Alabama Charter Application for a 2024 Opening

Submitted To:

Alabama Public Charter School
Commission Alabama Charter School
Commission

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SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MISSION & VISION

Independence Preparatory Academy Charter School seeks to build upon the unique assets of the Fairfield community to provide an innovative school that students deserve to improve academic achievement and disrupt the cycle of poverty.

Through student-centered instruction, a predictable and nurturing environment, and intentional character development, Independence Preparatory Academy ensures that students in kindergarten through eighth grade are equipped with the academic tenacity and strength of character necessary to excel in high school, pursue the college and careers of their dreams and create positive change within their communities.

iPrep believes that all children deserve access to a quality education that prepares them for college and the career of their dreams. Therefore, we commit to student-centered and student-driven learning through carefully designed classroom environments and freedom within limits to provide our students with the foundation that makes their dreams come true. We believe all children must be immersed in a rich academic achievement culture, supported by predictable guardrails to develop character, and engage in a nurturing community to build strong agency.

Appendix A defines our core values in detail. These values anchor all aspects of our model - from instruction to the physical environment to school culture. Together with our mission and vision, our core values help to form a coherent, innovative model for Independence Preparatory Academy.

EDUCATIONAL NEED AND ANTICIPATED STUDENT POPULATION

Receiving a quality education is a civil right and, for many, the ticket out of poverty. According to Kids Count Data Center, 17% of children in the US live below the federal poverty threshold, yet, the greatest contributor to ending poverty is quality education.[1] If all students in low-income areas had just basic reading skills, an estimated 171 million people could escape extreme poverty.[2] If all adults complete some post-secondary education, the global poverty rate will be cut by more than half.[3]

The results from 1996 and 2022 NAEP in reading and math reveal the widening achievement gap between African American students and their White counterparts and all students eligible for free or reduced lunch and those not.[4] Notably, there is a 21-point difference in 4th and 8th-grade math and a 22-point and 20-point difference in 4th and 8th-grade reading, respectively.[3] Drawing this closer to home, over the past five years, Alabama students have performed significantly below the national average in 4th and 8th-grade math and reading (**Figure 1.1**).

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[1] *Children in poverty: Kids count data center*. KIDS COUNT data center: A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. (n.d.). Retrieved October 28, 2022, from https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/171-children-in-poverty?loc=2&loct=2#detailed/2/any/false/1572,1485,1376,1201,867,133,38,35,18,17/any/8326,8327
[2] *How does education affect poverty? it can help end it.* Concern Worldwide. (2022, July 14). Retrieved June 12, 2023, from https://www.concernusa.org/story/how-does-education-affect-poverty/#:~:text=Access%20to%20high%2Dquality%20primary,issues%20can%20keep%20communities%20vulnerable.
[3] Ibid.
[4] *NAEP dashboards - achievement gaps*. The Nation's Report Card. (n.d.). Retrieved October 28, 2022, from https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/dashboards/achievement_gaps.aspx

Figure 1.1: NAEP Results in Math and Reading

		2017		2019		2022	
		AL	Nation	AL	Nation	AL	Nation
Math	Grade 4	31%	40%	28%	40%	27%	35%
	Grade 8	21%	33%	21%	33%	19%	26%
Reading	Grade 4	31%	35%	28%	34%	28%	32%
	Grade 8	28%	35%	24%	32%	22%	29%

In Fairfield City Schools, the 2022 results of the ACAP indicate that 21% of students are proficient in ELA, 4% are proficient in math, and 8% are proficient in science.[5] While Fairfield's graduation rate has increased by about 5%, the percentage of students showing college and career readiness (CCR) remains at least 40% below the graduation rate.[6] In 2021, PARCA reported that Blacks and economically disadvantaged (ED) students were limited to CTE credentials versus other postsecondary pathways. 57% of Black students and 57% of ED students received an approved industry credential, while 11% of Black students and 10% of ED students met ACT benchmark scores.[7] This disparity limits student access to postsecondary options and forces them into pathways that may differ from their personal goals and aspirations.

During its prime, Fairfield boasted of economic growth and vitality. But as the steel industry waned, the city's population and tax base declined.[8] These factors have exacerbated poverty and depressed opportunities for economic mobility. By providing an excellent school option, iPrep prepares students for college and career success, contributing to a thriving, renewed city. According to the 2021 Census, Fairfield has a population of 9,832 children and adults, of which, 93% of the population is African American, 5% is White, and a little over 1% is Hispanic or Latino.[9] The median household income is $41,439, and of the 93% of adults holding high school diplomas, only 21% of adults over 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher.[10]

Quality schools are institutions of change, and students who attend quality schools become effective change agents of the future. Through student-centered instruction, a nurturing and predictable environment, and intentional character development, iPrep produces students with academic tenacity and strong character to contribute to a flourishing, renewed Fairfield.

Serving students in zip codes 35064, 35228, 35221, 35224, 35208, and 35218, iPrep predicts similar student demographics (**Figure 1.2**) as Fairfield City Schools based on 2022 demographics on the state report card.

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[5] "Alabama Department of Education Report Card." Retrieved January 15, 2023.
[6] NAEP dashboards - achievement gaps. The Nation's Report Card. (n.d.). Retrieved October 28, 2022, from https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/dashboards/achievement_gaps.aspx
[7] "College and Career Readiness in Alabama." Accessed January 15, 2023. https://parcalabama.org/college-and-career-readiness-in-alabama/
[8] "Historic Town of Fairfield." Accessed January 15, 2023. https://www.fairfieldha.org/history#:~:text=Fairfield%20Alabama%2C%20founded%20in%201910,Company%20(TCI)%20in%201907.
[9] "U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts: Fairfield City, Alabama." Accessed January 11, 2023. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/fairfieldcityalabama/PST045221.
[10] ibid.

Figure 1.2: Projected Student Demographics

Student Demographics	iPrep	FCS
% Black	96%	96%
% Latino/Hispanic	2%	3%
% Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%
% American Indian, Native American, Alaska Native	0%	0%
% White	3%	2%
% Economically Disadvantaged	86%	74%
% English Language Learners	1%	1%
% Students with Special Needs	20%	15%

EDUCATION PLAN/SCHOOL DESIGN

Our mission is to foster a rigorous learning environment that prepares students to break the cycle of poverty, improve their lives, and strengthen their community. We embrace this approach by designing student-centered instruction to support unfinished learning and ensure standards mastery while simultaneously fostering social-emotional learning in a nurturing and predictable environment through three key pillars:

1. **Voice and Choice**: As core tenets of student-centered learning, voice and choice allow students to be active decision-makers in their learning through setting daily goals, defining the pace of their learning, and advocating for additional support when needed.

2. **Character and Culture Building**: 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 students in being self-directed and facilitating their success through school-wide practices, Eagle Habits, and a multi-tiered system of supports.

3. **College and Career Exploration**: As the incubator for future leaders, thinkers, and innovators, iPrep creates space for students to explore the careers of their dreams, leading them to discover their purpose and passion. College preparation and career readiness begin in kindergarten. Therefore, all iPrep students have space and time to explore individual interests and passions to inform future decisions.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Aligned with our mission and vision, our model depends on close partnerships that strengthen The Nest, nurturing our students as they soar to higher heights. The Nest extends to valuable community members: businesses and non-profits within the community, recreational organizations, community organizations, churches, and libraries that have deep roots in the Fairfield community and offer support and resources to ensure the school's success. We continue to test our model through conversations and feedback from community leaders, education reform experts, and students and families. We have engaged over 100 individuals to learn about their experiences and what they want in a school environment and used this feedback to inform our school model.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

iPrep has assembled a knowledgeable, high-capacity governing board. Our team's expertise spans finance, nonprofit management, school leadership, human resources, and business administration, with the skill set to ensure effective operation. **Attachment 1** provides details on iPrep's proposed board and leadership.

ENROLLMENT SUMMARY

In year one, iPrep will enroll a maximum of 160 students in grades K-2 to ensure fiscal wellness in implementing our mission, vision, and model. We predict enrolling a cohort of 60 each year in kindergarten. At maximum capacity, enrollment is projected at 520 students. **Figure 1.3** shows iPrep's growth pattern.

Figure 1.3: iPrep's Growth Pattern

	NUMBER OF STUDENTS						
	Year 1 2024 -2025	Year 2 2025-2026	Year 3 2026-2027	Year 4 2027-2028	Year 5 2028-2029	Year 6 2029-2030	Year 7 2030-2031
Kindergarten	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
1st Grade	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
2nd Grade	40	60	60	60	60	60	60
3rd Grade	0	40	60	60	60	60	60
4th Grade	0	0	40	60	60	60	60
5th Grade	0	0	0	40	60	60	60
6th Grade	0	0	0	0	40	60	60
7th Grade	0	0	0	0	0	40	60
8th Grade	0	0	0	0	0	0	40
Total	160	220	280	340	400	460	520

SECTION 2: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DESIGN AND CAPACITY

Program Overview

Our model is based on the intensive research of innovative models that successfully educate students in schools with similar demographics. At its core, our mission and vision to prepare students with the academic tenacity and strength of character necessary to excel in high school, pursue the careers of their dreams, and create positive change within their communities, fosters a rigorous learning environment that prepares

students to break the cycle of poverty improving their lives and strengthening our community. We embrace this approach by designing student-centered instruction to support unfinished learning and ensure standards mastery while simultaneously fostering social-emotional learning in a nurturing and predictable environment through three key pillars: **Voice and Choice**, **Character and Culture Building**, and **College and Career Exploration**.

Voice and Choice

Voice and choice are core student-centered learning tenets, improving student engagement and agency.[11] Research indicates that students engaging in student-centered learning and begin the year significantly below national norms in reading and math, move closer to norms during the year, and may even exceed the national norm in year 2.[12] Ultimately, student-centered approaches improve student outcomes in the short term (e.g., stronger rates of growth in achievement) and in the long term (e.g., successful completion of a postsecondary degree or successful transition into a career).[2]

In K-2, students develop foundational skills to prepare them for future learning. Instruction in K-2 is more teacher-directed with opportunities for students to co-create their knowledge. This might look like students selecting math centers to push them to their weekly goals, choosing books aligned to reading levels, or selecting tools based on lesson content.

In 3 – 8, iPrep adapts the Modern Classrooms Project (MCP), a research-backed instructional model that responds to student needs using three primary aspects – blended instruction, self-paced structures, and mastery-based grading. ***Blended instruction*** allows students to learn at their own pace through instructional videos or other resources, then complete aligned practice activities geared toward their proficiency level. Teachers have the freedom to work with students individually or in small groups. Then, using relevant data, teachers determine when to shift to targeted, direct instruction to support students moving further along the learning plan.

In many schools, efforts to meet individual students' needs take less priority than ensuring all students work toward grade-level standards and progress at the same pace as their peers.[2] The MCP model allows us to push students to meet grade-level expectations by ensuring that every student has flexible learning structures based on their specific needs and abilities. ***Self-paced structures*** allow students to work at a speed customized to their mastery level, allowing continuous learning. Within each unit of study, teachers identify "must do", "should do", and "aspire to do" lessons to craft learning plans for each unit of study. All students are expected to master "must do'' tasks by hard deadlines and spend 85% of class applying learning in ways driven by inquiry and scaffolded to more challenging work as the unit progresses.

[11] Institute, M. V. L. R. (2020, December 8). How implementing voice & choice can improve student engagement. Michigan Virtual. Retrieved December 3, 2022, from
https://michiganvirtual.org/blog/how-implementing-voice-choice-can-improve-student-engagement/#:~:text=Giving%20students%20voice%20and%20choice,being%20simply%20delivered%20to%20them.

[12] Pane, J. F., Steiner, E. D., Baird, M. D., Hamilton, L. S., & Pane, J. D. (2017, December 7). How does personalized learning affect student achievement? RAND Corporation. Retrieved December 19, 2022, from
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9994.html#:~:text=Key%20Findings,schools%20have%20experience%20implementing%20PL.

Mastery-based grading prevents lingering skill gaps and prepares students for the real world. Students demonstrate mastery through frequent mastery checks. Mastery checks are administered at the end of each lesson. At least 85% of the lesson content must be mastered before moving on. Students move through lessons based on proficiency and internalize that progress is contingent on mastery, not completion. The learning environment is flexible, allowing students the choice to redo tasks, rewatch videos, practice more, or revise assessments until mastery without being penalized for wrong answers while learning.

Character and Culture Building

School is not just a place for academic growth but should address character, social-emotional wellness, and life skills. Research shows that learning that addresses the whole child improves achievement by an average of 11 percentile points, increases prosocial behaviors (such as kindness, sharing, and empathy), improves student attitudes toward school, and reduces depression and stress among students.[13] Aligned with our mission, we leverage the lived experiences of our scholars to increase opportunities to see their culture valued, integrated, and represented as we support them in being self-directed and facilitating their success through school-wide practices, Eagle Habits, and a multi-tiered system of supports for academic and social-emotional concerns.

Career and College Exploration

Our students do rigorous work as a vehicle to spark passion and drive. As the incubator for future leaders, thinkers, and innovators, iPrep creates space for students to explore their dream careers to discover their purpose and passion. Research indicates that children with a strong sense of purpose experience greater life satisfaction and physical, mental, and emotional well-being. They perform better in school and have higher rates of college retention.[14] College preparation and career readiness begin in kindergarten. Therefore, all iPrep students have space and time to explore individual interests and passions to inform future decisions through Eagle Quests (**Appendix D**) twice a year.

Measuring Our Impact

In 5 years, iPrep will exceed local district proficiency averages in ELA and math, exceeding proficiency averages for schools in Alabama with similar demographics each year. We monitor our progress and measure our impact by setting annual performance goals. These goals use data from the proposed population as a baseline to ensure that goals are ambitious, yet attainable. Our goals for year 1 are:

1. 80% of students will meet or exceed grade level proficiency in foundational skills on the Star Early Literacy Test.
2. 80% of students achieve at least one year of growth in ELA and math on the i-Ready Diagnostic.
3. 80% of students will score 85% or higher on benchmarks in reading and math.
4. 90% of students report they agree or strongly agree that they "can apply the mindsets, skills, attitudes that help them succeed in school, career and life" as measured by annual surveys.

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[13] Weissberg, R. (2016, February 15). *Why social and emotional learning is essential for students*. Edutopia. Retrieved October 4, 2022, from https://www.edutopia.org/blog/why-sel-essential-for-students-weissberg-durlak-domitrovich-gullotta

[14] Cardona, M., & Katherine Neas. (2021). *Supporting child and student social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs*. www.ed.gov. Retrieved February 27, 2023, from https://www2.ed.gov/documents/students/supporting-child-student-social-emotional-behavioral-mental-health.pdf

5. 90% of families report they "feel welcomed and connected to teachers and to what students are learning and doing in school," as measured by annual surveys.

Curriculum and Instructional Design

Keeping the needs of students first, iPrep strategically prioritizes quality curriculum and instruction. Using student-centered learning to build academic tenacity in students, we intentionally align our learning environment with our mission and core values. Education Reimagined, a national non-profit committed to making learner-centered education available to every child, describes student-centered environments as classrooms where students are active participants in their learning as they gradually become owners of it, and learning itself is seen as an engaging and exciting process. "Student interests, passions, dreams, skills, and needs shape their learning experiences and drive the commitments and actions of the adults supporting them."[15]

Learning Environment

Academic instruction is facilitated by one teacher per 22 students in K-5. These classes are staffed with one teacher and teacher associate during literacy and math. Teachers and Teacher Associates co-plan and co-facilitate instruction as a team to individuals, small groups, or whole groups based on the level of mastery. K-2 teachers prioritize intense academic and social-emotional learning routines, and procedures students will use to learn now and in future grades. K-2 students experience freedom with limits to make choices in how they learn and express their learning in the classroom.

In 6-8, one teacher provides instruction for every 24-25 students. Aligned with our mission to leverage student-centered instruction, teachers facilitate the learning process rather than direct and deliver it. Sometimes our students guide their learning, and the teacher is an observer who asks questions or offers a critique. Sometimes the teacher guides learning, and the student receives instruction or directions for practice. There are frequent opportunities for students to take on the role of coach to share expertise and offer critique to other students and teachers.

In K-8, SPED teachers are teachers with special education expertise that manage the collaborative development of IEPs using academic and social-emotional goals for diverse learners. ELL Teachers are teachers with ESL expertise and manage the ILPs of ELLs needing specialized instruction in language proficiency. In addition, both Teachers and Teacher Associates collaborate with SPED and ELL Teachers to address special student population needs through supplemental small-group instruction and co-teaching.

