month, giving every scholar a new opportunity to earn this recognition. Families can support scholars by encouraging daily attendance, punctuality, consistent LifeWork completion, academic effort, and choices that reflect iPrep's expectations.

## Incentives

**iPrep** provides extra-curricular activities for scholars, including Identity Days, SWAG days, and guest speakers. These activities are open for the participation of all scholars, and there are no criteria for participation. Monthly extracurricular activities, including field trips, are incentive-based and require scholars to meet criteria expectations for homework completion, daily, on-time attendance, and behavior. These extracurricular activities reward scholars for their hard work and compliance with our expectations and policies. We provide the criteria window (usually a two-week timeframe) and expectations for the upcoming incentive to families in advance every month.

Parents will be notified of the criteria before the window starts. Parents will also receive a notification regarding whether their scholar may or may not participate once the window closes. Should your scholar not earn an extracurricular activity, and it is scheduled while school is in session, the scholar will still be required to be in school, as school activities will still be taking place. Failure to attend school will result in losing the privilege to participate in the next extracurricular activity.

# BEHAVIOR, BELONGING, AND EXPECTATIONS

## SCHOOL CULTURE AND EXPECTATIONS

**iPrep**'s school culture promotes learning that honors and includes each scholar's lived experiences while providing the freedom to explore interests and passions to master learning standards. In alignment with our mission and vision, we collaboratively create and sustain a predictable and nurturing environment rooted in our **SOAR with Pride** values of **Service**, **Optimism**, **Agency**, **Resilience**, and **Pride**.

- **Service**: I use my time and talents to improve my school, home, and community.
- **Optimism**: I try my best, even when it is difficult, because I know I can learn and grow.
- **Agency**: I am in charge of my learning and success.
- **Resilience**: I keep trying and learn from my mistakes.
- **Pride**: I believe in myself and celebrate my accomplishments.

Our core values are more than words on a page—they guide how we learn, lead, and interact daily. These values shape the culture of our school and set the foundation for academic success, strong character, and personal growth. By living our core values, scholars learn to make thoughtful choices, contribute to their community, and pursue excellence with integrity.

At **iPrep**, scholars are given more opportunities to connect their positive choices with success, helping them understand how they show up each day impacts their growth and the community around them. To achieve this, we provide the following support for all scholars:

1. **Morning Meeting:** At the start of the school year, all scholars are assigned to a Nest (homeroom) supported by classroom teachers and/or interventionists, called Nest Leaders. Nest Leaders develop close, motivation-driven relationships with their Eagles throughout the school year.
2. **Closing Circle:** The closing circle brings a peaceful end to the day. For 15 minutes, scholars reflect on their daily goals and celebrate their learning and success. Then give shout-outs to teachers and other scholars for displaying core values or positively impacting their day. This intentional time to reflect allows scholars the space with guardrails to make decisions to pursue their goals.
3. **Weekly Goal-Setting and Eagle Jubilee:** Scholars are instructed to set goals for themselves with the guidance of their Nest Leader. Our PBIS system rewards scholars for hitting these goals and is publicly celebrated during morning meetings and Eagle Jubilee. Goals are focused on academic and behavioral success and should provide a structure for our scholars to articulate their accomplishments positively to our school community.
4. **Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports:** The **iPrep** PBIS system is a class and school-wide positive incentive system. All classes have multiple opportunities for our scholars to demonstrate our core values based on their individual and collective choices. Teachers measure scholar performance in each core value, award Eagle Bucks, and discuss with scholars how they either showed or failed to show each core value at the end of every period. Nest leaders keep track of the total of Eagle Bucks rewarded to their Nest per week for group rewards and incentives at Friday Eagle Jubilee.

# EAGLE PBIS SYSTEM

At **iPrep**, we believe every scholar can learn, grow, and lead. Our Eagle PBIS System provides a consistent, positive, and restorative approach to behavior across all classrooms and school settings. PBIS stands for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.

The system is designed to create a safe, respectful, and engaging environment where scholars learn to make responsible choices, repair mistakes, and successfully rejoin the learning community.

## Our Schoolwide Expectations

Scholars are explicitly taught to be:

- **Ready:** I come prepared to learn.
- **Respectful:** I value myself, others, and our school.
- **Responsible:** I make good choices and take ownership of my actions.
- **Safe:** I protect myself and others.

Teachers model and practice these expectations during classroom lessons, transitions, arrival, dismissal, meals, and other schoolwide routines.

## Recognizing Positive Behavior

Teachers intentionally notice and celebrate scholars who demonstrate **iPrep**'s expectations and core values. Scholars may earn **Eagle Bucks** when they show readiness, respect, responsibility, safety, academic effort, resilience, leadership, or successful restoration after a mistake.

Scholars may save and spend their **Eagle Bucks** on approved rewards and experiences. Eagle Bucks also support classroom and schoolwide celebrations, including recognition during Eagle Jubilee.

## Responding to Behavior

When behavior concerns occur, staff use a consistent behavior-response system. Whenever possible, behavior is managed by the classroom teacher through:

1. Teaching or reteaching the expectation.
2. Providing a calm, brief redirect.
3. Offering appropriate choices.
4. Providing time and space to reflect and regulate.
5. Helping the scholar repair harm or missed learning.
6. Welcoming the scholar back into the classroom community.

If a behavior continues, staff may use a teacher conference, family partnership, a buddy-classroom reset, or administrative support. Serious behaviors involving immediate safety concerns are referred directly to school leadership.

### Restoration and Re-entry

Mistakes are treated as opportunities to learn. Scholars may be asked to reflect, practice the expected behavior, repair harm, complete missed learning, or participate in a restorative conversation.

After the scholar has completed the appropriate response, staff help the scholar rejoin the classroom with dignity and a fresh opportunity to succeed. The goal is accountability, restored relationships, and continued access to learning.

### Family Partnership

Families are essential partners in scholar success. Teachers will communicate with families when a behavior pattern develops, learning is being affected, or additional support may be needed. School leadership may contact families regarding serious incidents, safety concerns, formal administrative actions, or additional interventions.

Families can support the system by discussing the four schoolwide expectations at home, celebrating positive choices, and partnering with staff when a scholar needs additional guidance.

Together, we teach, prevent, reinforce, restore, and help every Eagle rejoin—because every scholar deserves the opportunity to soar.

## IPREP'S SCHOLAR CODE OF CONDUCT: THE EAGLE CODE

The **Independence Preparatory Academy** Scholar Code of Conduct, known as **The Eagle Code**, is based on responsibilities, rights, violations, and sanctions outlined below.

### Attendance

State law requires all persons between the ages of six and seventeen to attend school for a minimum number of scholastic days prescribed by the State Board of Education. **Independence Preparatory Academy** fully complies with all laws regarding school attendance.

**Scholar Responsibilities:**

- To abide by laws and **Independence Preparatory Academy** rules and policies regarding attendance.
- To be punctual and regular in attendance.
- To promptly request and complete make-up assignments for excused absences or tardiness.

**Scholar Rights:**

- To be informed of **iPrep** rules and policies regarding school attendance, including policies and regulations regarding absences, tardiness, truancies and related programs, checkouts, make-up work, and school-sponsored activities.
- To be provided with make-up assignments for excused absences or tardiness.

### Respect For Person, Privacy, And Property

**Scholar Responsibilities:**

- To abide by fundamental principles of honesty and ethics.

- To abide by laws, Board of Directors, and school rules and policies regarding respect for persons, privacy, and property.
- To respect the recognized privacy rights of others.
- To attend school and related activities without bringing items prohibited by law or **Independence Preparatory Academy** policy, or which detract from the educational process.
- To respect the property rights of those at school and the general public.

**Scholar Rights:**

- To be informed of laws and **Independence Preparatory Academy** rules and policies regarding respect for persons, privacy, and property.
- To retain the privacy of personal possessions on his/her person, in cubbies/lockers, or vehicles, unless school personnel have reasonable suspicion to believe the scholar possesses any item prohibited by law or **iPrep** policy.

## Knowledge And Observation Of Rules Of Conduct

**Scholar Responsibilities:**

- To abide by laws and **Independence Preparatory Academy** rules and policies regarding rules of conduct.
- To document receipt of the Scholar Code of Conduct with his/her signature.

**Scholar Rights:**

- To be informed annually of laws and **Independence Preparatory Academy** rules and policies regarding rules of conduct.
- To be informed of the specific grounds for the violation(s) of **iPrep**'s Scholar Code of Conduct.

## The Right To Learn

**Scholar Responsibilities:**

- To abide by laws and **Independence Preparatory Academy** rules and policies regarding the right to learn.
- To take advantage of appropriate opportunities provided for learning.
- To avoid hindering the teaching process.
- To seek assistance, if needed, to aid learning.
- To obey rules regarding attendance, conduct, free speech, student publications, assembly, privacy, and participation in school programs and activities.

**Scholar Rights:**

- To be informed of laws and **Independence Preparatory Academy** rules and policies regarding the right to learn.
- To be provided a safe school environment free of illegal drugs, alcohol, or weapons.
- To be provided appropriate instructors, instruction, materials, and equipment to take advantage of the opportunity to learn.
- To be provided with the opportunity to express concerns regarding the school's operation.