Framework of Instructional Design

"Our lessons, units, and courses should be logically inferred from the results sought, not derived from the methods, books, and activities with which we are most comfortable"[16] (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). When considering the urgency to improve student outcomes in Fairfield, AL, we recognize that the "first teach" must

[15] Education Reimagined. (2015, September). *A transformational vision for education in the US*. https://education-reimagined.org. Retrieved November 10, 2022, from https://education-reimagined.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/A-Transformational-Vision-for-Education-in-the-US.pdf

[16] Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. *Understanding by design*. ASCD, 2005 pg. 14.

focus on driving students to mastery of standards. For this reason, iPrep leverages Understanding by Design (UbD) to prepare for instruction. UbD involves identifying desired results, determining acceptable evidence, and planning learning experiences and instruction.[6]

The primary goal of UbD is developing and deepening student understanding. UbD prevents teachers from focusing primarily on activities and instruction versus instruction outputs, focusing more on learning than teaching. UbD identifies learning goals or desired results first, then aligns assessments and instruction around those outcomes. When teachers explicitly define learning outcomes, they better understand aligned high-leverage tasks that lead students to meet lesson goals. Using the UbD framework makes student learning more apparent since, through design, teachers are clear on what students need to know and understand to progress. "In teaching students for understanding, we must grasp the key idea that we are coaches of their ability to play the 'game' of performing with understanding, not tellers of our understanding to them on the sidelines"[6] (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

English Language Arts

Our approach to literacy highlights the connection between reading, writing, speaking, and listening. A successful literacy curriculum builds the confidence and competence of students through multiple readings of grade-appropriate complex text that exposes students to diverse ideas and cultures, a variety of forms of writing, and critical thinking about how literature connects to global issues and topics.[17] [18] As a result, iPrep selects the **EL Education Language Arts** curriculum in K-8. Aligned with the Alabama Course of Study, this curriculum meets expectations for text quality and complexity, building knowledge, and usability as rated on EdReports and was awarded nearly perfect scores, boasting that "modules are developed to support and build knowledge, to address academic vocabulary intentionally, and to scaffold support so that students will independently demonstrate grade-level proficiency at the end of the school year"[19] (EdReports, 2021).

This curriculum is a comprehensive, standards-based, core literacy program that engages teachers and students through compelling, real-world content.[20] The modules build "students' deep subject matter expertise by immersing them in real-world social and scientific topics to fuel creativity, critical thinking, and literacy."[21] Topics and texts prepare students to be more effective students and ethical people by engaging in issues that resonate nationally while targeting science and social studies content for each grade level. In addition, it explicitly supports ELLs focused on differentiation with greater representation of diverse cultures and identities in topics and communities studied, book authors, and characters.[22] There is also a consistent approach to writing across all levels.

[17] Pimental, S. (2017, January 19). *The Essential Elements of an ELA curriculum*. Peers and Pedagogy. Retrieved November 10, 2022, from http://achievethecore.org/peersandpedagogy/the-essential-elements-of-an-ela-curriculum/#:~:text=Successful%20ELA%20programs%20build%20the,specific%20questions%20and%20other%20supports

[18] Hill, M. G. (2018, May 4). *4 components of an ELA curriculum to reach all learners*. Medium. Retrieved November 10, 2022, from https://medium.com/inspired-ideas-prek-12/4-components-of-an-ela-curriculum-to-reach-all-learners-10962efc7783

[19] EdReports. (n.d.). El Education K-5 Language Arts. EdReports. Retrieved November 10, 2022, from https://www.edreports.org/reports/overview/el-education-k-5-language-arts-2017

[20] *El Education Curriculum*. Frequently Asked Questions | EL Education Curriculum. (n.d.). Retrieved November 10, 2022, from https://curriculum.eleducation.org/content/k-8-FAQs

[21] ibid.

[22] ibid.

EL's curriculum embodies vital principles that align with iPrep's mission, vision, and core values through its values of self-discovery, the responsibility of learning, empathy and care, and diversity and inclusion.[10] To realize our goal of exceeding local district student proficiency averages in ELA, we must select a program that shows evidence of increasing literacy achievement in schools with similar demographics. Users across the country have seen dramatic gains for students in historically underserved subgroups, finding that students outperform their state and district peers, become engaged readers of complex text, students eligible for free or reduced lunch make huge gains, and students become motivated to produce high-quality work.[23]

Attachment 2 provides a sample course scope and sequence for English Language Arts.

Mathematics

Aligned with our mission and vision to provide instruction that prepares students for college and careers, we commit to a mathematics curriculum that challenges students to master standards through real-world application and supports them in learning math by doing. We intentionally select a curriculum that supports students in seeing math in the real world and developing a productive disposition about math, ultimately realizing our goal to exceed local district student proficiency averages in math. iPrep selects **Imagine Learning Illustrative Mathematics** (IM) curriculum for grades K-8 because it uses a problem-based instructional framework that supports teachers in structuring lessons so students do the problem-solving to learn math.[24] The activities and routines allow teachers to determine what students already know and what they need to master new concepts. Student understanding is supported through the three aspects of rigor - conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and applying these concepts to math problems with and without real-world contexts.[25]

Aligned with the Alabama Course of Study, this curriculum meets expectations for focus and coherence, rigor and mathematical practices, and usability sections of EdReports.org in 2020 and was awarded perfect scores in all three areas. In an April 2020 survey, 73% of teachers using IM in K-12 reported that their students had an increased math knowledge, and 66% were more engaged in productive struggle.[26] Users from across the country suggest the curricular resources are specially tuned to support teachers in planning and facilitating lessons in a blended instruction model and identifying essential lessons and activities to address the major work of the grade or prerequisites aligned to our instructional model in grades 3-8. Through iPrep's mission to build academic tenacity, IM supports all students through structures that foster endurance and perseverance.

Science

iPrep selects **STEMscopes Science** as the K-8 science curriculum. STEMscopes is based on the 5E model (engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate), an inquiry-based approach that begins with a question and

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[23] *El Education Curriculum*. Results and Reviews | EL Education Curriculum. (n.d.). Retrieved November 10, 2022, from https://curriculum.eleducation.org/results-and-reviews

[24] *Online curricula and solutions | Imagine Learning*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 10, 2022, from https://il-cms.imaginelearning.com/media/pdf/ILM-Program-Overview-K-5.pdf

[25] ibid.

[26] *Teachers using illustrative mathematics K–12 curriculum report positive impact on teaching practices and student knowledge in mathematics*. Illustrative Mathematics K–12 Math. (2020, November 5). Retrieved December 19, 2022, from https://illustrativemathematics.org/teachers-using-illustrative-mathematics-k-12-curriculum-report-positive-impact-on-teaching-practices-and-student-knowledge-in-mathematics/

uses students' curiosity to fuel their learning of science. Aligned with the Alabama Course of Study in Science, it brings science to life through exploratory hands-on kits that promote inquiry and excitement through real-world scientific connections.[27] STEMscopes leverages a blended learning platform making learning flexible and personal, aligning with our fundamental design principle of voice and choice. Aligned with our mission to ensure academic success for all students, this program offers resources to differentiate, adapt, and equitably engage all students. STEMscopes has proven to be itself in driving student results. Research studies show that using STEMscopes results in more students who meet or exceed science proficiency benchmarks on state assessments. More notably, districts using STEMscopes saw an average increase of 4.69-7.19% in economically disadvantaged black students and 2.51-6.73% in economically disadvantaged Latino students than districts using other science curricula.[28]

Social Studies

iPrep teachers use Lavinia Group's **Insight Social Studies** curriculum in grades K-5 to plan instruction to support students in mastering social studies content while developing vocabulary, responding to text, and increasing their writing, speaking, and listening skills, teaching content through high-quality literature, writing, and project work. Aligned to the Alabama Course of Study and an "expanding environments" approach, students begin with content close to home—studying their communities and families—and build to World History by the time they leave 5th grade.[29] In grades 6-8, iPrep selects Savvas' **myWorld Interactive Social Studies** 6-8 curriculum. myWorld Interactive inspires students to become skilled citizens through active inquiry and strong literacy connections that promote critical thinking, problem-solving, evidence-based reasoning, and communication skills.[30] The student-centered approach ensures the implementation of Alabama standards and the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies.

Instructional Methods

Embracing the mindset that all students can achieve, we believe in prioritizing high-leverage methods to support our student population. Research suggests that some instructional strategies "significantly give at-risk students the tools they need to overcome learning obstacles when the strategies are implemented with fidelity"[31] (Bolden, 2020, para 5). Given the academic performance of our target population and aligned with our mission to equip students with the academic tenacity to excel in high school and beyond, iPrep selects strategies that have proven to narrow the achievement gap of all students, including those most at risk. These strategies are employed in all classrooms across grades K-8. **Figure 2.1** outlines our standard instructional methods.

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[27] *Stemscopes Alabama Curriculum: Al K-8 Science Curriculum. Accelerate Learning. (n.d.). Retrieved December 19, 2022, from https://www.stemscopes.com/science/al/*

[28] ibid.

[29] Lavinia Group. (n.d.). *Lavinia Group Social Studies Curriculum*. Lavinia Group. Retrieved November 18, 2022, from https://laviniagroup.org/curriculum/

[30] Savvas. (n.d.). *MyWorld interactive American History – Middle School US history*. myWorld Interactive American History – Middle School US History. Retrieved November 18, 2022, from https://www.savvas.com/index.cfm?locator=PS344o&PMDBSOLUTIONID=6724&PMDBSITEID=2781&PMDBCATEGORYID=815&PMDBSUBSOLUTIONID=&PMDBSUBJEC TAREAID=&PMDBSUBCATEGORYID=&PMDbProgramID=154303

[31] Bolden, Felicia. (2020, July 23). *Narrowing achievement gaps for at-risk students*. Graduate Programs for Educators. Retrieved November 10, 2022, from https://www.graduateprogram.org/2020/02/narrowing-achievement-gaps-for-at-risk-students/

Figure 2.1: Common Instructional Methods

Instructional Method	Rationale
Direct Instruction	Direct instruction refers to structured, sequenced lessons led by teachers that present explicit, guided instruction to students[32]. Direction instruction is essential for ensuring that content-specific vocabulary, background knowledge, and content are learned. Teachers may employ direct instruction during whole class or small group time, especially to reteach a concept or skill or to provide additional support for students to reach mastery.
Small Group Instruction	Research suggests that small group instruction is one of the most powerful levers supporting student needs[33]. We leverage small group instruction to teach, reteach and accelerate learning. It allows us to differentiate by readiness levels, learning setting, learning style, ELL language proficiency, interest, and product and process.
Explicit Teaching of Academic Vocabulary	To be successful in all content areas, students must know academic and domain-specific vocabulary. Teachers use strategies such as pre-teaching vocabulary, word walls, and common words in writing and discussions to build students' academic vocabulary.
Higher Order Questioning (HOQs)	To excel in college and careers, students must be critical thinkers prepared to engage in rigorous content. HOQs place advanced cognitive demands on students and encourage them to think beyond literal questions.[34] HOQs promote critical thinking skills because they require students to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate content instead of simply recalling facts.
Wait Time	Wait Time is the practice of inserting a short amount of waiting before taking an answer to a question. This strategy increases thinking and promotes more cognitive work during the wait. Research shows that a wait time of approximately three to five seconds yields more responses and a significant increase in the quality of responses (i.e., answers are more in-depth and/or closer to the desired correct answer, etc.).[35]
Cold Call	Cold Call establishes that students should always be ready to share their thinking and that being in a class community is to be part of the discussion. iPrep teachers leverage Cold Call to create inclusiveness and equity, providing a safe space for students to share thinking by breaking the barrier of voluntarily sharing.

[32] Direct instruction - A practical guide to effective teaching. BookWidgets. (2021, February 3). Retrieved November 18, 2022, from https://www.bookwidgets.com/blog/2019/03/direct-instruction-a-practical-guide-to-effective-teaching
[33] The Learning Accelerator. (n.d.). Targeted Small Group Instruction. Resources & Guidance from The Learning Accelerator. Retrieved November 18, 2022, from https://practices.learningaccelerator.org/strategies/targeted-small-group-instruction
[34] Bogdanovich, P. (2021, November 24). *Higher-order questions*. Dataworks Educational Research. Retrieved November 18, 2022, from https://dataworks-ed.com/blog/2014/10/higher-order-questions/
[35] Teach Like a Champion. (n.d.). *Wait Time*. How to Teach Like a Champion. Retrieved November 18, 2022, from http://lefevercd-tlac.weebly.com/3-wait-time.html

Turn and Talk	Turn and talk permits all students to participate in the discussion, process new learning, and engage in meaningful conversations with their peers. Research shows that having multiple opportunities to respond and actively engage in content learning improves student learning.[36] In addition, turn and talk promotes expressive language "improving students' expressive language can also strengthen linguistic comprehension necessary to comprehend text"[37] (Tunmer & Chapman, 2012).
Format Matters	iPrep teachers are charged with feeling "love for our students and their form of expression" and embracing "the responsibility of ensuring that they are prepared to speak the language of the professions with fluency"[38] (Lemov, 2021). Format Matters is the method that supports teachers in establishing and upholding expectations of students, consistently communicating in a clear and complete format while in school, and requiring students to format their responses in complete grammatical and audible sentences.[39]
Habits of Discussion	Doug Lemov suggests that "when mutual respect and psychological safety pervade, and where the ethos is collaborative, and the message is we are working together to understand this, then true open-mindedness and maximum learning are likely to occur" [40] (Lemov, 2021). Habits of Discussion allow students to bring out the best in each other through fundamental actions that build robust discussions. These habits are developmentally appropriate and will progress in future grades. For example, in kindergarten, students learn to track the speaker, speak loud and proud when appropriate, elaborate on their answers, and evaluate and build off their peer's answers. While 6th graders are expected to clarify, confirm, contradict, and extend others' responses.

Student Performance Standards

Independence Preparatory Academy anchors its teaching, learning, and curriculum to the most recent versions of the Alabama Course of Study (ALCOS) in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Physical Education to achieve our mission. The ALCOS sets a bar for academic rigor and, most critical, learning outcomes to prepare students for Alabama state assessments. Written by education experts in Alabama, these standards support all students, regardless of ability or current level of mastery, in gaining access to challenging, grade-level work and developing students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills for success in college and career.

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[36] MacSuga-Gage, A. S., & Simonsen, B. (2015). Examining the effects of teacher-directed opportunities to respond on student outcomes: A systematic review of the literature. Education and Treatment of Children, 38(2), 211–239.

[37] Tunmer, W. E., & Chapman, J. W. (2012). The simple view of reading redux: Vocabulary knowledge and the independent components hypothesis. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 45, 453–466.

[38] Lemov, D. Teach Like a Champion 3.0: 63 Techniques That Put Students on the Path to College. Hoboken, Jossey-Bass, 2021.

[39] ibid.

[40] ibid.

In response to the impact of the pandemic on student learning in Alabama, the Alabama State Department of Education determined critical standards for grades K-8. iPrep leverages these standards to ensure students are mastering the essential learning of the grade to succeed in the following and future grades. Recognizing that the ELA Critical Standards are based on the 2016 ELA ALCOS, iPrep leaders are prepared to crosswalk the 2021 and 2016 versions of the ALCOS and the critical standards document provided by the ALSDE to ensure prioritized ELA standards reflect the most accurate version.

Attachment 4 outlines a complete set of learning standards for English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Physical Education.

Criteria for Promotion and Retention

A solid academic foundation is necessary to succeed in high school and beyond. Our school's design, with tracking student performance and tiers of student support and frequent communication, ensures students matriculate successfully. In addition, Independence Preparatory Academy uses a standard grading scale like that of Fairfield City Schools. **Figure 2.2** outlines our grading scale.

Figure 2.2: Grades Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Score Range
A	100 – 90
B	89 – 80
C	79 – 71
D	70
F	69 – 0

Our students' backgrounds do not limit our expectations of their outcomes; however, we believe that the promotion of a student who has not successfully mastered the content in all classes contributes to the continued struggle of that student in future grades. Therefore, students earning at least 70% in all academic classes are promoted to the next grade. Final course averages will be calculated by averaging the grade of each of the four 9-week grading periods.

In alignment with our mission to always be student-centered, we actively monitor performance to ensure students are on track to grade-level mastery. With that, at the end of the 2nd 9-week grading period, teachers notify families of students maintaining grades below 70% for the first and second 9-week periods of the need for additional support to ensure student promotion. In this event, parent-teacher conferences in February are to define other structures and supports to move students closer to mastery.

When considering retention, the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) team led by the Dean of Academics, including general education teachers, the Student Culture Manager, the student, and their family meets to ensure all efforts to provide interventions and services to support the learner in meeting the benchmarks required to transition to the next grade successfully have been exhausted. The MTSS team must unanimously agree that retention is the best option for the student's development.

If retention is considered, the MTSS team focuses on the following:
- Students mastering less than 50% of the academic benchmarks for their grades
- Students 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
- Students who accumulate more than nine absences during the school year

Attachment 5 outlines the exit standards for our 8th-grade students.

We remain relentless in our pursuit to identify and remove barriers in our current policies, procedures, systems, or practices that limit opportunities for our scholars. For this reason, we leverage multiple data sources to ensure our promotion/retention policy remains responsive to community needs. We begin this interrogation by communicating these expectations at parent orientations during the summer that outlines all key policy and expectations of students and families. We support our families in supporting students outside of school by providing opportunities to learn more about our college preparatory and career readiness curriculum and instructional methods during University Nights to ensure students get maximum support in our rigorous learning environment. Finally, at least three times a three, we share family surveys to ensure our families continue to have space to share our programming and policies align with their needs and support of our students. Feedback from these surveys allows us essential data to ensure that policies – like the promotion/retention criteria – promote students' continued success.

School Calendar and Schedule
iPrep's calendar and schedule optimize instructional time for students and provide teachers with adequate time to prepare for student learning.

Our academic calendar (**Attachment 6**) reflects 180 instructional days. Students receive between 1,755-1765 minutes of instruction weekly. That is about 1,100 more minutes of instructional time per week or about 11 more days of instruction than Fairfield City Schools allowing students more time to receive literacy and math instruction aligned with their individual needs. In the event of inclement weather closings, we intend to convert teacher workdays in the spring to full instructional days or early release days into full instructional days.

Studies suggest that the more time teachers spend on professional development, the more significantly they change their practices.[41] Fifteen days before school opens, teacher development focuses on grounding in our mission, vision, and core values while engaging in learning around the academic and cultural vision. Because our model is unique, we protect 1.5 hours weekly for teacher development on teaching and learning. Meeting-free planning averages 60 minutes daily, in addition to 25 minutes of duty-free lunch.

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[41] Teaching teachers: PD to improve student achievement. Learning for Justice. (n.d.). Retrieved December 18, 2022, from https://www.learningforjustice.org/professional-development/teaching-teachers-pd-to-improve-student-achievement

Our schedule (**Attachment 7**) provides adequate time for students to engage in student-centered learning to support their diverse needs. Our school day begins at 8:00 am and concludes at 3:30 pm Monday through Thursday and 2:00 pm Friday. **Figure 2.3** outlines our instructional time in minutes.

Figure 2.3: Instructional Time in Minutes

Lower Elementary (K-2) Instructional Minutes			
Content Area	Daily Minutes (M, T, W, Th)	Daily Minutes (Friday)	Weekly Minutes
Literacy	160	120	760
Mathematics	90	45	405
Science or Social Studies	30	0	120
Physical Education	30	30	150
Character and Culture Building	30	50	170
College and Career Enrichment	0	30	30
Choice Block – Literacy or Math	30	0	120
Total Instructional	**370**	**275**	**1,755**
Upper Elementary (3–5) and Middle School (6–8) Instructional Minutes			
Content Area	Daily Minutes (M, T, W, Th)	Daily Minutes (Friday – Choice Day)	Weekly Minutes
Literacy	95	70 – 125	455 – 505
Mathematics	75	70 – 125	435 – 485
Science	55	45 - 100	270 – 320
Social Studies	55	45 - 100	270 – 320
Physical Education + Electives	55	30	250
Character and Culture Building	45	20	200
College and Career Enrichment	0	50	50
Total Instructional	**375**	**265**	**1,765**

School Culture

A 2014 brief from the Education Law Center states, "an estimated two in three children are exposed to traumatic experiences that have the potential to impact brain development, social functioning, and ability to learn and engage in school." [42] Recent research suggests that trauma response in children can diminish concentration, memory, and organizational and language abilities leading to low academic performance, challenging behavior, and complex relationships.[43] At iPrep, we commit to acknowledging, understanding, and addressing the impact of trauma and adversity by creating a trauma-sensitive culture where all students feel safe, connected, and loved. Our school culture promotes learning that honors and includes each student's lived experiences while providing the freedom to explore interests and passions to master learning standards. In

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[42] McInerney, M. and McLindon, A. Unlocking the door to learning: Trauma informed classrooms & transformational schools. Education Law Center, 2
[43] Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative. (2018, August 14). Trauma and Learning: Impact. Helping Traumatized Children Learn. Retrieved February 27, 2023, from https://traumasensitiveschools.org/trauma-and-learning/the-problem-impact/

alignment with our mission and vision, we collaboratively create and sustain a predictable and nurturing environment rooted in our **SOAR values (Appendix A)** of **Service**, **Optimism**, **Agency**, and **Resilience**.

Core Value	Connections to Our School Culture
SERVICE	At iPrep, healthy relationships are essential to our community. Therefore, we guide students in forming healthy relationships that create a safe and inclusive environment. Through community, we see beyond ourselves to become aware and responsive to the well-being and perspective of others. iPrep students see service and partnership as a part of whom they are becoming.

Positive relationships kickstart our day. A leadership team member greets our students at the school's door every morning. Then, at the classroom door, students are greeted by their teacher with the greeting of their choice. These greetings create a joyful start and allow iPrep teachers and leaders to determine how students are emotionally showing up that day. This allows for early intervention to ensure students are prepared to engage in their day.

Students grow and thrive in a caring community. iPrep students belong to an intimate community within our broader school community called The Nest (homeroom). Aligned with our mission, The Nest, named after local colleges, to promote pride, supports students in building community and giving/receiving support in intentional character development. Student interaction within The Nest develops emotional intelligence and healthy relationships. The development of emotional intelligence leads to self-regulation, which promotes building relationships that positively contribute to the welfare of others.

Restorative circles create accountability to self and others. Restorative circles allow students to "feel connected and develop communal ownership of the classroom"[44] (Yusem, 2022, para 7). Creating this kind of connectedness supports our students in engaging in environments that breed authentic engagement and deep learning. Weekly or as needed, restorative circles begin with mindfulness practices to open the space for intentional reflection. Each student "check-ins" on what they are bringing to the circle, followed by a review of circle guidelines and alignment on personal and community values. Circle Keepers (teachers and students) facilitate a rich dialogue through prompts and questions to generate a rich and meaningful conversation. The circle concludes with each student "checking out" and leaving with shared agreements. When the circle is in response to harm or conflict, students discuss how community norms were violated, the impact on the community, and how to repair relationships. Restorative circles allow students to take responsibility for their actions using our shared agreements and core values and the impact those actions have on our community.

Core Value	Connections to Our School Culture
OPTIMISM	At iPrep, we give our best in all things because we expect the best in all things. Because of that, we collaboratively set positive expectations for ourselves and others. We guide our students to build on their strengths to face rigorous learning while pursuing their dreams.

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[44] Yusem, D. (2022, December 1). Restorative justice in schools: SEL in action. Mindful Schools. Retrieved October 17, 2022, from https://www.mindfulschools.org/inspiration/restorative-justice-in-schools-sel-in-action/

Shared agreements set the context for a safe, supportive learning environment. When students "can collaboratively articulate and define their expectations for themselves and others and commit to a set of working agreements, then so many of the barriers that inhibit successful progress can be eliminated" [45] (Hirsch, 2021, para 1). At the beginning of the year, teachers engage in a process to create clear and consistent structures and routines that give students the responsibility of taking care of themselves, their classroom, and their school environments. These shared agreements allow students to practice care with each other and hold each other accountable by calling someone in (instead of calling them out) when an agreement is violated. Shared agreements ensure that all students can access a safe, supportive learning environment regardless of physical, academic, or language ability.

Our most vulnerable learners receive a well-rounded, inclusive education regardless of the language barrier, academic challenge, or disability. To realize our mission of ensuring our students are prepared with academic tenacity, we guide all students to build on their strengths to face the rigorous learning that comes with pursuing dreams and use this strengths-based approach to tackle identified academic, cognitive and social-emotional challenges. Our laser-like focus on eliminating the achievement gap for all students propels our staff to find alternative ways to support our students in alignment with their individualized learning needs. Our multi-tiered system of supports guides us in regularly monitoring student data and progress to goals while relying on both instructional strategies and behavioral supports to meet the unique needs of our diverse learners.

Core Value	Connections to Our School Culture
AGENCY	At iPrep, our values drive us to actively pursue our dreams. We consistently reflect on our values, goals, and actions to determine when to shift. We believe that our work is personal and always matters. We guide students to develop a lifelong relationship with learning so they learn they own both the process and experiences.
RESILIENCE	At iPrep, we are courageous in pursuing challenges and work hard to overcome them. Our students understand that learning is a continuous process that eventually leads to mastery. We encourage our students to embrace rigorous work because that is where they do their best learning.

Students are empowered to engage in our culture through Eagle Culture Camp positively. Each year, new students engage in two days of learning about iPrep's cultural procedures and routines before the start of the school year. Teachers model school-wide procedures and allow students opportunities to practice with feedback. We ensure students understand the why behind each system and structure, which strengthens their investment. Because our culture is unique and to ensure we honor our mission to develop the strength of character necessary for success, we intentionally set aside time to acclimate students to our culture to ensure a smooth transition into the school year.

In alignment with our mission, the layout and environment of our classrooms promote student voice and choice. iPrep classrooms are highly organized, with specific learning spaces to meet the diverse needs of our

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[45]Hirsch, S. (2021). Staff Shared Agreements. CASEL. Retrieved October 17, 2022, from
https://schoolguide.casel.org/focus-area-2/collaborate/staff-shared-agreements/

students. Decorated with student work, word walls, and anchor charts, students produce comfortably in working spaces designed to collaborate or work independently. Our classrooms are steeped in genuine engagement driven by students who think for themselves, and share thinking with others to address misconceptions and expand ideas.

A uniform approach to classroom design promotes predictable learning environments. During summer professional development, teachers learn about the iPrep Powerful Classroom Checklist, which guides classroom structure and decoration. Based on a 2014 study by the NBC News Group, students taught in a highly decorated classroom were more distracted and scored lower on classroom tests.[46] The Powerful Classroom Checklist ensures that the classroom environment promotes learning and limits distractions. The checklist includes power elements to display in all classrooms aligned with our mission and vision and critical design elements. For example, some power elements promote student agency, others create safety through consistency and predictability, while others remind students of their responsibility to themselves and others. iPrep SOAR values are displayed in all classrooms. **Figure 2.4** defines the iPrep Classroom Power Elements.

Figure 2.4: iPrep Classroom Power Elements

Power Element	Rationale
Class College Banner	Because education from iPrep makes college and careers possible, all iPrep classrooms are named after colleges and universities. This fosters pride, connectedness, and community.
Class Motto	Students create class mottos that reflect guiding principles for engaging in their class community. This serves as a reminder of students' responsibility to create a nurturing and safe environment for themselves and others.
Daily Schedule	Predictable schedules support students in internalizing the progression of the day and shifts from one task to another.[47] This helps to regulate student anxiety and uncertainty about what the day holds for them.
Habits of Discussion	As an iPrep instructional method, Habits of Discussion serve as how we engage in rich conversation in the classroom. A chart with sentence prompts supports students in learning and reinforcing the fundamentals of listening, speaking, and developing ideas.
Eagle Wall of Fame	We always celebrate the process of learning and student mastery. For this reason, iPrep teachers display student work at mastery and in progress. Displaying student work allows students to learn from each other and appreciate the work of others, creating nurturing empathy, respect, and a strong class community.[48] The Eagle Wall of Fame is designed on a board outside each classroom door.

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[46] NBCUniversal News Group. (2014, October 14). *The Bare Walls Theory: Do Too many classroom decorations harm learning?* NBCNews.com. Retrieved November 18, 2022, from https://www.nbcnews.com/news/education/bare-walls-theory-do-too-many-classroom-decorations-harm-learning-n223436

[47] TREP Project. (n.d.). Consistency and predictability: Trep-Educator. TREP. Retrieved December 4, 2022, from https://www.trepeducator.org/consistency-and-predictability

[48] Klayton, M. (2017, November 17). Displaying student work. Responsive Classroom. Retrieved December 4, 2022, from https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/displaying-student-work-2/#:~:text=It%20provides%20an%20opportunity%20to,%2C%20using%20tools%2C%20and%20writing .

Anchor Charts	Anchor charts capture the most important content and relevant strategies that help teachers to make their thinking visible.[49] To ensure learning remains accessible, teachers create and post anchor charts to support the teaching of current content.
Word Wall	Aligned with one of iPrep's instructional methods of Explicit Teaching of Academic Vocabulary, word walls display the essential vocabulary and support students in building vocabulary, reinforcing subject-specific terminology, and increasing independence when reading and writing. [50]
iPrep Behavior Matrix	iPrep promotes consistency and predictability so that students benefit from a safe environment. In all aspects of the school day, students learn that the expectations remain the same. As a reminder and to reinforce these expectations, the iPrep Behavior Matrix is posted in all classrooms.

Our students know what they are learning and why they are learning. iPrep students are empowered to navigate content in the ways that are most appropriate for them. Leveraging teacher videos and unit learning plans based on their daily goals, students are clear on the steps to mastering their goals and why they are essential. As a result, students are challenged while accessing grade-level content driven by their inquiry.

Pursuing our dreams and passions requires academic skills and non-academic skills. iPrep's character development is designed to help students build agency mindsets, habits, and behaviors that prepare them for success in high school, college, career, and life. Eagle Habits (see **Appendix C**) are habits of scholarship, ethics, and citizenship that support students in developing academic and non-academic skills to ensure their success in high school, college, and life.

School-wide routines create a safe, connected, predictable environment that builds strong relationships and community. Every day begins with *Morning Meeting* (K-5) or *Advisory* (6-8). Adapting Strong Start Morning Routine by the Whole Child Model, our day begins with 15 – 20 minutes for students to build relationships and community, set goals, engage in goal and choice coaching, and reflect on making sense of the path for the day and week. Starting each day with a predictable routine helps students feel safe and connected to school, creating time for explicitly teaching social-emotional skills and character development.[51] **Appendix B** provides the fundamentals of our Morning Meeting and Advisory. The closing circle brings a peaceful end to the day. For 15 minutes, students reflect on their daily goals and celebrate their learning and success of the day.[52] Then, students give shout-outs to teachers and other students for displaying core values or positively impacting their day. This intentional time to reflect allows students the space with guardrails to make decisions in pursuit of their goals.

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[49] Mulvahill, E. (2022, August 22). Anchor charts 101: Why and how to use them. We Are Teachers. Retrieved December 4, 2022, from https://www.weareteachers.com/anchor-charts-101/

[50] Cronsberry, J. (n.d.). Word walls: A support for literacy in secondary school classrooms. Reading Rockets. Retrieved December 4, 2022, from https://www.readingrockets.org/content/pdfs/World_Walls_-_A_Support_for_Literacy_in_Secondary_School_Classrooms.pdf

[51] Strong start morning routine. Whole Child Model. (n.d.). Retrieved October 3, 2022, from https://www.wholechildmodel.org/strong-start

[52] Northeast Foundation for Children, Inc. . (2012). What is a closing circle? - responsive classroom. Responsive Classroom. Retrieved December 3, 2022, from https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/sites/default/files/ClosingCircles_intro.pdf

We maximize time and support student agency through Eagle Wings. Eagle Wings are small, laminated cards worn on a lanyard or wristband that support students in learning fundamental skills during transitions and downtimes. These cards are personalized based on student mastery. When transitioning throughout the building or waiting during dismissal, students use their Eagle Wings to review sight words, shapes, math facts, literature, science terms, or other things pertinent to their personal growth and development in content. In alignment with our mission, we build academic tenacity by teaching students to practice what will move their success forward.

Developing, Sustaining, and Accessing iPrep Culture

A positive school culture significantly impacts student and teacher performance. Strong culture improves students' ability to learn and build relationships, and teachers are motivated and engaged when working with students.[53] Our intentionally safe, nurturing, and predictable culture is created through student and staff celebration, intensive professional development, and systematic data analysis.

Professional Development

iPrep teachers engage in approximately 750 minutes of professional development in the summer to unpack and internalize the cultural vision of iPrep, learn cultural routines, and unpack and internalize our school-wide positive behavior system. Based on culture walkthrough data, teachers engage in professional development around sustaining and improving the culture for at least 90 minutes per month. When teachers require additional support in cultivating strong classroom culture aligned with our mission, vision, and core values, the iPrep leadership team facilitates Culture Clinics to teach and practice bite-sized actions that lead to a more robust class culture.

Data Analysis

We audit our norms and norm-breaking through a culturally responsive lens and use frequent data types to monitor our culture. At the beginning of the year, the iPrep leadership team conducts Culture Walks daily for the first three weeks of school. iPrep leaders share quick feedback in morning staff huddles to ensure a quick turnaround. After the first three weeks, Culture Walks are conducted weekly. In addition, once a month, during iPrep Leadership Team meetings, leaders hold audit meetings to review student missteps and times when students did not meet expectations and norms to mine for behavioral and structural trends. Specifically, Independence Preparatory Academy always views the maladaptive behaviors of individual students as a product of an environment that fails to nurture specific community needs. Based on our audits and data from Culture Walks, we determine creative ways iPrep's culture can evolve, refine norms, and act as a preventive intervener.

Student Celebration

Eagle Town Hall celebrates how we live our core values and perform academically. We intentionally recognize students and classes living our SOAR values through academic and behavioral excellence to perpetuate positive behavior and alignment with our school culture. iPrep students gather weekly on our early release Friday for a

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[53] Bransteter, E. (2022, July 7). The importance of school culture. iAspire Education. Retrieved December 5, 2022, from https://iaspireapp.com/resources/the-importance-of-school-culture

time of ritual and connectedness. Eagle Town Hall allows for celebration, zest, and recognition of achievement as aligned with our core values. Students and classes are rewarded **(Figure 2.5)** for displaying Eagle Habits, our core values, and meeting academic goals.

Figure 2.5: Eagle Town Hall Awards

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 highest average on mastery checks in math and ELA

After students engage in a round of class mottos to build pride and community, students and classes are acknowledged for outstanding behavior and academic achievement. Eagle Town Hall reminds us that, while we are individual students becoming our authentic selves, we are members of a larger community responsible to and for each other.

Welcoming New Students and Families

All new students engage in culture camp for two days before the beginning of the school year. Students are introduced to iPrep's culture and meet the critical stakeholders within the school community. Whenever a student enters the school in the middle of the school year or enters at the beginning of the year in the older grades, we utilize a formal set of procedures to welcome and acclimate them and their family into our school culture. The student's Nest (homeroom) will ensure the new student learns about our learning environment and core values. New families engage in intentional community building through Parent Orientation with our school counselor to ensure we accelerate the understanding of student needs to ensure academic and social success.

A Day in the Life of an iPrep Student and Teacher[54]

Avery is a kindergarten student at Independence Preparatory Academy.

8:00 AM – ARRIVAL AND BREAKFAST

Excited about a new day of learning, Avery opens the school door to be greeted by an iPrep leadership team member. "Good morning, Avery! Are you ready to grow your brain today?" asks Dr. Sales, fist-bumping her. "Yes, ma'am!" shouts Avery as she boldly looks right into Dr. Sales' eyes, her head high just like she was taught.