## Free Speech

**Scholar Responsibilities:**

- To abide by law and **Independence Preparatory Academy** rules and policies regarding free speech.
- To be respectful of the views of others.

**Scholar Rights:**

- To be informed of laws and **Independence Preparatory Academy** rules and policies regarding free speech.
- To express disagreement constructively, taking into account the rights of others.

## Scholar Publications

**Scholar Responsibilities:**

- To abide by laws and **Independence Preparatory Academy** rules and policies regarding scholar publications.
- To communicate in a respectful manner consistent with good education practices.
- To see accurate and complete information on the topics approved for publication.
- To observe the accepted rules for responsible journalism under the guidance of the **iPrep** staff.

**Scholar Rights:**

- To be informed of **Independence Preparatory Academy** rules and policies regarding scholar publications.
- To participate, as part of the educational process, in the development and/or distribution of scholarly or school publications consistent with that educational process.

## Assembly

**Scholar Responsibilities:**

- To abide by laws and **Independence Preparatory Academy** rules and policies regarding assembly.
- To seek approval, plan, and conduct meetings consistent with **iPrep** rules.

**Scholar Rights:**

- To be informed of laws and **Independence Preparatory Academy** rules and policies regarding assembly.
- To assemble lawfully for a lawful purpose with prior approval by school officials.

## Participation In School Programs And Activities

**Scholar Responsibilities:**

- To abide by laws and **Independence Preparatory Academy** rules and policies regarding school programs and activities.
- To be courteous and responsible at all school programs and activities.
- To complete assignments related to his/her participation in school programs and activities.

**Scholar Rights:**

- To be informed of laws and **Independence Preparatory Academy** rules and policies regarding school programs and activities.
- To develop or participate in scholar programs and activities consistent with **iPrep** policies.
- To seek office in any scholar organization.

## Classification of Violations and Sanctions

Scholars are expected to always maintain the **Independence Preparatory Academy** Scholar Code of Conduct, known as the ***Eagle Code,*** when in contact with school grounds, staff, or partners. This could include during the school day, school-sponsored activities and trips, all-school events, or any time off school grounds that substantially disrupts the learning environment. Enforcement of the Eagle Code is based on a framework of progressive discipline. Specifically, minor infractions result in less severe consequences, while more significant infractions result in more severe consequences. Furthermore, first-time infractions result in less severe consequences, while repeated infractions result in more severe consequences. Students are expected to always respond respectfully to the authority and direction of the school staff.

The **Eagle Code** outlines the tiers of infractions that violate our behavioral expectations and the corresponding consequences that result. Students who violate the **Eagle Code** face a precise series of consequences with appropriately laddered steps of school responses. We have four tiers for infractions that students may commit in violation of our behavior system:

**Tier 0:** Behavior Addressed Through Teacher Management Strategies (Minor Infractions)
**Tier 1:** Core Value Violations (Moderate Infractions)
**Tier 2:** Conference Level Infractions/Repeated Tier 1
**Tier 3:** Severe Infractions

| **Tier 0 – Behavior Addressed Through Teacher Management Strategies (Minor Infractions)** | |
|---|---|
| **Infractions** | **Consequences** |
| Not actively participating in class; Not following directions after teacher; intentional disruption of class; not exhibiting core values; violations of school rules; out of the seat without permission; tardy to class; out of uniform; not tracking the teacher; incomplete homework; talking out of turn | Teachers enforce consistent classroom consequences and use consistent management techniques for infractions of classroom expectations. These consequences are explained to families during Family Orientation Sessions and include verbal or written warnings, a timeout, a seat change within the classroom, loss of Eagle Bucks, written notice home, or loss of privileges, including but not limited to scholars sitting silently or away from their peers during class or during snack time or lunch; participating in detention, either during or outside of school hours; and missing school events, trips, or activities. |
| **Tier 1 – Core Value Violations (Moderate Infractions)**<br>***These offenses are referred to the Culture & Instructional Manager*** | |
| **Infractions** | **Consequences** |
| Disrespect of an adult, including rolling eyes, sucking teeth, or other such body language, defiance, or | If a scholar commits a moderate infraction of our expectations and core values, the scholar may receive |

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| rudeness; Disrespect of a fellow scholar, such as name-calling, insulting, or excluding; Disrespect of the school, such as drawing on a table or book, taking school supplies without permission; Unsafe behaviors, such as hitting, kicking, biting, or throwing tantrums; Leaving class without permission; Use of inappropriate language; and disruption of class. | lunch detention. The process for disciplining Core Value Violations will be documented daily so parents can review scholar behavior. |
| **Tier 2 – Conference Level Infractions/Repeated Tier 1**<br>***Trigger for the MTSS Team to perform an Informal Review of Previous Behavior Infractions*** | |
| **Infractions** | **Consequences** |
| Gross disrespect of a fellow scholar, staff member, or school property; Using or possessing over-the-counter medication inappropriately; Using or possessing tobacco products; Damaging, destroying, or stealing personal or school property or attempting to do so; Committing sexual, racial, or any form of harassment or intimidation; Bullying or cyberbullying; Skipping school or class; Using abusive, vulgar, or profane language or treatment; Making verbal or physical threats, empty or otherwise; Fighting, pushing, shoving, or unwanted physical contact; Setting off false alarms or calling in groundless threats; Gambling; Departing, without permission, from class, floor, building, or school-sponsored activity; Unauthorized use of the building elevator; Forgery of any sort, including parental signatures; Cheating or plagiarism, or copying of anyone else's work; Repeated and fundamental disregard of school policies or procedures | If a scholar commits an infraction at this level, the scholar may receive an out-of-school suspension. Before the scholar may return to class, the scholar, his or her guardian, and the Culture & Instructional Manager will meet to address the scholar's behavior and plan for improvement. Furthermore, scholars will not be allowed to return to class after a suspension without a signature from a parent or guardian on the suspension letter. |
| **Tier 3 – Severe Infractions** | |
| **Infractions** | **Consequences** |
| Assault against an administrator, teacher, fellow scholar, or member of the school community; Repeated or excessive out-of-school suspensions; Repeated and fundamental disregard of school policies and procedures; Possession, use, or transfer of drugs and alcohol; Destruction or attempted destruction of school property including arson; possession of any weapon or prohibited dangerous object | We have zero tolerance for behavior that threatens the physical well-being of scholars and/or staff. The Executive Director may suspend and/or expel students for severe infractions, as detailed in the response on suspension and expulsion above. |

This Code of Conduct has been published with the following concepts in mind:

- School rules should be clearly stated and related to the school's educational purposes.

- School rules should be fair and specific enough for scholars to understand what they can and cannot do.
- Scholars, parents, and guardians should know the behavior and discipline rules.
- School personnel and scholars should comply with the required procedures when disciplinary actions are involved.
- Any scholar who has been identified as being eligible for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, and/or Section 504 of the 1973 Vocational Rehabilitation Act is subject to the provisions of the code of conduct and may be suspended or expelled. However, all procedural safeguards identified within these laws will be followed as required.

## Tobacco, Vaping, and Substance Use

In compliance with **Alabama Administrative Code 290-030-010-06**, **Independence Preparatory Academy** maintains a strictly tobacco-free and substance-free environment to protect the health and safety of all scholars, staff, and visitors.

The use of **tobacco products**, **electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes)**, **vapes**, or any device used to deliver a **non-medically prescribed substance** into the body is **prohibited at all times**:

- Inside any school building
- On all iPrep property (indoors or outdoors)
- During school hours and at any school-sponsored event (on or off campus)

### Prohibited Items Include:

- Cigarettes, cigars, pipes, or smokeless tobacco
- Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) or vape pens
- Vaporizers or similar devices
- Any device used to inhale a non-medically prescribed substance

Scholars **are not permitted** to use or possess any of the items listed above:

- On campus (indoors or outdoors)
- Before, during, or after school hours
- At school-sponsored activities or events

**Consequences** may include:

- Suspension or expulsion, depending on the nature and severity of the violation
- If the device is used to deliver an illegal or unauthorized substance, additional disciplinary measures will apply, consistent with **iPrep's Code of Conduct**

## Weapons Policy

To maintain a secure learning environment, we have a **zero-tolerance policy for weapons** on school property, school buses, and at all school-sponsored events.

**Prohibited Items**

The possession, use, or distribution of the following items is strictly prohibited:

- Firearms (loaded or unloaded)

- Ammunition
- Knives, blades, or sharp objects intended as weapons
- Explosives, fireworks, or flammable devices
- Any object used or intended to cause harm or to intimidate (e.g., brass knuckles, batons, or replicas)
- Any item that resembles a weapon or is used in a threatening manner

This policy applies to all scholars, staff, visitors, and anyone on school grounds or participating in school activities.

**Consequences for Violations**

Scholars found in possession of a weapon or weapon-like object will face immediate disciplinary action, which may include:

- Confiscation of the item
- Suspension or expulsion
- Referral to law enforcement, as required by state and federal law

Weapons violations are considered major infractions and will be reported per Alabama state law and the iPrep Code of Conduct.

**Mandatory Reporting**

All incidents involving weapons will be:

- Reported to the Executive Director
- Documented thoroughly
- Shared with law enforcement, as required by law

**Exceptions**

This policy does not apply to law enforcement officers authorized to carry weapons while on duty or any other individual specifically permitted by law and approved by the Executive Director.