Avery proceeds into the building and is ushered down the hallway by iPrep teachers and staff with warm, inviting smiles and authentic greetings. As she travels the hallway, Avery is surrounded by achievement through student work displays, college pennants, and notable people from her community and the state of Alabama. Avery is excited that she knows about a few of the colleges she sees daily. However, her favorite part

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[54] *The "Day in the Life" narratives are partly adapted from Purpose Prep, Nashville, TN.*

of Eagle Town Hall on Friday is hearing her friends in other classes recite the class chants about their Nest's college and mascot. Her Nest's college is Miles College, and she cannot wait to learn about more colleges when she gets to first grade.

Avery makes her way to the cafeteria to enjoy breakfast. A crate that houses her morning work folder is at the end of her table. She grabs her folder and heads to her assigned seat. Her breakfast is already at her seat, so she quickly digs in. Avery does not hesitate to jump into her morning work after finishing her cereal, fruit, and juice. This morning, she is working on matching pictures to corresponding letter sounds.

At exactly 8:19 am, Dr. Sales begins dismissing students to class. Avery joins her peers in a single, filed line at the door and proceeds to her classroom. As she moves to the classroom, Avery uses her Eagle Wings to practice sight words. She knows that the more sight words she knows, the sooner she will begin reading, and she cannot wait to be able to read books to her little brother. Finally, she makes it to her classroom, and the door is decorated with the colors and mascot of Miles College. She is excited that her mastery check from yesterday made it to her teacher's wall of fame!

At the door, Avery is greeted by her teacher, Ms. Brown, by selecting her favorite greeting for the wall. She always chooses a hug, so she leans in for a big one. "Good morning, Avery! How are you this morning?" says Ms. Brown. Avery looks at the emotion tracker at the door and points to the emoji with a bright smile. "Good morning, Ms. Brown! I am excited and happy!" she exclaims. "So glad to hear that, Avery! Let's make it a great day!" replies Ms. Brown. Avery proceeds to her cubby, puts her backpack away, and finds her assigned seat on the carpet with her "bottom flat, backs straight, legs crossed, and hands in lap."

8:20 AM – MORNING MEETING

Ms. Brown leads Avery and her classmates through the rituals of Morning Meeting. First, Avery stands and recites the Pledge of Allegiance in her square on the carpet. This week, she is responsible for leading her class in reciting Eagle Creed. Loud and proud, Avery begins: "I am an iPrep Eagle!" Her class joins in, "I leave places better than I find them. I give my best, and I expect the best. I am in control of my life and my future. I have dreams, and I will reach them. The college and career of my dreams are certain. I am courageous in the pursuit of my goals. I am an iPrep Eagle! Watch me SOAR!" This chant always pumps her up to her best throughout the day. Next, she returns to her place on the carpet to participate in Community Building. Today, the community builder is Freeze Dance.

Ms. Brown plays a song, and Avery and her peers dance like crazy. When the music stops, Ms. Brown holds up a picture, and she and her classmates freeze like the picture. Avery loves to be the first one to freeze in the correct pose. Next, Avery and Caden engage in Purposeful Partnering, a ritual that fosters peer-to-peer connection. They take turns giving each other two crazy choices and listen for what they would rather do. "Would you rather have arms or three legs?" asks Avery. "I think I want three legs so I can run super fast!" exclaims Caden. They both laugh! Caden asks Avery, "Would you rather have x-ray vision or be able to fly?" Avery responds, "I want to fly so I can go to my grandma's house every day!" Caden nods in agreement. They thank each other with a high-five and return to their place on the carpet. Avery then engages in Breath and Focus. She loves watching the balloon on the screen expand as she inhales and shrink as she exhales. It calms

and relaxes her. She feels ready for the day. Avery is ready to set her daily goal. Today, Avery decided her goal was to show respect by actively listening and tracking the speaker. Avery then listens as her teacher reminds the class of picture day and to always use their Eagle Wings during transitions in the hallway and reviews their daily schedule.

8:35 AM – READ ALOUD

Avery loves to hear Ms. Brown read stories with animated expressions. She cannot wait to become an expressive reader. Avery hears many of her sight words and words she does not know yet. To help grow her vocabulary, Ms. Brown often pauses to share the word and its meaning. This week, Ms. Brown is reading a story called A Pocket for Corduroy. "Lisa was reluctant to leave the laundromat without Corduroy. Being reluctant means not being sure you want to do something. Say the word with me: reluctant." Loud and proud, Avery says, "reluctant". "Someone might be reluctant to try new things, or someone might be reluctant to swim in the ocean because it is so deep. Think about something you might be reluctant to do. Start your sentence with 'I might be reluctant to…'" Avery thinks deeply. She raises her hand and waits to be acknowledged. "I might be reluctant to ride a motorcycle because it goes too fast!" Other students share, and Avery snaps in agreement. Read aloud ends, and Avery transitions to her area for her first literacy block.

9:00 AM – LITERACY BLOCK I (PHONICS)

Avery's first literacy block begins at 9:00, with Ms. Brown leading the class in a From Phonics to Reading lesson. The lesson starts with students orally blending sounds to produce words using the short /i/ sound. The lesson moves quickly, beginning with 5 minutes of phonemic awareness and then 15 minutes to move through blending sounds, beginning with words with minimal contrast, reviewing words to build fluency, challenging words to build skill, and then to context sentences. The last 10 minutes are spent in the Read-Spell-Write routine. Avery and her class read words with the short I sound – big and little - after Ms. Brown reads them in a sentence. Ms. Brown then spells the words, and Avery repeats the spelling after her. "What is the middle letter in the word big? What sound does it make?" Avery and her class reply in unison. Avery then writes big and little in her workbook.

9:35 AM – LITERACY BLOCK II (READING COMPREHENSION)

After Ms. Brown signals, Avery moves to the table with her other teacher, Mr. Thomas, the Teacher Associate. Mr. Thomas is supporting students in comparing and contrasting objects, which is a foundational lesson aligned to ALCOS comprehension standard #32 that states, with prompting and support, that students will compare and contrast two texts. First, Mr. Thomas builds Avery's prerequisite skills on comparing and contrasting by defining words, like similarity and difference, and discussing the characteristics of various objects. Next, Mr. Thomas asks Avery and her group to compare and contrast living things that can fly with living things that can swim by writing a sentence to describe the main difference after classifying them into sections. Mr. Thomas concludes the lesson with a mastery check and tells Avery that tomorrow they will compare and contrast two characters in a book of her choice. Avery loves selecting books on her level and cannot wait to use her new words – similarities and differences.

10:20 AM – READING ACCELERATION

After Ms. Brown's signal, Avery moves to her table for Reading Acceleration. For the next 30 minutes, Avery uses her Chromebook to independently practice essential literacy skills based on her level of proficiency through i-Ready. At the beginning of the year, Avery was given a personalized learning pathway to strengthen her reading skills, and she enjoys tracking her progress daily. i-Ready is tailored to meet students at their appropriate reading level, and Avery always feels challenged and engaged. Today, she is practicing identifying sounds in isolation, a core skill developing strong phonemic awareness. She loves to hear the chime in her headphones as she correctly drags the bubble that makes the "r" sound to the center of the screen.

10:50 AM - LUNCH

As Avery walks down the hall to the cafeteria, she uses her Eagle Wings to practice her sight words. As she enters the cafeteria, Avery grabs her lunch and takes her seat. She enjoys eating her lunch and laughing with her friends. During lunch, Dr. Sales stops by to check-in. "Dr. Sales, I got all my questions right on i-Ready today!" boasts Avery. "Outstanding, Avery! I love the way you work so hard to grow your brain!" says Dr. Sales as she gives her a fist bump. After lunch, Avery ensures that her area is neat and lines up at the door when prompted. This time, Avery decided to practice her math skills. Moving through the hall to her classroom, she counts the objects on her Eagle Wings and checks the answer with the one on the back. She is proud of how fast she can count objects now.

11:20 AM – LITERACY BLOCK III (WRITING)

After lunch, Avery begins her writing lesson. Ms. Brown provides the topic of the day. Today's topic seems so fun. Avery cannot wait to get started. Avery and her peers help brainstorm an illustration while Ms. Brown draws on a chart paper. Next, Ms. Brown asks the class to help her craft a sentence to describe the picture. Mr. Thomas pulls out two of Avery's friends to work with them during the lesson. Avery knows that when she needs extra help, there is always time and space to support her. Ms. Brown asks students to return to their tables, draw their illustrations, and craft their sentences. As Avery works, Ms. Brown and Mr. Thomas circulate the room and engage students in discussions about what they are drawing and writing. Avery takes her time to ensure she shapes her letters correctly and uses the lines on her paper to make the upper- and lower-case letters right. She uses her index finger, just as she was taught, to make sure the words are spaced appropriately.

11:45 AM – MATH BLOCK

Math is Avery's favorite part of the day. She enjoys using different manipulatives to work through math topics. Today's lesson is counting to one hundred and beginning addition activities. Ms. Brown models addition problems, explicitly naming every step. During guided practice, Avery pairs with Joshua to work on five additional problems. She and Joshua share their understanding and use tools to solve the problems correctly. After Ms. Brown checks her work, Avery is released to complete independent practice. While working, Avery notices a small group of her peers move to the side table with Ms. Brown. Avery knows that at iPrep, students always get the extra help they need. Avery continues working, and when she is almost at the end, Mr. Thomas places an additional sheet on her desk. Avery beams with pride because that sheet is "Challenge Work" given to students mastering the day's lesson with 90% or more proficiency. Avery works through the challenging work, growing her brain to add problems with two-digit numbers.

12:50 PM – MATH ACCELERATION

After the math block, Avery moves to her Math Acceleration group. Since Avery is on grade level in math, her time on i-Ready Math is spent working through 1st-grade content. As she celebrates each correct answer, she is so excited to have met her goal today! Avery shares her progress as Mr. Thomas circulates while Ms. Brown works with a small group. He gives Avery a gold star to add to the classroom tracker. She loves seeing her progress on display.

1:20 PM – SNACK AND BRAIN BREAK

Avery has worked hard today, and her brain deserves a little break. So, while Avery eats her snack, Ms. Brown plays a Go Noodle video, allowing her to stand, wiggle, and dance! It feels good to stretch and unwind before proceeding with her day.

1:30 PM – SOCIAL STUDIES

At iPrep, students rotate science and social studies units every month. Today, Avery is working on a Social Studies unit. Avery and her class have learned geography and map concepts, including details about the city of Fairfield and the state of Alabama. Avery can locate where she lives on a variety of maps and can identify and name rivers, mountains, and oceans by pictures. Today's lesson is connected to her reading comprehension lesson. Avery learns how to identify differences between people. Ms. Brown helps Avery connect her current lesson and the one during reading comprehension. This gives Avery an extra opportunity to apply their knowledge of comparing and contrasting things as she discusses the differences between cultures and diversity within the classroom. This lesson aligns with standard 6 in the Alabama Course of Study for Kindergarten Social Studies.

2:00 PM – PHYSICAL EDUCATION & SPECIALS

Avery and her peers head to the gym for physical education for 30 minutes. Avery uses her Eagle Wings to practice her sight words while walking to the gym. She is on a mission to master her sight word assessment this week. When they arrive at the gym, Coach Parker, iPrep's physical education teacher, leads them through various activities to get them moving. Today, Avery gets to practice her basketball skills of passing and dribbling to support her development of strong hand-eye coordination. Her special class today is 30 minutes of Art. Avery enjoys using pastel oil crayons to shade in a drawing of a flower.

3:00 PM – CLOSING CIRCLE

Avery and her peers sit on the carpet to engage in Closing Circle. Ms. Brown highlights concepts learned that day and how the learning connects to their lifework assignments. Avery cannot wait to shout out to her friend, Ansley, for the SOAR value of Service, for how she supported her in spelling high-frequency words today. After a round of shout-outs, Avery and her peers share if they met their goals today and celebrate each other with cheers and snaps. Finally, they indicate their final spot on the behavior charts and ensure lifework is in their folder. Ms. Brown and Mr. Thomas thanked the class for a wonderful, productive day.

3:15 PM – DISMISSAL

Before dismissal, Ms. Brown reminds Avery to grab her lifework folder. At iPrep, lifework folders go home daily with nightly homework, a daily behavior report, and any pertinent parent communication. Then, Avery rides the bus home. As she boards the bus, Dr. Sales says, "Bye, Avery! See you tomorrow!" and Avery gives a wave and a smile. It has been a great day of learning as Avery is one step further on her path to college and career.

Ms. Brown is a kindergarten teacher at Independence Preparatory Academy.

7:30 AM – ARRIVAL AND PREP FOR THE DAY

Ms. Brown arrives at her classroom to prepare for her day. First, she ensures she has prepared all materials for her lessons. Next, she checks her email for important updates or messages from parents. Then, grabbing her clipboard that houses her daily schedule with a space for notes, aggressive monitor charts, behavior charts, and teacher exemplars for the day, Ms. Brown heads to the teacher lounge to grab her coffee just before the Staff Huddle.

7:40 AM – STAFF HUDDLE

Every morning, iPrep staff gather in the hallway to build community and accountability. Staff Huddle is a 15-minute ritual where teachers share daily priorities and learn from quick feedback from iPrep's leadership team. During the huddle, Ms. Brown shares that her priority today is to tighten her transitions during class activities. She plans to use a timer and provide positive narration to ensure her students move with urgency to maximize learning time. After all staff members share their priorities, Dr. Sales delivers critical updates to support her in navigating her day and then a round of quick feedback based on yesterday's culture walk. The comradery and transparency shared between her team helped her feel connected and engaged in her work daily. Ms. Brown notes that she needs to ensure her classes use their Eagle Wings during transitions. She makes notes of that to share during the morning meetings. Ms. Brown appreciates the culture of feedback at iPrep. She believes iPrep leadership values her and shows it by supporting her in improving her craft.

7:55 AM – ARRIVAL POST

At 7:55 promptly, Ms. Brown arrives at her arrival post at the end of her hallway. As students arrive, she greets them with smiles, fist bumps, and bright hello's as they move to the cafeteria for breakfast. As she greets them, she monitors dress code and student energy. She provides reminders and makes a note to update Mr. Givens, Gabriel's teacher because he seems down this morning. She knows it takes a village to support iPrep students, so she ensures she checks in with Mr. Givens to provide an update on what she notices with Gabriel this morning.

8:15 AM – STUDENT GREETINGS

After checking in with Mr. Givens, Ms. Brown heads to her room. She stands on her threshold, ready to greet her students for the day. As they arrive from breakfast with Mr. Thomas, each student indicates their preferred greeting and how they feel this morning. She makes notes of students to check in with later based on their emotions. Everyone is happy and excited today!

8:20 AM – MORNING MEETING

It is time for the morning meeting. She joins her class on the carpet and introduces the day and date. She leads them in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and allows Avery to lead them through The Eagle Creed. Ms. Brown displays her Morning Meeting PowerPoint to guide her class through the daily ritual. Ms. Brown recognizes the value of the time to begin each day predictably and its impact on student learning throughout the day. She is invested in iPrep's mission to provide a nurturing and predictable environment, so she ensures that she creates an inclusive culture in her classroom. After she coaches students in goal setting, she is sure to remind students of picture day and to use their Eagle Wings during hallway transitions.

8:35 AM – READ ALOUD

While her class is still on the carpet, Ms. Brown spends the next 20 minutes reading a grade-level text. She intentionally supports her students in growing their vocabulary, so she frequently stops to define words and asks students to use the words in a sentence. Sometimes, she models this or gives them sentence stems to get them started. In preparation for transition and because of her daily priority to tighten her transitions, Ms. Brown sets the timer for 1 minute. She narrates the expectations for students, starts the timer, and then plays the chime. As students move to their desks for the first literacy block, Ms. Brown positively narrates to provide urgency. "I like how Avery is moving swiftly but safely to her seat. Great job, Ansley and Joshua. I see there are already eight friends at their desks. We have 30 more seconds to get to our seats!" Ms. Brown noted that three students did not reach their seats before the timer. She noticed that while traveling, the three students met a traffic jam. She notes the need to revisit the travel route during her planning today.

9:05 AM – LITERACY BLOCK I (PHONICS)

With her teacher exemplar in hand, Ms. Brown leads a From Phonics to Reading lesson on the short /i/ sound. As the lesson proceeds, Ms. Brown uses her aggressive monitoring tool to determine which students meet the lesson goal. She notes those that need additional support and provides her co-teacher, Mr. Thomas, with a list to pull during Reading Acceleration for some extra practice. At iPrep, Ms. Brown works with a Teacher Associate to meet her student's daily needs. That is the benefit of having a co-teacher during her literacy blocks.

9:35 AM – LITERACY BLOCK II (READING COMPREHENSION)

In their planning block yesterday, Ms. Brown and Mr. Thomas decided that Mr. Thomas would lead the reading comprehension lesson while Ms. Brown worked with five students that did not meet the comprehension lesson goal yesterday. After monitoring the transition, Ms. Brown pulls the five students to the side table and revisits yesterday's lesson. As students master concepts, she releases them to Mr. Thomas to engage in today's lesson. After her small group, she supports Mr. Thomas by circulating to monitor students engaged in practice around comparing and contrasting living things that can swim and living things that can fly. As she circulates, she indicates student mastery on her aggressive monitoring tool to review in preparation for tomorrow's lesson.