## Discipline: Off-Campus

According to legal rulings, scholars may be disciplined for offenses (such as those listed above) not only during the school day on school premises but also off campus during school-sponsored activities. Scholars who threaten school employees or damage employees' property away from the school campus are also subject to disciplinary action. Off-campus activity, such as using social media to threaten or intimidate any employee or scholar, may be subject to disciplinary action.

## Consequences

When scholars break the code of conduct, the teacher will correct them, review the correct behavior, and practice it with them. However, if the behavior continues, the scholar will face consequences agreed upon and supported by all the teachers and parents. These consequences progress in a hierarchy to deter a scholar from making poor choices. In administering consequences, school personnel will consider such factors as the severity of the offense, the age of the scholar offender, the scholar's history of inappropriate behaviors, and any other relevant factors.

Consequences include but are not limited to:

- Oral warning
- Mindful Moment in the Safe Space
- Eagle Buck deduction
- Seat change within the classroom
- Written warning
- Written notification to parent(s)/guardian(s)
- Conference with parent(s)/guardian(s)
- Temporary confiscation of disruptive items
- Exclusion and/or removal from a particular class or event
- Suspension from cafeteria, commons, field trips, extracurricular, or other activities or privileges
- In-school suspension
- Short-term suspension (less than five days) from school
- Long-term suspension (more than five days) from school
- Expulsion from school

No employee of **Independence Preparatory Academy** shall administer corporal punishment to any scholar for any purpose.

## Seclusion and Restraint Policy

**Independence Preparatory Academy** is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment for all scholars. Per **Alabama State Board of Education Rule 290-3-1-.02(1)(f)**, **iPrep** strictly limits the use of restraint and prohibits the use of seclusion and certain types of restraint under all circumstances.

### Prohibited Practices

The following **are not permitted** at **iPrep**:

- **Seclusion** (isolating a scholar in a closed space)
- **Mechanical restraint** (using devices to restrict movement)
- **Chemical restraint** (using medications to control behavior)

These practices are never allowed, regardless of the situation.

### Use of Physical Restraint

Physical restraint may only be used in **very limited situations** and only when a scholar presents an **immediate danger to themselves or others** and does not respond to less restrictive strategies like verbal redirection or de-escalation techniques. Physical restraint may not be used as a form of discipline or punishment under any circumstances. Staff members are expected to use professional judgment and approved training when determining how to respond in crises. This policy does not interfere with the responsibilities of law enforcement or emergency medical personnel when involved.

### iPrep's Responsibilities and Procedures

To ensure the safe and appropriate use of physical restraint, iPrep has developed the following procedures:

- **Staff Training:** All relevant staff receive training on **iPrep**'s restraint policy and de-escalation techniques. Training records are documented and available upon request.

- **Parent Notification:** If a scholar is physically restrained, families will be notified in writing within one school day of the incident.
- **Incident Documentation and Debriefing**: Every incident involving physical restraint is documented, and the staff involved will participate in a debriefing to reflect on the event and ensure appropriate follow-up.
- **Ongoing Review**: **iPrep** leadership regularly reviews all physical restraint incidents to ensure proper practices are followed.
- **Annual Reporting**: The **iPrep** Board and the Alabama State Department of Education receive a yearly summary of restraint usage and any prohibited practices.

## School Searches

To ensure a safe environment, **iPrep** reserves the right to **search scholars and their belongings** when there is reasonable suspicion of a safety concern or policy violation.

- The Executive Director or a designated school official may conduct searches.
- Searches must be based on credible information and carried out respectfully, considering the scholar's age, the situation's urgency, and the concern's nature.
- School lockers, desks, cubbies, and similar school-owned storage areas are considered school property and may be opened and inspected anytime.
- Scholars should not expect privacy in these spaces.

Families will be notified of any search involving their scholar as soon as reasonably possible.

## Due Process

**iPrep** is committed to protecting the educational rights and safety of all scholars. Scholars referred for any disciplinary infraction have the right to due process, including:

- Being provided the reason for consideration of the intervention/consequence,
- Presenting their side of the story,
- Bringing forth any applicable witnesses or evidence
- Receiving verbal communication to parents with written notification to follow within 48 hours
- Receiving equal treatment without regard to race, sex, creed, color, religion, national origin, or disability.

## In-School Suspension

**iPrep** may require scholars to serve an in-school suspension during which they are not allowed to be in their classes but must spend the school day supervised in one of the school offices while doing their schoolwork. These in-school suspensions may be given to scholars who demonstrate disruptive behavior or consistently violate the Code of Conduct. In-school suspensions may also be given in cases where a scholar needs to be sent home, but school leadership cannot reach a parent.

## Out-of-School Suspension

**Independence Preparatory Academy** will suspend scholars from school when serious breaches of the discipline code and core values exist to create and maintain a safe, supportive, fair, and consistent school community and culture. The Culture & Instructional Manager may decide to suspend a scholar. In all cases, parents or guardians will be informed of a suspension and must attend a conference to address the concern and work collaboratively with the Culture &

Instructional Manager.

In certain circumstances, the Executive Director may determine that a suspension of a greater length is appropriate. Parents or guardians will be informed of a suspension in all cases and must pick the scholar up at the school. **iPrep** will follow the proper procedures, fully complying with all applicable laws, including **Alabama Code §16-1-14**. Causes for scholar suspension, both in-school and out-of-school suspension, include, but are not limited to:

- Physical harm, fighting, or physical assault of another scholar
- Physical harm or assault of a teacher, staff member, or another adult at school
- Taking or attempting to take money or property from another scholar, staff member, or school
- Constant disruptive behavior or continued and willful disobedience
- Violation of Internet Use and Technology Policy
- Excessive disrespect of teachers or peers
- Harassment or violent threats, including cyberbullying
- Open defiance of authority
- Willfully causing or attempting to cause defacement or substantial damage to school property
- Possessing, using, or dispensing illegal substances such as drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, or firecrackers (Any unlawful substances will also be reported to the police, as required by law.)
- Possessing or using an object that may cause harm, such as a knife or cigarette lighter
- Accruing many discipline referrals
- Failure of the parent to pick up the report card, attend the report conference, or live up to other requirements of the covenant
- Repeated in-school suspensions
- Use of inappropriate language or profanity
- Using a cell phone in school
- Engaging in sexual activity, inappropriate touching, or exposure of undergarments or body parts
- Willfully causing defamation of another scholar's character
- Other actions deemed by a school leader

If a scholar is assigned an Out-of-School Suspension of more than five (5) days, the Director of Culture and Instruction may develop and implement a behavior plan to assist the scholar in improving his/her behavior. Scholars are responsible for completing academic work missed during the suspension. The completed work will receive full credit if submitted by the deadlines per the school's make-up policy.

The above due process is documented when the Culture & Instructional Manager considers suspension as an intervention. The Culture & Instructional Manager will conduct the due process hearing within 5 to 10 school days from the date of receipt of the suspension notice using this protocol:

- The scholar appears with a legal guardian.
- The Culture & Instructional Manager, recommending the hearing, presents all evidence concerning the alleged violation.
- The scholar provides an opportunity to admit or deny the allegation.
- The scholar provides the opportunity to present their side of the story and any applicable evidence.
- The scholar is allowed to call witnesses on their behalf.

- The Culture & Instructional Manager decides whether the offense has occurred and the appropriate intervention/consequence.
- The Culture & Instructional Manager prepares a written explanation of the allegations, applicable evidence, and appropriate intervention.
- The written explanation is provided to the scholar and family in writing within 48 hours.

Scholars and families can appeal the Culture & Instructional Manager's decision to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will convene an appeal, using this protocol:

- The Culture & Instructional Manager presents his/her written report to the Executive Director, including evidence of due process.
- The scholar can present their side of the facts. The family can advocate on behalf of their scholar.
- The Executive Director gives the family written notice of his/her decision within 48 hours. If the Executive Director overturns the decision, the Culture & Instructional Manager assigns an alternative consequence.
- The decision of the Executive Director is final.

## Expulsion

We reserve expulsions for scholars whose conduct constitutes a continuing danger to the physical well-being of other scholars and/or the staff. There will be zero tolerance for bringing a gun or deadly weapon to school or for any assault on school employees or scholars. A scholar may also be liable for expulsion for possessing, using, or selling alcohol or controlled dangerous substances on school property. A scholar with frequent suspensions, continued willful disobedience, and/or open defiance of authority may also be at risk of expulsion. For a scholar to be expelled, the Culture & Instructional Manager must initiate the process and include a hearing with the scholar's parents, where the Executive Director is present. A scholar who is expelled will receive due process under Alabama state law.

If a scholar is expelled or removed from school for more than 10 days, they continue learning virtually with the same supports provided, including special education and 504 services. In collaboration with the scholar's teachers, **iPrep**'s Learning Diversity Specialist will meet with the scholar and parent/guardian to create a remote individualized learning plan, including steps for progress monitoring. Once a scholar can return to school, the team will reconvene to create a safe re-entry plan to ensure a seamless transition back into the school community.