10:20 AM – READING ACCELERATION

Ms. Brown posts Reading Acceleration groups and monitors her students' transition. Based on i-Ready Diagnostic data, every student has a personalized learning pathway. While Mr. Thomas supports the small

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group needing additional practice with the short /i/ sound, Ms. Brown circulates to monitor student engagement on i-Ready. She also monitors the platform to note any student struggling to pass lessons. For example, she sees that Carter has difficulty matching pictures with the beginning /r/ sound, so she pulls Carter to her table and provides one-on-one support. She then releases him to return to i-Ready, where he successfully masters the lesson. During the last few minutes, Ms. Brown updates her classroom tracker to show student progress on reading goals. She notes to share shout-outs during Closing Circle for Jonathan and Micah for meeting their goals today.

10:50 AM – LUNCH

Ms. Brown enjoys a duty-free lunch every day at iPrep. She uses the time to grab lunch, review exemplars for her writing and math lessons, and check ins with other teammates.

11:20 AM – LITERACY BLOCK III (WRITING)

Ms. Brown starts the lesson by displaying and reading the topic for the day. Next, she guides students in drawing a picture and writing a sentence to describe the topic. Next, she models how to shape letters correctly, uses lines for lower- and upper-case letters appropriately, and uses her finger to model how to space words correctly. She then releases students to independent practice. Ms. Brown uses her aggressive monitoring tool to monitor who meets the lesson standard. As she circulates, she provides support to push students further along. During planning yesterday, Ms. Brown and Mr. Thomas decided that Mr. Thomas would pull a couple of students during the independent practice of the writing block to provide additional support since those students have consistently scored below 70% on the writing mastery checks. Her collaboration with Mr. Thomas has shown a significant impact in supporting students with unfinished learning and pushing them to their goals. During the last 2 minutes, Ms. Brown distributes math supply baskets to tables in preparation for her math lesson.

11:45 AM – MATH BLOCK

Today's lesson is on counting to 100 and beginning addition strategies. With her teacher exemplar in hand, Ms. Brown models addition strategies on the whiteboard. As students engage in guided practice, Ms. Brown circulates to note those who might need some additional support during independent practice. While Mr. Thomas supports those ready to move on, Ms. Brown pulls a group of students to the side table and uses manipulatives to model addition strategies. Once students show understanding, she releases them to work independently. One of her students continues to use the tools she shared with him during the small group, so she makes a note to shout him out during Closing Circle. While the class is working, Ms. Brown circulates to provide feedback and monitor progress.

12:50 PM – MATH ACCELERATION

Ms. Brown posts Math Acceleration groups and monitors her students' transition. Based on i-Ready Diagnostic data, every student has a personalized learning pathway for math. Ms. Brown supports a small group while Mr. Thomas circulates to monitor student engagement on i-Ready. During the last few minutes, Ms. Brown updates her classroom tracker to show student progress on math goals. She notes to share shout-outs during Closing Circle for Avery for meeting her goal today.

1:20 PM – SNACK AND BRAIN BREAK

Ms. Brown and Mr. Thomas distributed snacks and started the Go Noodle video. Then, she walks around celebrating her students for getting the wiggles out! At the end of snack, she supports her class in cleaning up their area and preparing for social studies.

1:30 PM – SOCIAL STUDIES

At iPrep, students in kindergarten rotate science and social studies units every month. Today's lesson is from a Social Studies unit. Ms. Brown has intentionally planned for the social studies lesson to connect directly to the reading comprehension lesson. Today, her class identifies differences in people, a lesson aligned with standard 6 in the ALCOS for Kindergarten Social Studies. With her exemplar in hand, Ms. Brown connects the current lesson and the one in reading comprehension. This gives her student another "at bat" with comparing and contrasting things as they discuss cultural differences in the classroom. Based on Dr. Sales' feedback this morning during Staff Huddle, she reminds her class to have their Eagle Wings and actively use them as they walk to the gym.

2:00 PM – PLANNING

At iPrep, teachers receive 60 minutes of meeting-free planning daily. Ms. Brown takes a moment to review her aggressive monitoring tracker to determine who needs additional support during tomorrow's lessons. She and Mr. Thomas revisit their weekly plan and adjust based on this data. To continue to build positive relationships with parents, Ms. Brown sends a few positive texts to parents celebrating her students' academic and behavioral achievements. She updates Schoolrunner with Eagle Bucks for her class and individual students for living the SOAR values and meeting their goals.

3:00 PM – CLOSING CIRCLE

After PE and Specials, Ms. Brown's class returns to the classroom for Closing Circle. Sitting on the carpet with her class, Ms. Brown highlights concepts learned that day and how the learning connects to their lifework assignments. Next, she shares her shoutouts from the day for students living SOAR values and meeting academic goals. After a round of shout-outs for her students, Ms. Brown completes their behavior charts and ensures their lifework is in its folder. Finally, she thanked the class for a productive day.

3:15 PM – DISMISSAL

It has been a great day! Ms. Brown walks her class to the buses and waves goodbye as they roll away.

3:30 PM – MASTERY CHECK HUDDLE

iPrep is laser-focused on improving the outcomes for students. Our unique approach to data-driven instruction (DDI) differs significantly from what Ms. Brown experienced in previous settings. She is excited to dig through her students' mastery checks with her peers and coach. She heads to the Mastery Check Huddle. Ms. Brown reviews mastery checks from her reading comprehension and math lessons today during this time. She categorizes students based on their scores on the mastery checks - students scoring 85% or higher, 70% - 84%, and below 70%. She reviews students' work in each category to determine the highest leverage gap in student learning. Based on this gap, she then decides her highest leverage action to close those gaps during instruction tomorrow. Ms. Brown brainstorms with her peers and coach until she has a firm plan for the next day. Since

joining iPrep, she feels a great sense of accomplishment for all the ways she is supporting her students in learning aligned with their personal needs, goals, passions, and dreams.

SUPPLEMENTAL PROGRAMMING

Summer Programming

Research indicates that the achievement gap widens every summer because of inequitable access to summer learning opportunities for students in economically disadvantaged communities.[55] To ensure our students' academic skills remain polished, iPrep offers four weeks of summer learning for 4 hours daily, focusing primarily on literacy and math. Summer school is open to all iPrep students, and students receiving less than 70% mastery in literacy and math must attend.

Co-Curricular Programming

iPrep's model is rooted in the knowledge that our student's success is connected to their overall mental, emotional, and social well-being. We believe we must attend to the whole child's development while achieving academic excellence. Supporting social-emotional learning is the foundation for aligning with our mission to ensure students develop academic tenacity and strength of character to excel in high school, college, careers, and life.

Aligned with the five competencies of Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), iPrep implements weekly character lessons using the CharacterStrong curriculum. CharacterStrong is grounded in research and focused on fostering the whole child with vertically aligned lessons that teach SEL and character side-by-side.[56] CharacterStrong has proven to have a strong, positive impact on student outcomes. In a 2021 study, the effects of CharacterStrong in middle schools showed significantly higher reports of academic engagement and perceived student safety. Teachers reported higher levels of safe behaviors, and school leaders indicated higher attendance rates.[57] In March 2022, a study revealed that when CharacterStrong is combined with PBIS, there is a more significant improvement in student-reported belonging, positive interactions with peers, and behaviors consistent with expectations.[40]

Teachers use these lessons to lead character development aligned to Eagle Habits every Friday. In K-5, CharacterStrong focuses on social skills and conflict resolution, executive functioning – focusing, organizing, goal-setting – and emotion regulation. In middle grades, lessons focus on belonging, well-being, and engagement.

Extracurricular Activities

Being culturally responsive, promoting character and leadership development, and encouraging students to explore their passions and dreams, iPrep offers opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities relevant to student interests. Leveraging their developing leadership skills, iPrep encourages students to take the lead in creating student organizations and clubs with the support of iPrep staff. In grades K-5, student organizations

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[55] *Leveraging Summer for Student Success.* Summer Matters Partnership for Children & Youth (2014).

[56] CharacterStrong. (n.d.). Retrieved December 6, 2022, from https://characterstrong.com/

[57] Evidence supporting CharacterStrong curricula. CharacterStrong. (n.d.). Retrieved December 6, 2022, from https://characterstrong.com/embed-page/evidence-supporting-characterstrong-curricula/

and clubs will meet once a month on Choice Day, and in grades 6-8, they will meet during lunch or after school. Partnering with local organizations, such as the parks and recreation board and YMCA, we ensure students have access to sports. Extracurricular activities allow students to engage in content with others, develop Eagle Habits, and expand their passions and dreams.

Financing Supplemental Programming

iPrep's budget dedicates funding for instructional materials and digital content. This funding will be used to purchase the CharacterStrong curricular resources for students and staff. For summer programming after year 1 of operation, iPrep will leverage the New Schools for Alabama and Bloomberg Philanthropies partnership for free summer school, known as Summer Boost, which provides free summer school for charter school students in the Birmingham area. In the event that funding eventually becomes unavailable, the iPrep board commits to raising additional funds to secure staff and resources. iPrep board commits to raising additional funds to secure staff and resources.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS AND AT-RISK STUDENTS

Our approach to serving special populations and at-risk students is grounded in the belief that all students are brilliant and deserve an exceptional education. In alignment with our mission to ensure success for all, every iPrep student is provided with precisely what they need to access grade-level content and beyond. Our students with Individualized Learning Programs (IEPs) or Individualized Language Plans (ILPs) already have a customized learning plan based on current proficiency levels, just as every other student at iPrep. Likewise, our students with identified social, emotional, or academic needs are seen just like all our students, with strengths and growth areas. At iPrep, we acknowledge every student's unique need and strive to create a nurturing, safe, and inclusive environment. Through this belief, we execute our plan to serve special populations and at-risk students.

According to the 20-21 Alabama State Report Card, 15.41% of students in Fairfield City Schools identify as students with disabilities and less than 2% as students with limited English proficiency. Given the uniqueness of our model, we anticipate serving a population consisting of about 16% of students with disabilities and 2% of students with limited English proficiency. Additionally, according to the National Associate for Gifted Children, roughly 8% of students in Alabama have been identified as gifted.[58] For this reason, iPrep plans to serve a gifted population of 5% of our students. Our daily schedule, including Morning Meeting or Advisory, Reading/Math Acceleration or WIN, and personalized learning pathways, combined with our staffing model, provide exemplary support for students with special needs.

Meeting the Needs of At-Risk Students through The Eagle's Nest - MTSS

After the 8th grade, all iPrep Eagles are ready to soar into high school. We ensure this by providing intentional structures while our Eagles remain in the nest. *The Eagle's Nest* is our tiered approach to academic and behavioral support. This approach aligns with Alabama's MTSS framework that ensures academics and behavior strategies for all students based on needs. For example, *Eagle Protection* provides all students with

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[58] State of the States Report - National Association for Gifted Children. (n.d.). Retrieved December 28, 2022, from https://nagc.org/page/state-of-the-states-report

Tier I academic and behavior support, while *Eagle Uplift* ensures Tier II and Tier III support for ~20% of students likely to need them.

The Eagle's Nest (MTSS) serves to identify students with special needs and at-risk students by providing mechanisms to monitor growth and progression through tiers of services.[59] Surrounding all academic interventions, iPrep relies on adapted strategies from The Whole Child Model to design Eagle Protection (tier II) strategies and Eagle Uplift (tier III) strategies to embrace the whole child.

iPrep believes that intervening when students need it the most prevents lingering skill gaps. Through the practices and procedures of MTSS, we identify underperforming students to benefit from early intervention. The Renaissance Star Early Literacy, NWEA Reading and math (academics), and the Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener (SAEBRS) (behavior) determine which students are at-risk and through data triangulation (surveys, questionnaires, academic and behavioral performance, etc.) decide proper placement into the MTSS tiers.

Students needing Tier II intervention in reading or math receive 20-30 minutes of small group instruction every day during Reading/Math Acceleration in K-5 and WIN in grades 6-8 in addition to core instruction in Tier I. i-Ready Teacher Toolbox in ELA and math provide curriculum for small group intervention and supplements the core literacy and math blocks. These lessons connect to student proficiency levels and align with students' customized learning pathways. In addition to Tier I behavior strategies adapted from Teach Like a Champion (What to Do, Radar, Strong Voice, Positive Framing, Precise Praise, Warm/Strict, Firm, Calm Finesse, Joy Factor) and The Whole Child Model (threshold greetings and Safe Space) strategies, Tier II interventions include, but are not limited to:
- Positive Reinforcement
- Time-Love-Connection (TLC)
- Structured Recess
- Group Therapy
- Movement Breaks
- Personalized Schedule
- Behavior Intervention Plan

In addition to Tier II supports, students needing Tier III intervention receive an additional 30 minutes a day in small-group or one-on-one instruction. Interventionists use Read 180 and Do the Math to provide customized support in reading and math. *Read 180* is a blended learning program designed to accelerate students two or more years below grade level toward independence with rigorous, grade-level text.[60] *Do the Math* is a mathematics intervention program that uses explicit instruction to move students through concrete, semi-concrete, and abstract (CSA) representations of math concepts and skills and is designed to help students develop the skills they need to compute with accuracy and efficiency, the number sense they need to reason,

[59] Essential components of MTSS. Center on Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. (n.d.). Retrieved March 2, 2023, from https://mtss4success.org/essential-components
[60] Branine Instructional Coach, S., Endo Education Research Director, A., Iasevoli Shaped Executive Editor, B., Prescott Shaped Contributor, J., & Del Mar Shaped Staff, Z. (2021, June 3). *HMH read 180®*. HMH Read 180 | 3-12 Reading Intervention Curriculum. Retrieved December 6, 2022, from https://www.hmhco.com/programs/read-180

and the ability to apply their skills and reasoning to solve problems.[61] Tier III behavior interventions include, but are not limited to:

- The formal process for ensuring behavior plans centers on the why of student missteps (Function-based assessments)
- Consideration of the school's culture and context and the impact on student's well being
- Student-centered planning to align on goals, knowledge of student's past, present, and future life, and actions for change, support, development, and learning
- Implementation of a comprehensive, holistic student and family-driven plan of support from a team of professionals

We monitor student progress in Tier II and Tier III every two weeks using i-Ready Growth Monitoring and Direct Behavior Rating – Single Item Scale (DBR-SIS). In addition, the MTSS team meets monthly to review various data types (questionnaires, i-Ready reports, lesson feedback, etc.) to evaluate student progress and determine tier changes as necessary. The MTSS team includes the Dean of Academics, regular education teachers, the Literacy Specialist, and the Student Culture Manager. If students are not adequately responding to interventions, the MTSS team considers referral to the Student Supports Coordinator for evaluation for a potential disability.

Identifying Students with Special Needs

It is iPrep's responsibility to create and sustain a nurturing, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all students. We commit to providing all students with free and appropriate education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) to ensure access to the general curriculum. To the greatest extent possible, we serve students with IEPs, ILPs, and 504 plans in a general education setting. As minimum standards, we fully adhere to federal, state, and local guidelines and regulations regarding students with special needs while creating thorough screening processes and supports for students who may have undiagnosed disabilities. This compliance includes, but is not limited to:

- The Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA)
- The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, PL 92142
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), 42 U.S. Code §12101. et seq.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 20 US Code., §1400, et seq. and the 1997 IDEA
- Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S. Code §794
- Amendments (§614(d)(3)) PL 105-17 including:
  - Child Find Provision - CFR 34 § 300.220
  - Referral & Prior Notice - 34 CFR § 300.504
  - Informed Consent - 34 CFR § 300.500
  - Evaluation - 34 CFR§ 300.532
  - Least Restrictive Environment - PL 94142

The Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) includes a "Child Find" mandate. Child Find requires all school districts to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities, regardless of the severity of

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[61] Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. (n.d.). Do the math: Research evidence base: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Do The Math: Research Evidence Base. Retrieved December 6, 2022, from https://www.hmhco.com/research/do-the-math-research-evidence-base

disabilities.[62] While internal processes and procedures support us in identifying students with disabilities, iPrep complies with the Child Find provision of IDEA and readily investigates family concerns regarding their child's eligibility for special education services. For this reason, a parent can initiate the eligibility process at any time.

Upon referral, a Student Support Team (SST) assembles to discuss the referral, collect (or recommend more) evaluations, and determine whether the student is eligible for special education services. The SST includes Student Supports Coordinator, SPED Teachers, general education teachers, related service providers (speech pathologist, occupational therapist, etc.), the student (if appropriate), and parents/guardians. When a student is eligible for special education services, the SST meets to create an individualized education program (IEP) to include the special education services needed and the appropriate setting for the services to be delivered. SPED Teachers manage the collaborative development of IEPs using academic or social-emotional goals for diverse learners. In addition, both teachers and teacher associates collaborate with SPED Teachers to address special student population needs through supplemental small-group instruction and co-teaching.

Serving Students in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

According to Section 290-8-9-.06 of the Alabama Administrative Code, Independence Preparatory Academy provides qualified students with special education services in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The LRE of every student qualifying for special education services is determined on a case-by-case basis during the Student Support Team meeting to develop or revise the IEP. At iPrep, students with special needs are educated with their peers without special needs to the maximum extent appropriate and not removed from the general education classrooms unless they are not progressing with the support of supplementary aids and services.