## Rights Of Special Education Students And Students With Disabilities

**Independence Preparatory Academy** recognizes the rights of all scholars, including scholars with disabilities and special education scholars. Teachers and staff collaborate with the Scholar Support Coordinator and Learning Diversity Specialists to ensure the scholar's behavioral needs and goals are appropriately identified, documented, and serviced. This aims to provide scholars with the appropriate support to de-escalate behaviors. These processes comply with all state and federal laws and are designed to ensure that the scholar is treated fairly and has equitable access to the school and curriculum.

When a special education scholar commits a Tier III offense, the Scholar Support Coordinator initiates procedures to have the scholar's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) Committee address the behavior problem. The IEP Committee decides if the offense was related to the area of disability and determines the appropriate action to be taken. The IEP

Committee conducts a functional behavior assessment and consults or constructs a behavior intervention plan. All IEP revisions must be documented within the current IEP. Only the IEP Committee may change a special education scholar's placement. In no case will a scholar receiving special education services be excluded from school for more than ten cumulative days without the IEP team meeting and determining that a change of placement is necessary.

## Responsible Use of Media and Technology

Independence Preparatory Academy is a place of tolerance and good manners. The Scholar Code of Conduct applies to all Internet users. Honesty, integrity, and respect for the rights of others should always be evident.

### Internet And Computer Usage

Scholars may not use the network or school's computers to send hate mail, make defamatory statements intended to injure or humiliate others by disclosing personal information (whether true or false), make personal attacks on others, or express animus toward any person or group because of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.

The Internet, including the World Wide Web, must support education and academic research and be consistent with **iPrep**'s educational objectives. **iPrep** shall not be responsible for any financial obligations incurred by Internet users.

The computer user is responsible for his/her actions and activities. Unacceptable computer and/or Internet use shall result in appropriate disciplinary action, including suspension, expulsion, or revocation of these privileges. If a scholar has questions about whether a specific activity is permitted, he or she should ask a teacher or administrator.

If a scholar accidentally accesses inappropriate material, he or she should immediately remove that information. Scholars who may inadvertently access a site that is pornographic, obscene, or harmful to minors shall immediately disconnect from the site and inform the teacher.

Scholars shall use Internet search engines and/or other Internet tools only under the direction and supervision of teachers.

Regulations for the use of computers and the participation by anyone on the Internet include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Scholars may only use email, instant messaging, or direct electronic communication with permission and direct supervision from a teacher.
2. Personal online purchases, anonymous posting, or using another person's account are strictly prohibited.
3. The Executive Director or designee must pre-approve all online subscriptions and external communications.
4. Social media access may be restricted as needed.
5. Cyberbullying, hate speech, or language that is indecent, vulgar, abusive, slanderous, sexually harassing, or threatening is prohibited in all digital communications.
6. Scholars may not post personal information (e.g., last name, address, phone number) about themselves or others.
7. Harassment, discriminatory remarks, or any behavior invading another's privacy is prohibited.

8. Scholars may not access or create content that is obscene, pornographic, harmful to minors, or lacks educational value.
9. Materials promoting violence, illegal activity (including bomb-making), or lewd behavior are strictly forbidden.
10. Scholars must cite all sources and respect copyright laws. Plagiarism is not allowed.
11. Scholars must not waste or misuse school network resources, including sending spam or unnecessary emails.
12. Downloading files without permission or intentionally introducing viruses or harmful software is prohibited.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, including loss of technology privileges, suspension, or other consequences per the iPrep Code of Conduct.

### Electronic Devices

Scholars are **not permitted to bring electronic devices** to school to support a focused and distraction-free learning environment. This includes but is not limited to:

- Cell phones
- Gaming devices (e.g., Nintendo Switch)
- iPods or portable music players
- CD players or other personal electronics

While **iPrep** takes precautions to prevent theft, the school will not investigate or be responsible for lost or stolen electronic devices that are not allowed on campus. If a scholar is seen with or uses a prohibited device:

- A staff member will confiscate the device.
- It will be returned only to a parent or guardian who must come to the school to retrieve it.
- Repeated violations may result in indefinite confiscation, regardless of the device's value or cost.

### Media

The Executive Director handles all media. At the start of the school year, a release form will be sent home for guardians to sign to authorize or deny the use of pictures or videos of their scholar.

## INTERNET SAFETY AND THE CHILDREN'S INTERNET PROTECTION ACT (CIPA)

**Independence Preparatory Academy** complies with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) to ensure a safe digital learning environment. This federal law requires schools that provide internet access to implement measures that protect scholars from inappropriate content and online threats.

**What iPrep Does to Protect Scholars Online:**

- **Content Filtering:** All internet access on school devices is filtered to block material that is obscene, pornographic, or harmful to minors.
- **Monitoring:** Internet use is monitored by school staff to help ensure that scholars are accessing appropriate educational content.
- **Digital Citizenship Education:** Scholars receive instruction on safe and responsible use of technology, including how to recognize, avoid, and report online threats such as cyberbullying, inappropriate contact, and phishing scams.

**What's Not Allowed:**

Scholars are prohibited from using school devices or networks to:

- Access or share obscene, harmful, or inappropriate content
- Use social media, chat rooms, or messaging apps without permission
- Bypass internet filters or attempt to access restricted sites
- Engage in cyberbullying or other unsafe online behaviors

All school technology use must follow **iPrep's Technology and Internet Use Policy** and align with our Soar with Pride values.

**Parental Involvement**

We encourage parents and guardians to discuss digital safety and responsible online behavior with their scholars. Families may contact the School Operations Manager for more information about our internet safety policies or the filtering tools we use.

# UNIFORM POLICY AND DRESS CODE

**Independence Preparatory Academy** requires all scholars in grades K-8 to wear a school-approved uniform. Scholars in our community are expected to follow the school dress code to be allowed in class. Shirts and blouses must always be tucked in, and bottoms must remain at the waist. The only approved attire for a school day is outlined below, without exception.

| Scholar Uniform Policy | |
|---|---|
| **Tops** | **GIRLS**<br>• Solid royal blue, green, or gray polo shirt with **iPrep** logo<br>• **iPrep**-approved light blue or white Peter Pan blouse always worn with an i**Prep** cross-tie<br>• Solid white, gray, or black short-sleeved or long-sleeved undershirts may be worn under the uniform shirt<br><br>**BOYS**<br>• Solid royal blue, green, or gray polo shirt with **iPrep** logo<br>• Solid white or light blue, long-sleeved or short-sleeved, button-down Oxford shirt always worn with an iPrep necktie<br>• Solid white, gray, or black short-sleeved or long-sleeved undershirts may be worn under the uniform shirt |
| **Bottoms** | **GIRLS**<br>• Solid khaki, solid navy blue, or solid black pants or Bermuda shorts<br>• Solid khaki, solid navy blue, solid black, or an iPrep plaid skirt<br>• Jumper dress in iPrep plaid, solid khaki, solid navy blue, or solid black<br><br>**BOYS**<br>• Solid khaki, solid navy blue, or solid black pants or shorts |
| **Socks & Shoes** | • Closed-toe, low or high-top sneakers in solid black or solid white<br>• Closed-toe, solid black or solid brown shoes with a soft rubber sole<br>• Boots, sandals, moccasins, clogs, bowling shoes, shoes with stripes or multi-colors are not permitted<br>• Solid black or white knee-high or ankle dress socks<br>• Solid black or white athletic socks are only permitted while wearing tennis shoes |
| **Outerwear** | **All outerwear and hats must be removed during the morning routine and cannot be worn throughout the day unless moving outside the building.** The following are permitted while within the school building:<br>• Cardigan with **iPrep** logo<br>• Solid royal blue, green, or gray sweater, fleece, or sweatshirt (without hoods) |

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| **Accessories** | • Small stud earrings, dime-sized or smaller<br>• One watch or bracelet on each arm<br>• One necklace that remains under the uniform top at all times<br>• Solid royal blue, green, white, black, or gray hair bows or headbands<br>• Solid black or brown belts<br>• Makeup, body art or piercings, or temporary/permanent tattoos are not permitted unless for religious purposes<br>• Nail polish is only allowed on natural nails without embellishments |
| **Friday Attire** | • **iPrep** school t-shirt or college t-shirt with solid khaki or black pants, Bermuda shorts or skirt for girls, or regular shorts for boys<br>• Approved shoes, accessories, and outerwear as listed above |

## Failure To Comply With Uniform Policy

**Independence Preparatory Academy** scholars with an approved **iPrep** school uniform are always welcome in class. However, whenever ***any*** element of physical appearance or grooming—even if it is allowable under the school's current rules—becomes a distraction to the scholar or others, it is no longer acceptable, and steps will be taken to remove the distraction.

Parents or guardians will be notified to request appropriate uniform items if a scholar reports to school without the correct uniform. If this is not possible, the following consequences will occur:

1. **First Violation:** Uniform reminder sent home
2. **Second Violation:** Phone conference to discuss a plan to correct the uniform violation
3. **Third Violation:** Written uniform plan and loss of privileges for the scholar

## Extra Clothing

Parents of Kindergarten and First Grade scholars and older students with a record of bathroom accidents must send an extra pair of pants, underwear, and socks to school. The extra clothes will be kept in the scholar's classroom. If the scholar must change into an extra set of clothes, a clean set of clothing must be sent the next day. If the child is prone to accidents, we recommend keeping more than one change of clothing at school.

## Lost And Stolen Property

We strongly encourage families to ensure scholars do not bring valuable objects to school. Any items that scholars bring to school that may cause disruption will be confiscated at the school. We make every reasonable effort to return all personal property to the appropriate parent; however, the school is not responsible for replacing the lost or stolen property or compensating the family for the value of that property. Lost and Found clothing will be collected at the school temporarily. Parents are encouraged to visit the school to check the lost and found if a scholar loses an item. iPrep is not responsible for any lost or missing items. Any items remaining at the school for a lengthy period will be donated.

# HEALTH AND WELLNESS

## STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

Healthy students are better learners, and academic achievement has many health benefits. **Independence Preparatory Academy** offers limited scholar health services designed to address minor medical issues during the school day or to assist with unique or chronic health problems.

### Health Documentation

The school must have on file the following forms:

- **Medical Health Assessment Record:** This form provides the school nurse with additional information regarding your scholar's health needs.
- **Authorization to Dispense Medication Form:** If a scholar requires prescribed medication while in school, the school must have an Authorization to Dispense Medication form, filled out by the scholar's physician.
- **Over-the-Counter Medication Authorization Form:** This form provides the school nurse and designated staff permission to assist scholars in the administration of over-the-counter medication in accordance.
- **Diet Prescription Form:** If a scholar requires a special diet due to allergies or health needs, the school must have an Diet Prescription Form, certified by a State Licensed Healthcare Professional.

### Medications

All medication must be presented in its original pharmacy container and brought in by a parent or accompanied by a note from the parent.

1. Medications should be given at home when possible.
2. The authority for licensed or unlicensed personnel to deliver medication to a scholar must come from the prescriber, when applicable, and the parent/guardian. The parent/guardian shall provide written authorization to the School Nurse when it is necessary for a scholar to receive medication during school hours.
3. In consultation with the School Operations Manager, the School Nurse may delegate and train unlicensed school personnel to assist scholars with medications when a licensed nurse is unavailable.
4. Self-administration of medication is allowed on an individual basis and at the discretion of the School Nurse concerning safety and appropriateness. Written authorization must be provided by the scholar's physician and parent/guardian. Self-administration does not imply self-carry of a medication.
5. Scholars with chronic health conditions may be given over-the-counter medication. The parent/guardian should provide the school with written authorization and medication.
6. All medication should be provided to the School Nurse in its original container, including prescription medication in the original, labeled pharmacy container.
7. The school may require medication authorization from the scholar's non-parental healthcare provider for chronic health conditions.
8. Except for authorized emergency medication, scholars cannot self-carry medications on campus.
9. Narcotic pain medication shall not be kept at or administered by school personnel. Scholar possession of a controlled substance is prohibited and violates the school's Safe and Drug-Free Policy.

## First Aid and Emergency Care

School officials are authorized to take reasonable and appropriate steps to provide or arrange for the provision of emergency medical services to scholars who require immediate medical attention. Standard first aid procedures will be followed in case of illness or accidental injury and will not require immediate medical attention.

## Communicable/ Infectious Diseases

Parents/guardians may be notified and required to pick up the scholar in case of acute or contagious illnesses. Certain diseases/conditions will be reported to the local health department as the law requires.

## Pediculosis (Head Lice)

Head lice are a common problem for children and their families. The head louse is a wingless insect that lives on the human scalp and lays eggs (nits) in the hair. Head lice are primarily transmitted by direct contact or everyday use of combs, hairbrushes, clothing, bedding, or headgear. Head lice are not limited to any sex, age, social, ethnic, or economic group of children.

It is the policy of **Independence Preparatory Academy** that whenever a scholar is identified with head lice, the parents will be notified and asked to pick the scholar up at school, allowing sufficient time for verbal and written instruction regarding treating head lice. The school will establish procedures for controlling head lice within the building.

After receiving appropriate treatment for head lice, the scholar may be readmitted to school the following day, provided no evidence of live lice is found during a check. We believe in a swift and effective response to head lice infestations, ensuring minimal scholar education disruption.

Mass screenings for head lice may be conducted as indicated. These screenings shall be conducted in a manner that maintains the privacy and confidentiality of each scholar. Our dedicated School Nurse plays a crucial role in our approach to head lice management. They are available to provide staff support and guidelines for parent education and environmental management for treating head lice.

## Health Screenings

Screenings may be conducted to determine potential issues affecting a scholar's academic performance or growth and development. School screenings are not diagnostic; abnormal results should have follow-up for diagnosis and treatment by the scholar's health care provider.

## Scholar Immunizations

**Independence Preparatory Academy**'s policy is that a current Alabama Certificate of Immunization, designated by the State Health Officer as required for school entrance, be provided to the school before a child can be enrolled.

A current Alabama Certificate of Immunization will include any of the following:

1. **State of Alabama Certificate of Immunization** (COI)
   For this form to be considered valid, it must have the following:

- An expiration date (month, day, and year). This date should be when the next required vaccine, including TD boosters, is due.
- Dates of all prior vaccines received.
- Signature or stamp of the facility issuing the certificate.

2. **State of Alabama Certificate of Religious Exemption from Immunization**
   - County Health Departments are the only locations where an Alabama Certificate of Religious Exemption may be obtained.
   - The form should document the County Health Department stamp, the date issued, and the signature of the clinic staff member who provides the religious exemption.
3. **The Certificate of Medical Exemption from Immunization**
   Some scholars may not get certain vaccines or wait before getting them because of age, health conditions, or other factors. The scholar's healthcare provider may grant medical exemptions, which may be full or partial, depending on the scholar's health condition.
   - The scholar's healthcare provider can issue a full medical exemption for all school-required vaccines if medically indicated.
   - The scholar's healthcare provider can issue a partial exemption when the exemption is for one or more but less than all school-required vaccines as medically indicated.

Scholars enrolled in **Independence Preparatory Academy** shall maintain a current Certificate of Immunization. All documentation concerning immunizations from the local health department or private medical provider should be provided on original forms approved by the Alabama Department of Public Health or electronically from the Alabama Department of Public Health.

The Alabama Department of Public Health's electronic database will be used for scholar immunization verification, tracking, and compliance.

## SUICIDE PREVENTION AND AWARENESS | JASON FLATT ACT

In alignment with the **Jason Flatt Act (Act #2016-310)** and **Alabama Code §16-28B-8**, we are committed to implementing strong prevention, intervention, and postvention strategies to support scholars at risk of suicide and to promote a culture of mental health awareness, safety, and support.

This law equips schools with tools to recognize warning signs and respond effectively. It also emphasizes the importance of preventing harassment and violence, key factors affecting scholars' well-being.

### iPrep's Commitment to Suicide Prevention

As required by the **Jason Flatt Act**, **iPrep** will:

- Promote counseling services for individuals, families, and groups about suicide prevention
- Offer referrals and crisis intervention support to scholars, families, and staff as needed
- Train school staff, particularly those who work closely with scholars, in recognizing signs of suicidal behavior and how to respond
- Raise awareness among scholars about the connection between substance use and suicide

- Teach scholars to recognize warning signs of suicidal thoughts or behavior in themselves and others
- Inform scholars and families about community resources for mental health and suicide prevention
- Coordinate with local mental health professionals and programs to expand support beyond the school
- Support recovery and healing for scholars and school staff following an incident of attempted or completed suicide
- Develop and promote alternative, community-based programs that support scholars' emotional and mental wellness
- Engage in other programs or services deemed necessary and appropriate to support scholars' mental health

### Staff Training and Awareness

All **iPrep** staff and volunteers who regularly interact with scholars receive annual training on:

- Suicide awareness and prevention
- The school's suicide prevention policies and procedures
- Strategies to prevent harassment, intimidation, violence, and threats of violence

This training may be incorporated into existing in-service sessions or professional development programs.

### Scholar Expectations

**iPrep** scholars are expected to:

- Treat others with **kindness, respect, and dignity**
- Follow the expectations outlined in the **Code of Conduct**
- Support a safe and inclusive school environment
- Follow school rules and laws prohibiting **harassment, intimidation, violence, and threats**
- Participate in and respect school-based prevention, intervention, and postvention efforts

Anyone who reports concerns or participates in implementing this policy is protected under **state immunity law**, as outlined in the Jason Flatt Act.

## SCHOOL COUNSELING SERVICES

All public schools in Alabama must provide access to trained, certified professionals serving as school counselors for grades K–12. At **Independence Preparatory Academy**, our school counselors provide classroom-based lessons and individual or small-group counseling services to support scholars' academic, social, emotional, and career development.

### Classroom Lessons

Counselors deliver classroom lessons to help scholars grow academically, develop social-emotional skills, and build early career awareness. Families may request to review the materials used during these lessons by contacting the school counselor.

### Counseling Services

Counseling services may be offered during the school day depending on a scholar's needs. These services may include short-term individual or small-group counseling sessions focused on specific concerns.

Parents or guardians will be notified if a scholar requires ongoing counseling support, which is defined as more than two sessions within nine weeks. They must provide written permission annually for continued services. Families may withdraw consent for services by submitting a written request. The school also reserves the right to discontinue services if they are no longer appropriate or if a referral to external support services is recommended.