For most students, the LRE is an integrated program inside the general education classroom, where all students benefit from varying co-teaching models in which the general education teacher and the SPED Teacher share the responsibilities of ensuring all students, regardless of ability level, access, learn, and master the grade-level content.[63] All students experience whole group, small group, or one-on-one instruction during inclusive instruction. For students whose needs exceed the reach of the co-teaching model, instruction can occur in a special education setting with a focus on foundational skills. In this setting, SPED teachers deliver targeted, research-based instruction to build compensatory strategies and fill learning gaps. Foundational courses are meant to be temporary placements for students who cannot access the general education curriculum in math or ELA until their learning is accelerated.

Modified curriculum in a special education setting is available when the SST determines that the student's cognitive, behavioral, emotional, or physical needs cannot be met without intensive, specialized instruction outside of the general education setting for up to 79% of the time in school. Students whose needs are more severe than those that can be met in the general education classroom will access the general education curriculum in a modified format while in a special education setting.

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[62] The child find mandate: What does it mean to you? Wrights Law. (n.d.). Retrieved March 2, 2023, from https://www.wrightslaw.com/info/child.find.mandate.htm
[63] What does the least restrictive environment (LRE) mean? . Forte Law Group LLC. (2022, March 16). Retrieved March 2, 2023, from https://www.fortelawgroup.com/what-does-the-least-restrictive-environment-lre-mean/

Students with 504 Plans

iPrep follows Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure the prohibition against discrimination based on disability and guarantees them a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Students with impairments substantially limiting one or more major life activities are eligible for 504 accommodations. Major life activities may include but are not limited to walking, hearing, seeing, breathing, and learning. Suppose a student is suspected of needing accommodations to participate in or benefit from the same activities as their non-disabled peers, as determined by a parent, teacher, diagnostician, or school administrator. In that case, the student is referred to the Student Supports Coordinator, who serves as the 504 Coordinator. Students who complete the evaluation process and do not qualify for special education may also be referred to the 504 Coordinator.

The 504 Coordinator meets with the parent/guardian, the student (when appropriate), a general education teacher, the referring individual, and any other qualified persons knowledgeable about the student and their needs. During this meeting, all participants discuss relevant data (educational, behavioral, and medical), interventions already in place, placement options, and the possible need for further evaluation. Based on the review of records, the 504 Team is responsible for determining if the student does or does not qualify for a Section 504 Plan or whether further evaluation is required to determine the best approach to meeting the student's needs. In addition, the 504 Coordinator is responsible for developing, revising, and ensuring compliance in implementing Section 504 Plans through information dissemination, training, and support of school personnel.

Students with Limited Language Proficiency

iPrep serves English Language Learners (ELLs) in compliance with the Alabama Department of Education's ELL Policies and Procedures Manual. Identification of ELLs begins with the administration of the Home Language Survey. Based on family input, the Home Language survey may prompt the identification process forward, requiring students to be assessed using the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT). The W-APT is an English Language proficiency screener designed to assist educators in identifying and placing English Language Learners. Upon completion, the ELL Student Support Team (ELL-SST) consisting of the Student Supports Coordinator, ELL Teachers, general education teachers, students (as appropriate), and parents/guardians meet to determine eligibility. Students may test proficient and be deemed transitional or lack proficiency and the appropriate service delivery model for that student's needs determination. The ELL-SST is responsible for the following:
- recommending and monitoring student participation in the ELL program
- monitoring the academic progress of ELL students in the regular program
- providing recommendations to core teachers for ELL accommodations
- determining if an ELL student will participate in the statewide testing program
- reclassifying ELL students as they gain proficiency in English

ELL students take ACCESS 2.0 annually. This assessment tests students in 4 language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Domains are assigned proficiency levels ranging from 1 to 6. When a student completes ACCESS 2.0, proficiency levels are determined for students in each domain. In addition, the ELL-SST

meets regularly to review ACCESS data, progress through ELL programming, and determine appropriate supports for individual students.

iPrep anticipates an ELL population of less than 2% and will be supported by the Student Supports Coordinator. Our teachers intentionally plan and assess to meet the learning needs of ELL students. Both teachers and teacher associates collaborate with the Student Supports Coordinator to address ELL student needs through supplemental small-group instruction and co-teaching in the general education classroom.

Below are some selected strategies used to support student language acquisition and academic growth:
- Previewing Text: Students can look through a text to identify pictures or headings that provide context.
- Summarizing and Retelling: After completing a text, students put the text in their own words and make personal connections.
- Buddy Reading/Think-Pair-Share: With a buddy, students think about questions, discuss them with their buddy, and then share with the larger group.
- Explicit Vocabulary Instruction: Teachers use word walls, word sorts, and concept maps to teach vocabulary.
- Metacognitive Strategies: Teachers support student use of metacognitive strategies to monitor, assess, and organize learning.
- Graphic Organizers: Graphic organizers help students connect learning concepts.

Gifted and Talented Students

iPrep embraces the opportunity to serve a diverse student population, including students identified as gifted and talented. Aligned with the Alabama Administrative Code (AAC), we identify students as intellectually gifted as those who perform or have demonstrated the potential to perform at levels in academic or creative fields compared to others of their age, experience, or environment.

Through the Child Find process, iPrep screens all second-grade students to identify gifted and talented students. Adhering to the ALSDE's screening guide, teachers use checklists of behaviors to screen students and note each student's behavior in every gifted domain. After gaining parental consent, the Student Supports Coordinator arranges the Student Support Team, consisting of SPED teachers, general education teachers, students (as appropriate), and parents/guardians, to meet to determine eligibility and complete the Gifted Education Plan (GEP). In addition to students identified through the Child Find process, parents, teachers, and school leaders may refer students to the SST for evaluation.

Eligible students receive services in the following settings:
- Grades K-2—Students receive accommodations in the general education setting.
- Grades 3-5—Students receive pullout services for 3-5 hours weekly.
- Grades 6-8—Students participate in enrichment clusters during WIN and take advanced classes.

Gifted Education Plans are reviewed annually to monitor student progress, outline services, and establish goals for an individual student. Every student's GEP meets their unique needs. Especially for those identified as twice

exceptional, the collaboration between SPED Teachers, general education teachers, and Student Supports Coordinator is critical to implement the appropriate program.

Discipline Policies for Students with Special Needs

Independence Preparatory Academy recognizes the rights of all students, including students with disabilities and special education students. iPrep staff strictly adheres to all discipline guidelines outlined in IDEA and C.F.R. 300.530. Suspensions are rarely used at iPrep, as data shows it is ineffective in modifying behavior.[64] However, if a student with special needs requires a suspension, iPrep staff ensures the suspension follows guidelines set by federal regulations.

Teachers and staff collaborate with the Student Culture Manager and Student Supports Coordinator to ensure that student behavior needs and goals are appropriately identified, documented, and serviced to provide students with the appropriate support to de-escalate behaviors. To maintain alignment with Fairfield City Schools, when special education students or students with a disability commit a Class III offense (see Appendix D), iPrep's processes align with Fairfield's Code of Student Conduct. In addition, these processes comply with all state and federal laws and ensure the student is treated fairly while having equitable access to the school and curriculum.

When a special education student commits a Class III offense, the Student Culture Manager initiates procedures to have the student's Individualized Educational Program (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 revisions to the student's IEP must be documented within the current IEP. Only the IEP Committee may change a special education student's placement. In no case will a student 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.

If a student is expelled or removed from school for more than ten days, they continue learning virtually with the same supports, including special education and 504 services. In collaboration with the student's teachers, iPrep's Student Supports Coordinator will meet with the student and parent/guardian to create a remote individualized learning plan, including steps for progress monitoring. Once a student 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.

Promoting Equity: Monitoring Disproportionality of Special Education Services

Aligning with our mission and vision to ensure all iPrep students excel in high school and beyond, we actively seek ways to interrupt bias, prejudice, and stereotypes that limit access and success for all students. We are intentionally attentive to groups most often overrepresented in high-incidence disabilities or underrepresented in gifted and talented programs. To prevent over or underrepresentation of students identified for special education services, we commit to:

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[64] Álvarez, B. (n.d.). School suspensions do more harm than good. NEA. Retrieved December 6, 2022, from https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/school-suspensions-do-more-harm-good

- Targeted professional development around bias and stereotypes in identifying students with special needs
- Monthly academic and behavior data reviews, particularly monitoring student subgroups
- Comprehensive review and data analysis for students referred to the MTSS team
- Comprehensive review and data analysis for students referred for special education services, including gifted and talented services

Student Support Services Staffing Model

Given the anticipated needs of our students, Independence Preparatory Academy carefully designs a staffing model to ensure robust support is provided and delivered by an effective team focused on serving students and working with parents and external providers.

The Student Supports Coordinator (SSC) is responsible for the leadership and coordination of the Special Education program and plans, implements, and supervises Special Education mild, moderate, and severely handicapped educational programs and all related student support services. The SSC plans and implements program goals and objectives for the special education program while maintaining an awareness of current laws, policies, and regulations about specific programs. In addition, the SSC is responsible for ensuring the iPrep Special Education program remains compliant with federal, state, and local regulations through regular program reviews and research of current legislation about areas of special education. The SSC also supports SPED teachers in managing student caseloads and provides direct services to ELL students and delivers SPED services to students in year 1.

SPED Teachers provide special education students with learning activities and experiences designed to help them fulfill their potential for intellectual, emotional, physical, and social growth. iPrep prioritizes recruiting, training, and retaining high-quality SPED Teachers, fully certified in the State of Alabama, hired to manage a caseload of 18-21 students.

In addition to managing caseloads, SPED Teachers co-teach in the general education setting, provide consultation to school staff, train and manage paraprofessional staff, empower and support general education teachers around accommodating lessons and assessments, and then adjust supports as student progress, lesson planning, teaching, and collecting data in a self-contained special education setting, and provide guidance and support around behavior management strategies. As advocates for specific students and caseload managers, SPED Teachers monitor student achievement data and progress toward IEP goals, attend to student behavioral performance and need, track student attendance and discipline records, regularly communicate with teachers, administrators, service providers, and family members to advocate for and effectively support the ever-evolving needs of diverse learners.

iPrep anticipates an ELL population of less than 2%. Given that, we continue to monitor enrollment, mining for trends of increasing numbers of ELL students to determine the staffing of ELL Teachers and seek a Student Supports Coordinator and SPED Teachers qualified to support the nurturing of our ELL students as we monitor the growth of this population.

Professional development and ongoing support and training are priorities for iPrep's special education program. Program staff participates in specialized PD around topics including writing instructionally appropriate IEPs, goal, and progress monitoring, accommodations and modifications, Functional Behavior Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans, and growth mindset and student advocacy. In addition, SPED Teachers participate in content-specific professional development in mathematics and English Language Arts as they provide co-teaching support in core literacy and math classes.

iPrep is positioned to hire additional support to provide related services, including clinicians to provide speech and language services, occupational and physical therapy services, counseling services, nurses, and vision and hearing services. This is contracted through a provider who supports and maintains specialists who are certified/licensed in their field of expertise. To provide educational evaluations to determine initial and continued eligibility for special education services, iPrep will contract with clinical evaluators to work with the Student Supports Coordinator and Student Support teams to determine the most appropriate location and time allotted to deliver the delivery of services based on student needs. **Figure 2.6** outlines the student support staffing plan.

Figure 2.6: Student Support Staffing Plan

Operational Year	Anticipated SPED Population	Projected Staffing Needs
2024 – 2025	16	Student Supports Coordinator (1), SPED Teacher Associate (1)
2025 – 2026	35	Student Supports Coordinator (1), SPED Teacher (1), SPED Teacher Associate (1)
2026 – 2027	45	Student Supports Coordinator (1), SPED Teacher (1), SPED Teacher Associate (1)
2027 – 2028	54	Student Supports Coordinator (1), SPED Teacher (2), SPED Teacher Associates (2)
2028 – 2029	64	Student Supports Coordinator (1), SPED Teachers (2), SPED Teacher Associates (2)
2029 – 2030	74	Student Supports Coordinator (1), SPED Teachers (2), SPED Teacher Associate (2)
2030 – 2031	83	Student Supports Coordinator (1), SPED Teachers (3), SPED Teacher Associate (2)

The Special Populations and At-Risk Students section is partly adapted from Memphis RISE Academy's special education services policy and procedures.

UNIQUE/INNOVATIVE PROGRAM OFFERING

Our entire educational program is unique; no other school in Fairfield or surrounding areas offers our key design elements. Our model is based on the intensive research of innovative models that successfully educate students in schools with similar demographics as iPrep. We embrace student-centered instruction to support unfinished learning and ensure students master standards while fostering social-emotional learning in a

nurturing and predictable environment. While our entire model is unique and innovative, our approach to personalized learning, character development, and career and college exploration sets us apart.

Personalized Learning Pathways

In 2022, 79% of students needed support with unfinished learning in ELA, and 96% needed support with unfinished math learning. [65] Using i-Ready Diagnostics, we determine our students' current academic performance levels, and with this data, teachers and leaders design personalized learning pathways to target unfinished learning. In K-5, Reading and Math Acceleration provides time for personalized learning in reading/ELA and math using the i-Ready platform and small group instruction. Students in grades 6-8 spend 30 minutes daily in WIN (What I Need) to work within personalized learning pathways using the i-Ready platform and small group instruction.

Character Development

School is not just a place for academic growth but should also address the whole child. We believe that character development is a vehicle for students mastering rigorous work. iPrep's approach to character development is designed to help students build agency mindsets, habits, and behaviors that prepare them for success in high school, college, careers, and life. Based on our core values, iPrep defines a set of competencies we instill in our students by the end of 8th grade. These competencies comprise *The Eagle Graduate Profile* **(Appendix C)**. Aligned to *The Eagle Graduate Profile*, **Eagle Habits** are habits of scholarship, ethics, and citizenship, simplified into a progression of developmentally appropriate character learning targets like "I can revise my work to high-quality products" or "I can listen actively to diverse opinions." *Eagle Habits* are taught for 30 minutes every Friday and targeted in all lessons daily.

College and Career Exploration

In 2022, Fairfield High School's graduation rate was almost 93%, yet based on college and career readiness rates, only 65% of students are prepared to enter college or take on a viable career after graduation. With about 94% of Fairfield citizens living below the federal poverty threshold, post-secondary options are vital to breaking the cycle of poverty that persists. iPrep students explore the careers of their dreams to support them in discovering their purpose and passion. **Eagle Quests (Appendix D)** provides students with hands-on, real-world explorations of college and career options. Twice a year, students spend two weeks immersed in project-based learning experiences that align with a professional career. Students engage in field visits, learn from guest educators in the field, and then showcase their learning through a community presentation. iPrep students leave an expedition with a strong product or performance that leads to deep reflections about personal motivations and interests. Eagle Quests aims to expose students to new ideas, disciplines, and careers that plant seeds of future possibility and the opportunity to focus on content beyond core academics.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT

Section 16-6F-5 of the Alabama School Choice and Student Opportunity Act regulates charter school enrollment with which iPrep is fully compliant. Aligned with our mission, we enroll students without regard to

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[65] Public.tableau.com. (n.d.). Retrieved October 3, 2022, from
https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/alabama.school.connection/viz/2021-22schooltestresults/DBbyschoolallsubjects

ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, income level, disability, proficiency in the English language, or academic or athletic ability. We will serve, at maximum capacity, 520 students, beginning with 60 students in kindergarten and 1st grade and 40 students in 2nd grade. Employing a slow-growth model, we build out to total elementary-middle school capacity by 2030-2031. As outlined in **Figure 2.7**, we enroll 60 kindergarteners per year for the duration of the charter. We expect to graduate at least 40 students in 8th grade each year.

Figure 2.7: Five-Year Enrollment Plan

	NUMBER OF STUDENTS						
	Year 1 _2024 -2025_	Year 2 _2025-2026_	Year 3 _2026-2027_	Year 4 _2027-2028_	Year 5 _2028-2029_	Year 6 _2029-2030_	Year 7 _2030-2031_
Kindergarten	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
1st Grade	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
2nd Grade	40	60	60	60	60	60	60
3rd Grade	0	40	60	60	60	60	60
4th Grade	0	0	40	60	60	60	60
5th Grade	0	0	0	40	60	60	60
6th Grade	0	0	0	0	40	60	60
7th Grade	0	0	0	0	0	40	60
8th Grade	0	0	0	0	0	0	40
Total	**160**	**220**	**280**	**340**	**400**	**460**	**520**

When potential enrollment exceeds available seats, iPrep conducts a public lottery to ensure a random selection process places students into the school. Students are assigned numbers, and during an open meeting, available slots are filled. Students remaining in the pool are selected for the wait list in the order drawn. Any additional students enrolled are placed at the end of the waiting list on a first-come, first-served basis. Aligned with Section 16-6F-5, if the number of applicants exceeds capacity, preference is given to students in this order:
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 previous school year
4. Students enrolled in attendance zones outside of Fairfield City Schools
5. Students of iPrep employees, Board of Directors, and founder aligned with the 10% of the total student population mandate

iPrep's recruitment plan is two-pronged: excite students and families about our model and involve parents and community members through input and design. Aligned with our mission to ensure success for all students, our recruitment efforts transcend students and families traditionally academically or economically disadvantaged or at risk. For this reason, we seek partnerships with local organizations, like the Housing Authority, to host recruitment events, distribute materials in languages represented in the community, host information sessions that are inclusive of all populations with intentionality around how our student-centered approach meets all student needs, and providing alternative ways to submit enrollment applications via our website or paper copies available at recruitment events or via mail. **Attachment 8** outlines our full recruitment

and enrollment policy, including tentative dates for the application period and enrollment deadlines and procedures.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE POLICY AND PLAN

At iPrep, we are committed to aligning our mission, school culture, and discipline policy. We are relentless in our efforts to create and sustain a school culture that reinforces positive behavior and prevents distractions caused by student misbehavior. Independence Preparatory Academy relies on the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework to create a positive social culture and behavioral support for all students. PBIS is an evidence-based, three-tiered approach that integrates all data, systems, and practices affecting daily student outcomes. Data shows that schools, especially those servicing students with lower socioeconomic status, utilizing the PBIS framework experienced improved student outcomes (academic performance, social-emotional competence), reduced exclusionary discipline (fewer office referrals and suspensions), and improved teacher outcomes (higher teacher efficacy, healthy culture, and climate). [66] In collaboration with our community of stakeholders (teachers, students, and families), the iPrep leadership team establishes a comprehensive PBIS structure outlined in **Figure 2.8**.