The Learning Diversity Specialist can coordinate referrals to outside mental health providers. All counseling records are treated as confidential health care records and kept separate from scholars' academic files.

## WELLNESS POLICY

**Independence Preparatory Academy** is committed to providing a school environment that enhances learning and the development of lifelong wellness practices. To create this environment, the school ensures the following goals:

1. Scholars will be exposed to and participate in physical activities through PE classes, recess, school athletics, and other activities.
2. Learning about nutrition will encourage scholars to have healthy eating habits.
3. **iPrep** is committed to promoting healthy eating habits. All food and beverages available must adhere to specific guidelines that encourage nutritious choices:
    - Foods sold through vending machines and à la carte items sold through the cafeteria shall follow Alabama's Action for Healthy Kids standards.
    - "For sale" or "free" foods or beverages of minimum nutritional value shall not be available during school hours.
    - Any fundraising activities that involve selling food shall reinforce food choices that promote good health.

## SCHOOL MEALS

**iPrep** participates in the **National School Lunch Program**, which provides a daily healthy breakfast and lunch. However, families may choose to send breakfast or lunch from home. Please note the following guidelines for meals brought from home:

- **Microwaves are not available**, so all food should be ready to eat.
- **Soda, candy, and other high-sugar treats are prohibited**, even in packed lunches.

### Meals and Food Guidelines

All **iPrep** scholars receive breakfast (if they arrive on time) and lunch daily. A monthly meal menu will be sent home at the beginning of each month. Milk is served with all meals. If a scholar does not like a specific meal, they are welcome to bring lunch from home. However, we ask that families only send **healthy, low-sugar options**. The following items are not permitted at school:

- Candy
- Soda
- Juices that are not 100% juice
- Energy drinks
- Donuts, cupcakes, candy bars, and other high-sugar treats

**iPrep does not provide food substitutions**. If your scholar does not like a menu item, please review the menu in advance and send a bag lunch on those days. Families must notify the school of any food allergies and submit a doctor's note to be kept in the scholar's health file. Please also inform the school of any religious or cultural food restrictions so we can be respectful and supportive. **Sharing or trading of food is strictly prohibited for all scholars**.

Note: **iPrep** is a **gum-free** and **nut-free** campus. Scholars may not bring or chew gum or snacks or meals that contain nuts at any time while on school grounds. This ensures the safety and well-being of all scholars, including those with severe allergies.

## Healthy Snack Policy

Scholars will have time for an afternoon snack and are encouraged to bring one from home. Each class will follow a snack calendar, which your scholar's teacher will share. While scholars are not required to bring a snack, any snack brought from home **must be healthy**. Snacks high in sugar, processed, or unhealthy will not be allowed. **Examples of approved healthy snacks include:**

- Fruit bars or granola bars (low in sugar)
- Fresh fruits such as apples, grapes, and strawberries
- Fresh vegetables like carrots or celery
- 100% dried fruit or fruit snacks made with real fruit
- Baked chips or popcorn
- Applesauce pouches

# STUDENT SERVICES

## Support for Scholars with Unique Learning Needs

At i**Prep**, every scholar is brilliant and deserves access to an exceptional education. In line with our mission to ensure success for all, we are committed to providing each scholar with the personalized support they need to access grade-level content and thrive beyond it.

Scholars with **Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)** or **Individualized Language Plans (ILPs)** receive instruction tailored to their current learning levels, just as every scholar at **iPrep** gets support based on their strengths and needs. We also support scholars with identified academic, social, or emotional needs by creating an inclusive environment that recognizes their potential and growth areas.

We are dedicated to nurturing a school culture where all scholars feel seen, supported, and empowered. Our approach to serving special populations and at-risk scholars reflects this belief and drives everything we do to ensure every child has the opportunity to succeed.

## The Lift-Off System: Academic and Behavior Supports (MTSS)

All scholars can soar, but some may need extra support along the way. That's why we've created The Eagle's Nest, our tiered system of academic and behavioral supports. This approach follows **Alabama's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)** and helps us give every scholar exactly what they need to succeed, whether it's extra help or a challenge to stretch further.

- **Eagle Protection (Tier I)** provides all scholars with strong academic instruction and positive behavior strategies.
- **Eagle Uplift (Tiers II & III)** gives targeted support to the ~20% of scholars who need extra academic or behavioral help.

We use this system to identify scholars at risk academically or behaviorally and provide the proper support as early as possible. Tools like NWEA Map Growth & Reading Fluency, i-Ready Diagnostics, and the behavior screeners help us track progress and determine which scholars need more support.

### Academic Interventions

Scholars needing Tier II academic support receive **20–30 minutes of small-group instruction** during our daily Acceleration Block (K–5) or WIN Block (6–8) in addition to regular classroom instruction. We use resources like the i-Ready Teacher Toolbox to ensure lessons match each scholar's skill level and align with their personalized learning path.

For scholars needing Tier III support, we provide an **additional 30 minutes per day of small-group or one-on-one intervention**. These programs help scholars two or more grade levels behind gain confidence, close learning gaps, and build independence.

### Behavior Interventions

Our approach to behavior begins with a strong foundation of Tier I strategies, including routines and practices from **Teach Like a Champion** and **The Whole Child Model**, such as positive framing, warm/strict consistency, threshold greetings, and safe spaces.

**Tier II behavioral support** may include:

- Positive reinforcement
- Time-Love-Connection (TLC) moments
- Structured recess
- Movement breaks
- Group therapy
- Personalized schedules
- Behavior Intervention Plans

**Tier III behavioral supports** are more intensive and individualized. These may involve:

- Functional Behavior Assessments to understand the cause of behaviors
- Student-centered goal setting and planning
- A holistic support plan involving school staff, family, and other professionals

### Monitoring Scholar Progress

Scholars receiving Tier II or Tier III support are monitored weekly using tools like **i-Ready Growth Monitoring** and **Direct Behavior Rating**. Our MTSS team, which includes the Culture & Instructional Manager, general education teachers, and interventionists, meets monthly to review progress and determine if supports should be adjusted.

If a scholar is not showing adequate growth despite interventions, the team may refer them for further evaluation to determine if additional services are needed.

## Support for Scholars with Special Needs

**iPrep** is responsible for creating and maintaining a nurturing, safe, and inclusive learning environment where every scholar can thrive. We are committed to providing all scholars a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), ensuring they have full access to the general education curriculum whenever possible.

Scholars with **Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)**, **Individualized Language Plans (ILPs)**, or **504 Plans** are primarily served within the general education setting with appropriate accommodations, modifications, and support. We also have strong systems to identify scholars who may have undiagnosed disabilities and ensure they receive timely support.

**iPrep** fully complies with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations related to special education. These include, but are not limited to:

- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
- Child Find provisions under IDEA

Child Find is a legal requirement that schools identify and evaluate any child who may have a disability. At **iPrep**, families can begin this process anytime by sharing concerns with school staff. We take all requests seriously and follow a formal process to ensure scholars are evaluated thoroughly and fairly.

Once a referral is made, a Scholar Support Team (SST)—including general education teachers, Learning Diversity Specialist, Scholar Support Coordinator, related service providers (such as speech or occupational therapists), and the scholar's parent or guardian—meets to review the referral. If needed, additional evaluations may be recommended. If a scholar is found eligible for services, the SST will work together to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) tailored to the scholar's unique academic and/or social-emotional needs.

The Learning Diversity Specialist leads the development of IEPs and provides direct support through small-group instruction, co-teaching, and collaboration with classroom teachers. **iPrep**'s approach ensures all scholars receive the support they need to succeed while learning alongside their peers.

### Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for Scholars Receiving Special Education Services

Under **Section 290-8-9-.06 of the Alabama Administrative Code**, **Independence Preparatory Academy** is committed to providing scholars who qualify for special education services with Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) instruction. The appropriate learning setting for each scholar is determined individually during the Student Support Team (SST) meeting as part of the development or revision of their Individualized Education Program (IEP).

At **iPrep**, scholars with special needs learn alongside their peers without disabilities to the greatest extent appropriate. Scholars are only removed from the general education classroom when their academic or behavioral progress cannot be met, even with additional supports, accommodations, or services.

For many scholars, the LRE is the general education classroom, where support is provided through inclusive co-teaching models. In these classrooms, general education teachers and the Learning Diversity Specialist work together to ensure all scholars, regardless of ability, can access, learn, and master grade-level content. Instruction is delivered through whole-group, small-group, and individualized support.

For scholars who need more intensive support, temporary instruction may occur in a special education setting, focusing on building foundational skills. The Learning Diversity Specialist uses research-based strategies in these settings to close learning gaps and help scholars develop the tools they need to reengage with grade-level content.

When a scholar's cognitive, behavioral, emotional, or physical needs require more extensive support, the SST may recommend receiving a modified curriculum in a special education setting for up to 79% of the school day. Even in this setting, scholars continue engaging with the general education curriculum at a pace and level that meets individual needs.

We always aim to support scholars returning to the general education setting as soon as they are ready, with the tools, confidence, and strategies they need to succeed.

### Section 504 Accommodations

**Independence Preparatory Academy** is committed to ensuring that all scholars have equal access to a high-quality education. In alignment with **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973** and **Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**, iPrep prohibits discrimination based on disability and guarantees every eligible scholar a **Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**.

A scholar may qualify for a **504 Plan** if they have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as learning, walking, seeing, hearing, breathing, or concentrating. If a scholar is suspected of needing accommodations to participate fully in school like their peers, a parent, teacher, diagnostician, or school leader can make a referral.

Referrals are made to the Scholar Support Coordinator, who also serves as **iPrep**'s 504 Coordinator. Scholars who go through the special education evaluation process but do not qualify for special education services may also be considered for a 504 Plan.

Once referred, the 504 Coordinator assembles a team—including the scholar's parent or guardian, a general education teacher, the referring staff member, and others who know the scholar well. This team reviews relevant information such as academic data, behavior records, medical reports, and existing supports. Based on this discussion, the team determines whether the scholar qualifies for a 504 Plan or if additional evaluation is needed.

If a scholar is found eligible, the 504 Coordinator will lead the development of a plan outlining the accommodations and supports needed for success. The 504 Coordinator is also responsible for training staff, ensuring that accommodations are appropriately implemented, and regularly reviewing and updating plans as required.

### Support for English Language Learners (ELLs)

**Independence Preparatory Academy** proudly serves English Language Learners (ELLs) in full compliance with the **Alabama Department of Education's ELL Policies and Procedures Manual**. Our goal is to ensure every scholar, regardless of their first language, can access high-quality instruction and make substantial academic progress.

The process begins when families complete a **Home Language Survey** at enrollment. If the survey indicates that a scholar may speak a language other than English at home, the scholar is given the **WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT)**—a screener used to determine their level of English proficiency.

After testing, the **ELL Student Support Team (ELL-SST)**—made up of the Scholar Support Coordinator, the Learning Diversity Specialist, general education teacher(s), parents/guardians, and the scholar (when appropriate)—meets to review the results. Based on these results, scholars may be:

- Placed into ELL services,
- Identified as "transitional" if they are nearly proficient, or
- Found proficient and not in need of ELL services at this time.

The ELL-SST is responsible for:

- Recommending and monitoring scholars' participation in the ELL program
- Supporting classroom teachers with appropriate accommodations
- Tracking academic progress and English language development
- Deciding if the scholar will participate in statewide testing
- Reclassifying scholars when they reach English proficiency

All ELL scholars take the **ACCESS for ELLs 2.0** assessment each year, which measures progress in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each skill is rated on a scale from 1 to 6. The ELL-SST meets regularly to review this data and adjust supports as needed. The Learning Diversity Specialist provides support through small-group instruction, co-teaching, and classroom strategies to make learning accessible.

### Gifted and Talented Services

We are proud to serve a diverse community of scholars, including those identified as gifted and talented. By the **Alabama Administrative Code (AAC)**, scholars may be identified as intellectually gifted if they perform—or show potential to perform—at levels significantly above their peers in academic or creative areas.

As part of Alabama's **Child Find** process, **iPrep** screens all second-grade scholars for gifted and talented services. Teachers use observation checklists to identify behaviors across multiple gifted domains, following the **Alabama State Department of Education's (ALSDE)** screening guidelines. With parent or guardian consent, the Student Support Team (SST)—including the Scholar Support Coordinator, general education teachers, the Learning Diversity Specialist (if applicable), the scholar (when appropriate), and the family—meets to determine eligibility and develop a personalized Gifted Education Plan (GEP).

In addition to scholars identified through universal screening, parents, teachers, or school leaders at any grade level may also refer scholars for evaluation.

## Annual Notice of Rights Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

**Independence Preparatory Academy** is committed to identifying, evaluating, and supporting scholars with disabilities per the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**. This federal law ensures that children with disabilities receive **a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)** in the **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)** that meets their needs.

**Your Rights Under IDEA Include:**

- **Child Find: iPrep** actively identifies and evaluates scholars who may have disabilities, regardless of the severity, and may require special education services. If you believe your scholar may need support, you may request an evaluation at any time.
- **Evaluation and Eligibility**: Scholars are evaluated in all areas of suspected disability. Parents or guardians must give written consent for evaluations, and results are used to determine if a scholar qualifies for special education services.

- **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**: If a scholar is found eligible, an IEP team—including parents, teachers, and school staff—will develop a plan that outlines specific goals, accommodations, services, and supports.
- **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**: Scholars with disabilities will be educated alongside their peers without disabilities whenever possible and will only be removed when their needs cannot be met in the general education setting, even with support.
- **Parental Participation**: Parents have the right to participate in all meetings related to their child's identification, evaluation, IEP development, and educational placement.
- **Procedural Safeguards**: Parents have the right to receive a copy of their procedural safeguards, which include the right to:
    - Request mediation or a due process hearing
    - Review educational records
    - File a complaint if they believe IDEA rights have been violated

A full copy of procedural safeguards is available upon request and will be provided at key points in the special education process. Please email the Student Support Coordinator for questions regarding our special education services.

# SCHOLAR SAFETY

At **Independence Preparatory Academy**, the safety and well-being of every scholar, staff member, and visitor are our top priority. We are committed to maintaining a secure and respectful learning environment where teaching and learning can thrive.

We expect full cooperation from scholars and families in following all school safety policies. Failure to comply with these expectations may result in disciplinary action under the **iPrep Scholar Code of Conduct**, including potential dismissal.

## SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY

We are committed to maintaining secure buildings, well-kept grounds, and safe equipment to help prevent accidents and injuries. Our school buildings are designed, maintained, and updated according to all local, state, and federal safety codes. We proactively protect against fire, natural disasters, mechanical or electrical issues, and other avoidable hazards.

Key safety features include:

- **Fire and tornado alarm systems**
- **Fire extinguishers are throughout the building**
- **Ongoing facility inspections**
- **Emergency drills and safety training at all grade levels**

All scholars and visitors must be supervised while on school property to ensure safety and proper use of facilities.

The School Operations Manager oversees a comprehensive school-wide safety program that includes emergency response planning and coordination with local fire, health, and public safety officials. This program reflects our commitment to protecting every member of the iPrep community. In addition, first aid kits are easily accessible across campus, and trained staff are available to respond to health emergencies. By working with local agencies and consistently practicing safety procedures, **iPrep** ensures a secure learning environment where scholars can thrive.

### Video Surveillance and Camera Use

**iPrep** uses security cameras throughout the school property to help monitor activity and maintain a secure learning environment.

#### Security Camera Use

Security cameras may be placed:

- Inside and outside school buildings
- On school property, including entrances, hallways, and common areas
- On school-provided transportation

These cameras are used to:

- Help ensure the health, safety, and well-being of scholars, staff, and visitors

- Protect school facilities and equipment

Cameras are monitored and accessed by school administrators as needed. Footage is generally retained for approximately 30 days.

### Classroom Cameras

iPrep uses classroom cameras only under two conditions:

1. **For safety and security purposes**, it is activated by an emergency alert
2. **For instructional use**, at the teacher's discretion, to support teaching and learning

Classroom cameras are not used for continuous surveillance and are never used without a clear purpose.

### Privacy and Recording Policy

Private individuals may **not use personal recording devices** to record scholars or staff on school property without their consent, unless in a public setting (e.g., school performances open to the public). Any unauthorized recording of scholars or staff is **strictly prohibited**.

### Access to Video Footage

Security footage may become part of a **scholar's educational record** if relevant to an investigation. iPrep will only release footage under applicable laws and will do so with the permission of the Executive Director or their designee. Footage may also be shared with law enforcement when necessary and legally permitted.

## Closed Campus Policy

**iPrep** is a closed campus, which means scholars may not leave the school building during the day unless:

- They have official permission from the school, and
- They are accompanied by an authorized adult (parent, guardian, or approved school staff member).

Scholars should also be mindful and respectful of the neighborhood and the surrounding community. Once scholars enter the school in the morning, they must remain on campus until dismissal unless formally signed out by a parent or guardian.

## Visitor Policy

All visitors—including parents and guardians—must:

- **Check in at the Main Office** immediately upon arrival
- **Sign in** with the Office Manager
- **Wear a visitor badge** on a school-provided lanyard for the duration of the visit

Any visitor who fails to follow check-in procedures may be asked to leave. This helps us maintain a secure environment for all scholars and staff.

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES AND SAFETY DRILLS

We maintain detailed emergency procedures and conduct regular drills to ensure everyone is prepared during a fire, severe weather, or other emergency. These procedures are designed to keep scholars safe and ensure an orderly response.

### Fire Drills

**iPrep** conducts fire drills at least once a month in coordination with the local fire department and in compliance with Alabama law and regulations from the State Fire Marshal's office.

- Evacuation routes are clearly posted in all rooms used by scholars.
- All staff and scholars are expected to participate calmly and promptly.
- A report is filed with the Executive Director after each drill.

### Severe Weather and Civil Defense Drills

**iPrep** works closely with local emergency officials to plan and implement drills in case of a local or national emergency, including severe weather events.