Figure 2.8: iPrep's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Framework[67]

Tier	Systems	Practices
Tier 1 systems, data, and practices impact all students in all settings and establish the foundation for proactive support in preventing unwanted behaviors.	- Shared commitment to establishing a positive school culture - PBIS lead team meets regularly to establish and evaluate the school-wide system; use data for decision making - Teacher professional development and alignment to evaluation methods	- School-wide expectations are modeled, and classroom expectations aligned - Continuum of procedures for encouraging expected behaviors and discouraging problem behavior - Procedures to encourage school and family partnership - Implementation of TLAC strategies - What to Do, Radar, Strong Voice, Positive Framing, Precise Praise, Warm/Strict, Firm, Calm Finesse, Joy Factor - Implementation of TWCM strategies - threshold greetings, the teaching of self-regulation strategies (Safe Space)
Tier 2 systems, data, and practices provide targeted support for students at risk for developing more	- Screening process to identify students needing Tier 2 support - Continued professional development and technical assistance	- Increased opportunities for positive reinforcement - Increased focus on the possible function of problem behaviors - Increased access to academic supports

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[66] *Why implement PBIS?* Center on PBIS. (n.d.). Retrieved October 19, 2022, from https://www.pbis.org/pbis/why-implement-pbis
[67] ibid.

severe behaviors before the behaviors begin.	• Collecting and monitoring data about student performance to ensure fidelity of implementation of Tier 2 supports • Increasing two-way communication with families	• Implementation of CARE Plus Strategies, TLC, proactive group therapy, movement breaks, personalized schedules, and behavior intervention plans (TWCM)
Tier 3 strategies are for students who need more intensive, individualized support to improve behavioral and academic outcomes.	• Broader, multi-disciplinary team to make decisions about interventions from multiple perspectives • Collecting and monitoring data about student performance to ensure fidelity of implementation of Tier 3 supports	• Formal process for ensuring behavior plans center on the why of student missteps (Function-based assessments) • Consideration of the school's culture and context and the impact on student's well being • Student-centered planning to align on goals, knowledge of student's past, present, and future life, and actions for change, support, development, and learning • Implementation of a comprehensive, holistic student and family-driven plan of support from a team of professionals

One of our most fundamental priorities is ensuring a safe, nurturing environment where students are supported, cared for, and educated. In Teach Like a Champion, Doug Lemov states that "one of the core challenges of teaching is that it is very, very hard to create classrooms reliably characterized by psychological safety and where students encourage the best from one another; where when necessary, students can think deeply amidst quiet and develop their capacity to pay attention; where some students' desire to pursue learning assiduously is honored and supported, even when others do not really feel like it," (Lemov, 2021).[68]
The Eagle Code (Figure 2.9) establishes shared language for how our students live our SOAR values throughout the day. When these expectations are met, all students benefit from a safe environment to learn and grow.

Figure 2.9: The Eagle Code

SOAR Values	Learning Spaces	Hallways	Restrooms	Gym and Play Area	Cafeteria
Service	Take care of my property, the property of others, and that	Open and hold doors for others Turn in found items	Flush and clean up after using the stall	Take care of the gym and playground equipment	Place garbage in a trash can Clean up after eating

[68] Lemov, D. Teach Like a Champion 3.0: 63 Techniques That Put Students on the Path to College. Hoboken, Jossey-Bass, 2021.

	which belongs to the school Honor personal space Include everyone Be aware of the feelings of others Practice empathy	Place garbage in a trash can Honor personal space	Keep water in the sink Knock on the door before entering a stall Place garbage in a trash can	Place garbage in a trash can Include everyone Be aware of the feelings of others Practice empathy	Value the food choices of others Invite others to eat with me
Optimism	Snap to show appreciation Listen to others Build up me and others Use SLANT to engage Celebrate my learning and the learning of others	Model excellent behavior for others	Smile and say hello	Create win-win situations Walk away from conflicts and get support from an adult	Engage others in positive conversations when appropriate
Agency	Ask for help Use self-control Always do my best work Stay on task Use time wisely Use kind words and actions Be prepared Be on time	Go directly to my destination Use quiet voices Always walk	Use the restroom at appropriate times Use good manners Wash hands with soap Quickly return to my original location	Use kind words and actions Follow the rules to ensure safety	Use good manners Wait patiently in the food line Say "please" and "thank you" Feed your body healthy choices Ask permission to leave the assigned area Use inside voices
Resilience	Push through the hard stuff Answer hard questions Try again and again Believe in me	Use Eagle Wings to grow my brain		Try something new Try again and again	Try something new Stay focused on Morning Work

Independence Preparatory Academy uses Eagle Bucks to implement our school-wide PBIS system. We are leveraging an interactive platform like Schoolrunner, teachers and staff reward students with points for meeting or exceeding expectations and aligning with our SOAR values.

PBIS in Grades Kindergarten through Fifth Grade

Our K-5 teachers enforce classroom expectations using the **iPrep Tiered Behavior Matrix (Figure 2.10)**. iPrep parents receive daily behavior reports to sign and return to school in their student's daily folders. In addition, Eagle Bucks are awarded based on the color students land by the end of the day.

Figure 2.10: iPrep Tiered Behavior Matrix

Tier	Behavior	Eagle Bucks	Actions
BLUE	Student exhibits behavior above and beyond daily expectations and classroom agreements.	+20 Eagle Bucks	Behavior recorded in daily take-home folder
GREEN	Student exhibits behavior aligned to daily expectations and classroom agreements.	+10 Eagle Bucks	Behavior recorded in daily take-home folder
YELLOW	Student needs 2-3 redirections regarding daily expectations and classroom agreements.	+5 Eagle Bucks	1. Behavior recorded in daily take-home folder 2. Parent/Guardian contact via text
RED	Student needs the fourth redirection while on Yellow. Student causes significant disruption to the community through defiance, disrespect, or harm to others.	-5 Eagle Bucks	1. Student takes cool down inside the classroom 2. Parent/Guardian contact via text 3. Improved behavior allows the student to return to Yellow
Level 1	The student receives another warning after being placed on Red and being assigned to cool down inside the classroom. Student causes significant disruption to the learning environment or harm to others.	-10 Eagle Bucks	1. Student takes a 15-minute cool down outside of the classroom (implement appropriate restorative practice) 2. Parent/Guardian phone call
Level 2	Student receives an additional warning after returning from outside classroom cool-down. Student causes another significant disruption to the learning environment.	-15 Eagle Bucks	1. Student takes a 30-minute cool down outside of the classroom (implement appropriate restorative practice) 2. Parent/Guardian phone call

Every Friday, students are rewarded for the total amount of Eagle Bucks earned throughout the week, as described in **Figure 2.11**.

Figure 2.11: Eagle Bucks Rewards and Interventions

Weekly Balance of Eagle Bucks	Rewards and Interventions
Balance of 85 or more Eagle Bucks	1. Positive phone call 2. Recognition during morning meeting 3. Automatic recipient of iPrep Stars Award during Eagle Town Hall 4. Opportunity to shop for prizes in the Eagle Shop
Balance of 84 to 40 Eagle Bucks	1. Positive phone call 2. Recognition during morning meeting 3. Eligible for the iPrep Stars Award during Eagle Town Hall 4. Opportunity to shop for prizes in the Eagle Shop
Balance of 39 to 20 Eagle Bucks	1. Goal-setting support for the upcoming week 2. Parent/Guardian contact via text
Balance of 20 to 0 Eagle Bucks	1. Conference with a counselor 2. Parent/Guardian contact via phone 3. Teacher completes MTSS Tier 2 referral
Balance less than 0 Eagle Bucks	1. Conference with a counselor 2. Parent/Guardian re-entry meeting is required before the student returns to the classroom 3. Teacher completes MTSS Tier 2 referral

PBIS in Grades Sixth through Eighth

In grades 6-8, students unable to meet established norms and expectations expect logical consequences for their behavior. iPrep students, teachers, and parents monitor student behavior to determine areas of strength and growth. To track minor student missteps over time, iPrep uses a weekly tiered system for interventions and rewards outlined in **Figure 2.12**.

Figure 2.12: Grades 6-8 Weekly Tiered System for Rewards and Interventions

Tier	Weekly Balance of Eagle Bucks	Rewards and Interventions
Tier 1	Balance of 85 or more Eagle Bucks	• Positive phone call • Recognition during advisory • Automatic recipient of the iPrep Stars Award during Eagle Town Hall • Opportunity to shop for prizes in the Eagle Shop
Tier 2	Balance of 84 to 40 Eagle Bucks	• Recognition during advisory

		● Eligibility for iPrep Stars Award during Eagle Town Hall ● Opportunity to shop for prizes in the Eagle Shop
Tier 3	Balance of 39 to 20 Eagle Bucks	● Goal-setting support for the upcoming week ● Parent/Guardian contact via text
Tier 4	Balance of 20 to 0 Eagle Bucks	● Parent/Guardian contact via phone ● Structured Lunch Check-In with reflections and/or Restorative Circle ● Teacher completes MTSS Tier 2 referral
Tier 5	Balance of less than 0 Eagle Bucks	● Conference with a counselor ● Parent/Guardian re-entry meeting is required before the student returns to the classroom ● Teacher completes MTSS Tier 2 referral

Addressing Student Missteps

To achieve our mission to develop self-directed and confident students, we guide them to make responsible decisions and to own their mistakes. Our focus is to keep students learning in classrooms as much as possible. Therefore, suspension is considered only when necessary to ensure the safety of learners and staff in our community. iPrep uses research-based strategies like Teach Like a Champion (TLAC) and The Whole Child Model (TWCM), in addition to Restorative Justice practices, because students respond better to caring structures, positive reinforcement, mediation, and alternative forms of discipline than they do to more traditional methods of detention and suspensions. [69] [70]

The iPrep staff is trained during summer and weekly professional development to use Teach Like a Champion (TLAC) strategies to maximize time for instruction and minimize distractions by student misbehavior. There are schoolwide systems for assigning natural consequences. Aligned with clear and consistent norms and expectations, we use TLAC and TWCM strategies to remind and redirect learners when issues are small and manageable. Teachers build healthy classroom communities where students hold each other accountable to the norms and expectations they helped establish to maintain a productive learning environment.

Ideally, when a norm is not met or a relationship needs repair, this will happen inside the classroom sometime after the incident. However, suppose a more serious norm is not met, a norm is repeatedly not met, or if a resolution cannot be found inside the classroom where the incident occurred, the incident will be referred to iPrep's leadership team. Trained in restorative practices, the leadership team will be called to escort student(s) to a space to reset and process the incident. iPrep leaders will focus their efforts on mediation, agreement, and

[69] Williams, C. (2021, November 4). Classroom management: Positive reinforcement. Center for Student Achievement Solutions. Retrieved December 30, 2022, from https://www.studentachievementsolutions.com/classroom-management-positive-reinforcement/

[70] Lyubansky, M. (n.d.). New Study reveals six benefits of school restorative justice. Psychology Today. Retrieved December 30, 2022, from https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/between-the-lines/201605/new-study-reveals-six-benefits-school-restorative-justice

opportunities for growth rather than punishment. The team will evaluate individual and community shortcomings and guide students toward opportunities for growth and learning.

Addressing Major Infractions

Independence Preparatory Academy will maintain the discipline definitions framework of the Fairfield City School system to promote clarity and consistency while maintaining efficient mechanisms for reporting discipline actions to the Alabama State Department of Education. According to Fairfield City's Code of Student Conduct, infractions are grouped into three classes - Minor Offenses (Class I), Intermediate Offenses (Class II), and Major Offenses (Class III). Class III offenses are considered safety violations and/or criminal misconduct and violations are subject to long-term suspension or expulsion.

A list and definitions of the offenses for which students must (where non-discretionary) and may (where discretionary) be suspended or expelled are provided in **Appendix E**.

Suspensions, Expulsions, and Appeals

iPrep is committed to protecting the educational rights and safety of all students. Students referred for any discipline 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
- Verbally communicating to parents with written notification to follow at least 48 hours
- Receiving equal treatment without regard to race, sex, creed, color, religion, national origin or disability.

The above due process is documented when the Executive Director considers suspension as an intervention. The student and legal guardian are provided with the notice of suspension, in writing, including any stipulations for reinstatement, such as a restorative conference or restitution. The Executive Director 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 student appears with a legal guardian.
- The Student Culture Manager recommending the Class III hearing presents all evidence concerning the alleged violation.
- The student provides an opportunity to admit or deny the allegation.
- The student provides the opportunity to present their side of the story and any relevant evidence.
- The student is allowed to call witnesses on their behalf.
- The Executive Director decides whether the offense has occurred and the appropriate intervention/consequence.
- The Executive Director prepares a written explanation of the allegations, relevant evidence, and appropriate intervention.
- A written explanation is provided to the student and family in writing within 48 hours.

Students and families can appeal the Executive Director's decision to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will convene a minimum of 3 members for the appeal using this protocol:

- The Executive Director presents his written report to the board, including evidence of due process.
- The student can present their side of the facts.
- The family can advocate on behalf of their student.
- Within 48 hours, the Board of Directors presents the family, student, and Executive Director with written notice of their decision. If the Board overturns the decision of the Executive Director, the Executive Director responds by assigning an alternative consequence.
- The decision of the Board of Directors is final.

If a student is expelled or removed from school for more than ten days, they continue learning virtually with the same supports provided at school, including special education and 504 services. In collaboration with the student's teachers, iPrep's Student Supports Coordinator will meet with the student and parent/guardian to create a remote individualized learning plan, including steps for progress monitoring. Once a student 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 students, including students with disabilities and special education students. Teachers and staff collaborate with the Executive Director and SPED Teachers to ensure that student behavior needs and goals are appropriately identified, documented, and serviced to provide students with the appropriate support to de-escalate behaviors. To maintain alignment with Fairfield City Schools, when special education students or students with a disability commit a Class III offense, iPrep's processes align with Fairfield's Code of Student Conduct. These processes comply with all state and federal laws and ensure the student is treated fairly while having equitable access to the school and curriculum.

When a special education student commits a Class III offense, the Executive Director initiates procedures to have the student's Individualized Educational Program (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 revisions to the student's IEP must be documented within the current IEP. Only the IEP Committee may change a special education student's placement. In no case will a student 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.

School Rewards and Incentives

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

Each month, we recognize all students that meet the requirements for Eagle of the Month. We acknowledge their hard work with a school-wide recognition ceremony and a monthly certificate.

- Excellent Attendance (may have one excused absence; may not have more than two tardies or early dismissals)
- 100% Days of Scholarly Behavior (Blue or Green according to Daily Behavior Chart in Grades K-5; Weekly Eagle Bucks balances of 15 or more in Grades 6-8)
- 90% or higher in homework completion

Students who earn Eagle of the Month every month in the school year will be awarded the honor of Eagle of the Year.

iPrep provides extra-curricular activities for students, including Identity Days, SWAG days, and guest speakers. Monthly extracurricular activities, including field trips, are incentive-based and require students to meet criteria expectations for homework completion, daily, on-time attendance, and behavior. These extracurricular activities reward students for their hard work and compliance with iPrep expectations and policies.

Communicating Discipline Expectations

In collaboration with our students and families, iPrep develops a shared vision for student behaviors and our PBIS matrix. These expectations are communicated to students and families during culture camp and provided as written policy in the Family Handbook as described in **Attachment 9**. Families will acknowledge receipt in writing. iPrep staff will provide family workshops introducing unfamiliar concepts like restorative justice practices and our interactive PBIS platform to ensure students and families are empowered to monitor behavioral progress throughout the school year.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Our community is central to our model. Aligned with our mission and core values, iPrep is poised to be a community of leaders creating positive change within Fairfield and beyond. Our success depends on the close relationships of students, teachers, school leadership, and staff, and the support of parents and families. iPrep consciously develops principles guiding family and community engagement.

"It takes a village to raise a child" originates from an African proverb and conveys that it takes many people to provide a safe, healthy environment for students to grow and the security they need to develop, flourish, and realize their hopes and dreams. [71] From enrollment to graduation and beyond, we see each student as a part of a family actively collaborating with iPrep to create "the village" that provides fertile grounds for students to grow and thrive.