#### Weather Warning Definitions:

The National Weather Service uses the following alerts. Understanding these helps ensure the correct response:

- **Severe Thunderstorm Watch:** Conditions may lead to a severe thunderstorm
- **Severe Thunderstorm Warning**: A severe thunderstorm has formed and is likely to impact the area
- **Tornado Watch**: Conditions may lead to a tornado forming
- **Tornado Warning**: A tornado has been sighted or detected and may impact the area

#### Recommended Actions:

- **Severe Thunderstorm Watch**: Staff will review emergency procedures.
- **Severe Thunderstorm Warning**: Scholars outside will be moved inside the main building or to a designated safe area.
- **Tornado Watch**: Teachers and staff are notified and are preparing for a possible relocation.
- **Tornado Warning**: All scholars will move to the designated storm shelter area.

#### Tornado Drill Procedures:

- Scholars will sit on the floor with their backs to the interior walls.
- Exterior doors will be opened to reduce pressure.
- Tornado drills are held **four times yearly**: September, October, January, and February.
- A report is submitted to the Executive Director after each drill.
- Emergency plans include assignments for first aid, communication, and floor leaders, coordinated by the Executive Director or designee.
- **iPrep** maintains a **battery-powered radio** and a **battery-powered light** for emergencies.
- An **air horn** (not the fire alarm) will signal emergency alerts other than fire.

### School Dismissal During Severe Weather

If dangerous weather conditions arise at normal dismissal time, scholars will remain safely inside the building until the conditions have passed. The Executive Director will determine when it is safe to release scholars.

### Inclement Weather

In inclement weather, including but not limited to snow, **Independence Preparatory Academy** will follow the closure decisions of local school systems. Closure announcements will be communicated via our official social media pages, local television and radio stations, and the school website. Families are encouraged to check these sources for the most up-to-date information.

## SAFE, SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

We are committed to creating and maintaining a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment where all scholars can thrive. In alignment with the **State of Alabama's Student Harassment Prevention Act of 2009**, federal civil rights laws, and our core values of Pride, Service, Optimism, Agency, and Resilience, we strictly prohibit all forms of harassment, intimidation, bullying, and sexual harassment.

### Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) Policy

Harassment, intimidation, or bullying includes any written, verbal, physical, or electronic act that occurs on school property, at school-sponsored events, or on school transportation, and that:

- Targets a scholar based on actual or perceived characteristics, including race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability
- Causes physical or emotional harm to a scholar or their property, or causes fear of harm
- Substantially disrupts the learning environment or interferes with the orderly operation of the school

Harassment does not have to be intentional, repeated, or directed at a specific individual to be considered a violation. When severe, pervasive, or persistent behavior interferes with a scholar's ability to learn or feel safe, it violates this policy.

#### Cyberbullying

The use of cell phones, computers, or other electronic devices to repeatedly and intentionally harass or threaten others is considered cyberbullying and is prohibited by law and school policy.

**Reporting and Response**

Any scholar, parent/guardian, staff member, or community member may report incidents of harassment or bullying using a form available through the school. Reports can be submitted to any staff member or the school designee. All reports will be investigated promptly and fairly. **iPrep** prohibits retaliation against anyone who reports harassment or bullying or participates in an investigation. According to school policies, false accusations or reports in bad faith will be addressed.

**School Responsibilities**

In compliance with **Alabama Code §16-28B**, **iPrep** will:

- Develop evidence-based practices and programs to maintain a safe environment
- Incorporate anti-harassment awareness in character education
- Submit required reports to the school board and protect the privacy of all scholars involved
- Implement counseling, crisis intervention, and prevention efforts
- Maintain policies to prevent scholar suicide as required by law

### Sexual Harassment Policy

Sexual harassment is a form of sex-based discrimination and is prohibited at all **iPrep** facilities, programs, and events. Sexual harassment includes unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is a condition of participation in school activities or benefits
- The conduct impacts a scholar's education or creates a hostile learning environment
- The conduct interferes with academic performance or school participation

**Examples include:**

- Inappropriate comments, gestures, or images
- Repeated unwelcome requests for sexual contact
- Unwanted touching
- Threats or favors linked to sexual behavior

**Reporting Sexual Harassment**

Any scholar who believes they are being sexually harassed—or who witnesses or becomes aware of harassment—should report it immediately to a trusted adult, teacher, counselor, or administrator. A parent, guardian, or school staff member may also make a report on behalf of the scholar.

- **Reports must be made to the Culture & Instructional Manager within three (3) days of the alleged incident.**
- Scholars may choose to report to a staff member of the same gender.
- No scholar is ever required to report harassment to the person accused of misconduct.

**Investigation and Resolution**

- **Informal Resolution:** The Culture & Instructional Manager may resolve some incidents informally at the school level.
- **Formal Complaint:** If further action is needed, a written complaint should be submitted to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is unavailable or named in the complaint, the report should go to the board of directors.
- **Investigation:** All formal complaints will be investigated promptly and thoroughly. If the complaint is substantiated, appropriate disciplinary actions will follow.
- **Board Review:** If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome, they may request a review by the Board of Directors.

All efforts will be made to keep complaints confidential, but complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

**Retaliation and False Reporting**

**iPrep** prohibits retaliation against scholars, staff, or others who report harassment or participate in investigations. Disciplinary action will be taken for:

- Retaliation against reporters or witnesses
- Knowingly making false claims of harassment

**Consequences for Policy Violations**

Consequences for violating **iPrep**'s anti-harassment and anti-bullying policies may include:

- Positive behavior supports or interventions
- Suspension or expulsion for scholars
- Disciplinary action for employees
- Restricted access or removal for visitors or volunteers

These policies apply at all times: during the school day, at school-sponsored events, on school buses, and at any location where **iPrep** activities occur. The policy is reviewed annually, posted publicly, and distributed to all staff, scholars, and families.

## PROTECTION OF PUPIL RIGHTS AMENDMENT (PPRA)

The **Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)** gives parents and guardians certain rights regarding their scholar's participation in school surveys, collecting and using information for marketing purposes, and specific physical exams.

As a parent or guardian of a scholar at **Independence Preparatory Academy**, you have the right to:

1. **Consent Before Scholar Participation**
   You must be allowed to review and provide written consent before your scholar is required to participate in any survey that reveals information about:
   - Political beliefs or affiliations
   - Mental or psychological problems of the scholar or family
   - Sexual behavior or attitudes
   - Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior
   - Critical appraisals of others with whom the scholar has close family relationships
   - Legally recognized privileged relationships (e.g., with doctors or clergy)
   - Religious beliefs or practices
   - Income (unless required to determine eligibility for a program)

2. **Opt-Out Rights**
   You have the right to opt your scholar out of:
   - Any non-emergency, invasive physical exams or screenings not required by state law (except for hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings)
   - School activities that collect personal information from scholars for marketing or sale
   - Surveys involving any of the topics listed above

3. **Access to Materials**
   You may inspect any instructional materials used in the educational curriculum or in connection with a survey or evaluation described above.

**Notification and Policy Access**

**iPrep** will notify families of their PPRA rights at the beginning of each school year and before any covered activities. Please contact the School Operations Manager for more information or to submit a written request to opt out.

## TITLE IX COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

**Independence Preparatory Academy** complies fully with **Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972**, which prohibits discrimination based on sex in any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. This means that **iPrep** does not discriminate based on sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation in:

- Admission or enrollment
- Access to academic or extracurricular programs
- Athletics and activities
- Employment or school-sponsored events
- Treatment of pregnant or parenting scholars

**Title IX Prohibits:**

- Sexual harassment, including unwelcome sexual advances or conduct
- Gender-based bullying or discrimination
- Retaliation against anyone who files a complaint or participates in an investigation

iPrep is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all scholars, staff, and community members.

**Reporting and Support**

Anyone who believes they have experienced or witnessed sexual harassment or discrimination at iPrep is encouraged to report the incident promptly. Reports may be made to Dr. Sales, Title IX Coordinator. All reports are handled with discretion and care. Retaliation against anyone who files a report or cooperates in an investigation is strictly prohibited.

# HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Scholar Name:** _____ **Grade:** _____ **Teacher:** _____

## FAMILY HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

I acknowledge receiving and reviewing the **Independence Preparatory Academy** Family Handbook for the current school year. The handbook outlines the school's policies, procedures, and expectations.

I agree to support my scholar in following all rules and responsibilities outlined in the handbook and understand that updates may be shared throughout the school year.

## TECHNOLOGY USE AGREEMENT

**Independence Preparatory Academy** provides scholars with access to technology and the Internet to support learning. However, using school technology is a privilege, not a right, and students must follow school guidelines and digital citizenship expectations.

By signing below, I acknowledge that:

- I have reviewed the Technology and Internet Use Policy with my scholar.
- My scholar will use technology for educational purposes only and will follow school expectations regarding safety, responsibility, and respectful use.
- I understand that violations may result in loss of privileges and disciplinary action.

## MEDIA RELEASE CONSENT FORM

To celebrate scholars' achievements and share school events, **Independence Preparatory Academy** may occasionally photograph or video scholars for:

- School newsletters, website, and social media
- Educational materials or classroom displays
- Local media coverage of school-related events

**Please check one:**

☐ Yes, I permit my scholar's image and/or work to be used for school-related media.

☐ No, I do not permit using my scholar's image or work.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Scholar Signature (grades 3+): _____ Date: _____