Building the iPrep Village: Gathering Community Input and Feedback

Under the guidance of BES and New Schools for Alabama, iPrep created a prototype and tested many assumptions on which our model is built through over 25 individual conversations with community leaders,

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[71] Reupert, A., Straussner, S. L., Weimand, B., & Maybery, D. (2022, February 11). It takes a village to raise a child: Understanding and expanding the concept of the "village". Frontiers. Retrieved December 31, 2022, from https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2022.756066/full#:~:text=The%20phrase%20%E2%80%9Cit%20takes%20a,to%20realize%20their%20hopes%20and

experts in education reform, and school leadership in Fairfield and the greater Birmingham area, community organizations, nonprofits, and potential partners. Since January, the Independence Preparatory Academy founding team has conducted three community meetings in Fairfield and surrounding areas and two virtual meetings to share the mission, vision, and key pillars of iPrep. In these sessions, we received feedback on the quality of education in the area, and the methods families use to create the best education for their children. In November, iPrep launched digital outreach through social media platforms. Through these platforms, iPrep engaged over 50 families through input surveys. Families were asked to rank (scale of 1 to 7, 7 being very important) how important our key design elements are to them in the education of their children. An average of 90% of all responses indicate that our key design elements are important to their school choice. One parent stated, "Having resided here all my life, I am very disappointed to see where and how we exist at this current time. I look forward to the change this school will bring". While another shared, "A charter school is much needed. It is the only way my Son will attend a school in Fairfield City".

Co-designing our model with the community we intend to serve is critical to launching and sustaining our innovative instructional model. We continue to test our model to gain families' insight into how iPrep can best meet their needs.

Engaging the iPrep Village: Family Involvement from Approval to Opening

iPrep's village is a nurturing support network that provides fertile grounds for our students to thrive and grow. From enrollment to graduation, iPrep sees our students as a part of a family, actively collaborating with the iPrep community. To this end, when a student enrolls at iPrep, his or her family enrolls, and we strive to ensure 100% family engagement in our student's learning experience.

Parent Orientation and Training We host orientation sessions, informative workshops, and meetings throughout the year.
- *Open House*s provide the opportunity to inform the community about our school's mission and innovative approach. Families sign "Intent to Enroll" forms, and follow-up calls and appointments are initiated to answer further questions and concerns from potential families.
- *Enrollment Sessions* provide dedicated time for assisting families with registration and enrollment.
- *Parent Orientation* with the Executive Director allows parents to dive deep into the iPrep Way. The iPrep Family Handbook **(Attachment 9)** is reviewed, which outlines policies and expectations of students and families.
- *Back to School Bash* is the initial opportunity to meet the entire iPrep family. Families tour classrooms, meet teachers and connect with other students and families.
- *iPrep LIFE Classes* are a series of one-hour fun and educational sessions (i.e., mindfulness, group fitness, cooking, resume-building, computer skills, financial literacy) for families to develop rapport and **L**earn **I**n a **F**un **E**nvironment (LIFE).

Frequent, Consistent Communication iPrep commits to frequent, consistent communication with families to share the ongoing progress of the school. Emails, calendars, and newsletters regarding school announcements, policies, updates, and programming will be shared frequently. All communication is shared in both English and Spanish.

Strengthening the iPrep Village: Sustaining Family Engagement Through Operational Years

Because our relationships with iPrep families are vital to our success and because we recognize that needs, assets, and priorities shift with time, iPrep commits to partnership and rethinking – and at times rebuilding – relationships based on trust and mutual respect.

Board Membership iPrep empowers our families to have an authentic voice in our school. Under Alabama Act 2015-3, iPrep reserves at least 20% of the Board of Directors' membership for family members of our student with voting rights in school governance and future developments. iPrep's Executive Director will identify parents that offer unique skillsets to move the work of the Board of Directors forward. Potential parents joining the Board will be elected by the Board as stated in our bylaws.

Community Partnerships iPrep's Executive Director and Board of Directors plan to expand outreach efforts with community partnerships that ensure student needs are met to achieve academic success. iPrep intends to partner with nonprofit providers to offer mental health and social work, mentorship, medical and dental health, and before and after school care. iPrep leaders continue to recruit community members to support Eagle Quests by sharing their passion and expertise.

Parent Volunteers Our Parent Volunteer Program, coordinated by our Student Supports Coordinator, creates schoolwide opportunities for parents to volunteer. This includes, but is not limited to, being a reading buddy, bulletin board support, tutoring, or extra hands for school events. Each month, an email is sent with a signup link for current volunteer opportunities. iPrep understands the need for parents to be a part of the school community and to feel that their skills and talents are valuable to the school.

Supporting Student Progress at Home Academic and behavioral progress is communicated with families throughout the school year. Families receive weekly reports that outline their child's academic proficiency regarding prioritized standards. iPrep is poised to acquire access to a learning management system (LMS) to provide real-time, on-demand access to student progress. The LMS will house student goals, weekly action plans, grades, assignments, behavior incident logs, and teacher feedback. *University Nights* are structured opportunities to learn more about our college preparatory and career readiness curriculum and instructional methods. Families peek inside our classrooms to better understand what students are learning. *Achievement Ceremonies* allow students and their families to celebrate student progress and make clear the path to goal attainment. These are held four times yearly at the end of each 9-week grading period.

Sharing iPrep's Progress and Updates Twice a year, the Executive Director will share The State of iPrep, detailing the school's overall health and progress toward goals. Aligned with the Alabama Open Meeting Act, the Board of Directors' meeting minutes and the school's financial statements remain on the iPrep website.

Family Surveys To remain in response to student and family needs, iPrep provides opportunities for families to share their perspectives on the school's progress and promises. Three times a year, iPrep will send questionnaires to obtain helpful feedback on the overall effectiveness of pursuing our mission.

Open-Door Policy With prior notice, we welcome the community and our families to see our students in action. Our Family Handbook (Attachment 9) details clear guidelines for visiting classrooms to ensure student safety and minimal disruption of the learning environment.

iPrep's Family Handbook (**Attachment 9**; pg. 37) defines required expectations for iPrep families.

PARTNERSHIP OR CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIPS

iPrep has partnered with BES (Build. Excel. Sustain.), a highly selective fellowship program that identifies and prepares excellent leaders to transform education in their communities. Our lead founder, Dr. Sales, of the 2022-2023 cohort, commits to a four-year process to design, found, and lead an excellent public charter school. She is participating in 300+ hours of training, studying 20+ exemplar schools, and completing two residencies at high-performing charter schools. To ensure a strong start and excellence over time, BES will provide Follow On Support in years 0 - 2. This consists of various coaching activities – site visits, weekly coaching calls, remote training, document review, video feedback, small group intensives led by BES coaches and leaders of high-performing BES schools, and access to the Follow On Support resource hub.

In partnership with New Schools for Alabama (NSFA), Dr. Sales is also currently participating in a yearlong fellowship in the School Founder Program, a highly selective fellowship for aspiring charter school founders in Alabama that recruits, selects, and trains high-caliber individuals as they launch new, high-quality charter schools. The program consists of training experiences in application assistance, leadership training, Alabama compliance, and a full-time residency with a high-quality charter school. With NSFA, Dr. Sales visited high-performing charters in Memphis and New Orleans to learn best practices in charter school leadership and participate in Teach Like a Champion leadership cohort. NSFA's CFO and COO provide advisory support in startup budgeting, facilities acquisition, and strategic planning. Beginning in year 0 and beyond, NSFA will provide support in board training, startup support, back-office services, and ongoing leadership coaching.

In alignment with our mission to offer student-centered instruction, iPrep will partner with the Modern Classrooms Project (MCP) to adapt, design, and train staff around our voice and choice instructional model. During pre-authorization, MCP offered in-kind support in designing our research-based instructional model. Upon authorization, iPrep will partner with MCP to offer ongoing professional development for iPrep teachers and leaders. Because creating a nurturing and predictable environment is intentional and modeled by adults first, iPrep partners with Silent Rock Educational Services to support establishing norms and structures to develop a culture aligned with our core values through fee-based coaching and development opportunities. CharacterStrong partners with iPrep to provide leadership and teacher development around our selected character development curriculum. iPrep's founder engaged in a 5-month masterclass with the founders of CharacterStrong to grow her influence, impact, and legacy in leading a high-quality charter school centered around personal and organizational values. CharacterStrong will offer fee-based training and development on iPrep's SEL curriculum upon authorization.

To support facility acquisition, iPrep partners with Savills, a comprehensive property consultancy service to the education sector, which advises on existing options and provides strategic support in project management. Broker Lesa Nickelson French of Savills has over 20+ years of experience supporting start-up charter schools in

finding a facility to meet their unique needs and negotiating lease or purchase terms aligned with projected funding.

Attachment 10A and 10B provide memoranda of understanding from BES and NSFA and **Attachment 10C** provides letters of support from potential partners and supporters in the Fairfield community.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM CAPACITY

iPrep commits to being one of the highest-performing public schools in Fairfield, AL. Rooted in and supported by the assets of our community, our leadership team brings expertise in teaching and learning, school leadership, performance management, and parent and community engagement. As we grow our team, we seek mission-aligned leaders with the expert knowledge and skills to open, operate, and grow iPrep.

Dr. Calandra Sales, Proposed Executive Director
As a native Alabamian, Dr. Sales has the unique background of not only having been an administrator in an Alabama school district, but also of having been an administrator and administrative coach in two of the highest-performing charter school networks in the nation. Throughout her career, Dr. Sales has proven to transform academic outcomes for students in district and charter schools. As an instructional coach in Atlanta, GA, Dr. Sales used data-driven instructional analysis to coach teachers in two urban middle schools to increase the percentage of all students meeting standards on the state math assessment by 4% and 8% and increased the percentage of students with disabilities meeting standards by 17% and 19%. Building upon this success, Dr. Sales supported first-year math teachers in an urban school in Memphis to improve student achievement in Algebra II by 25% on state assessments. In another school setting, she coached teachers across three grade levels to improve student proficiency on state assessments by 10%. As a director of leader development with IDEA Public Schools, Dr. Sales managed content specialists in developing teachers and school leaders to improve student achievement in ELA and math. Her leadership led the campus to receive a "C" on the state report card after trending at an "F" after semester exams. In addition to managing content specialists, Dr. Sales coached principals-in-residence (PIRs), principals, and assistant principals of instruction (APIs). Through her strategic approach to leadership coaching, leader capacity, as measured by school leadership levers, increased by over 20% in 3 months. Her coaching led to two PIRs' promotion to principals and two APIs' promotion to PIRs.

As a member of the highly selective BES and New Schools for Alabama Fellowships (NSFA), from July 2022 to May 2023, Dr. Sales has studied over 30 high-performing charter schools in Tennessee, Louisiana, Washington, D.C., New York, and California. Additionally, she completed school leadership residencies with two high-performing BES schools, Memphis Merit Academy and Purpose Prep of Nashville (ranked within the top 5% of schools in TN for academic performance). Both BES and NSFA will continue to support iPrep through governance training, financial advisory, and leadership development.

Attachment 13 details the qualifications, resume, and professional biography of iPrep's proposed Executive Director.

To achieve our mission and vision, iPrep recruits critical leaders in school operations, teaching and learning, school culture, and student support. The leadership team must believe in the school's mission and leverage its expertise to contribute to the growth. **Figure 2.13** details the transition of our leadership team.

Figure 2.13: Leadership Team Staffing Plan

Planning Year and beyond	Executive Director	Dr. Calandra Sales (proposed)
	Director of School Operations	
	Dean of Academics	Pending grant funding
Year 1 and beyond	ES Student Culture Manager	
	Student Supports Coordinator	
	ES Literacy Specialist	
	ES Counselor	
Year 3 and beyond	Director of Lower School	
	ES Math Specialist	
Year 4 and beyond	Math Specialist	
	Director of Lower School	
Year 6 and beyond	MS Literacy Specialist	
	MS Math Specialist	
	Operations Manager	
	Dean of Student Supports	Student Supports Coordinator role ends; elevates to Dean of Student Supports to support growth
Year 7 and beyond	Director of Upper School	
	MS Counselor	
	MS Student Culture Manager	

Appendix F is iPrep's leadership team's roles and responsibilities matrix for our first operational year.

Upon authorization, the Board of Directors will officially hire the proposed Executive Director, Dr. Calandra Sales, full-time during its planning year. Philanthropic funds will fund this role. In collaboration with Silent Rock Educational Services, iPrep's proposed Executive Director will determine essential mindsets aligned with our mission, vision, and core values. These mindsets will serve as the North Star in recruiting and hiring talent. These mindsets support our commitment to establishing a school that identifies and removes any biased and inequitable systems and structures perpetuating our society's dominant values, norms, and beliefs based on race, class, and gender.

The Executive Director plans to hire the Director of School Operations (DSO) and the Dean of Academics (DoA) as early as December 1, 2023, pending grant funding. The founding team will leverage our networks and connections to the community to source candidates with essential mindsets, experience, and achieved outcomes aligned to the roles and responsibilities and charter school startup needs. The Executive Director, the DoA, and the DSO serve as the interview team to hire the Counselor, Student Supports Coordinator, Student Culture Manager, and Literacy Specialist by July 2024. This timeline allows time for transition into iPrep's culture and leadership team, ensuring a strong start in August 2024. We continue leveraging our networks and community connections to source all other school leadership positions.

SECTION 3: OPERATIONS PLAN AND CAPACITY

LEGAL STATUS AND GOVERNING DOCUMENTS

Independence Preparatory Academy is constituted as an Alabama non-profit corporation under Alabama law and has received its Certificate of Formation. A copy of the filing is included in **Attachment 15**. Independence Preparatory Academy filed Articles of Incorporation and additional paperwork with the IRS for 501c3 non-profit status. Federal tax exemption status is pending.

Attachment 16 is the completed and signed Statement of Assurances.

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Attachment 17 outlines our organizational structure and relationships at the governance and management levels, beginning with operational year 1 through operating year 7, at scale.

GOVERNING BOARD

The iPrep Board of Directors is composed of a diverse group committed to ensuring high-quality education options are available to the children of Fairfield, AL. Under the general supervision of the Alabama Public Charter School Commission and in compliance with the charter agreement and the Alabama School Choice and Student Opportunity Act, the Board of Directors oversees the strategic direction of iPrep. In addition to providing fiduciary oversight, the Board selects, supports, and evaluates the Executive Director.

Governance Philosophy

The Board will have at least five members and at most 11 members and ensure accountability to its mission, financial viability, and adherence to the terms of the charter. Each member commits to:
- Develop, vote, and provide oversight of policies and procedures for the school
- Oversee the educational program, ensuring alignment with the mission and goals
- Hire, support, and evaluate the Executive Director
- Ensure effective long-term business and organizational planning
- Lead efforts in opportunities for funding
- Maintain the school's image in the community

Founding board members will transition to the governing body immediately upon charter authorization. Each member will operate under term limits as indicated in our Bylaws, one, two, or three-year terms and no more than six years consecutively of any length. Directors shall serve staggered terms to balance continuity with new

perspectives. Under Alabama law, the Board will also bring on a parent representative after authorization, based upon their ability to support the mission of iPrep through professional expertise.

Board Meetings
Board meetings will occur at least once per month, ten months each year, and will fully comply with the Alabama Open Meetings Act. Additional meetings may be called as necessary and will continue to abide by all Alabama Open Meetings Act provisions.

Attachment 18 provides the proposed governing Bylaws.

Founding Team
The founding team is led by **Dr. Calandra Sales**, a Fellow with Build. Excel. Sustain. and New Schools for Alabama, Lead Founder of Independence Preparatory Academy, and proposed Executive Director.

As a native Alabamian, Dr. Sales has the unique background of not only having been an administrator in an Alabama school district, but also of having been an administrator and administrative coach in two of the highest-performing charter school networks in the nation. Throughout her career, Dr. Sales has a proven track record of transformative academic outcomes for students in district and charter schools. As an instructional coach in Atlanta, GA, Dr. Sales used data-driven instructional analysis to coach teachers in two urban middle schools to increase the percentage of all students meeting standards on the state math assessment by 4% and 8% and increased the rate of students with disabilities meeting standards by 17% and 19%. Building upon this success, Dr. Sales supported first-year math teachers in an urban school in Memphis to improve student achievement in Algebra II by 25% on state assessments. In another school setting, she coached teachers across three grade levels to improve student proficiency on state assessments by 10%. As a director of leader development with IDEA Public Schools, Dr. Sales managed content specialists in developing teachers and school leaders to improve student achievement in ELA and math. Her leadership led the campus to receive a "C" on the state report card after trending at an "F" after semester exams.

Upon chartering, all Founding team members, except Dr. Sales, will transition to the Independence Preparatory Academy Board of Directors.

Mr. Courtney Dennis, Proposed Board Treasurer
Mr. Dennis is an astute and methodical senior manager underwriter, and banking professional with significant experience working with clients. He serves as Vice President at Loan Depot, where he underwrites 1-4 family mortgage loans. Mr. Dennis is passionate about education, especially financial literacy, and seeks to ensure quality educational options for all children.

Ms. Tinesha Ross, Proposed Board of Director
Ms. Ross is an experienced system engineer and serves as Senior Manager of General Procurement – Production Operations and Launch Operations with United Launch Alliance. Most notably, Ms. Ross successfully launched the Mars 2020 Perseverance Rover into space and onto the planet's surface. Additionally, as a native of Fairfield, AL, she is committed to supporting students in quality education that leads them to the careers of their dreams.

Mr. Charles Stallworth, Proposed Board Vice Chair
As the Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students at Miles College in Fairfield, AL, Mr. Stallworth works collaboratively with the President's cabinet to create a campus culture that promotes student success, provide a safe and welcoming campus environment, and foster a sense of community among all students. Mr. Stallworth also teaches freshman and sophomore-level English. His leadership and passion for post-secondary education motivate him to serve iPrep families to ensure students have clear paths to college and careers.

Ms. Kristy Stewart, Proposed Board Secretary
A native of Fairfield, AL, Ms. Stewart has been in banking for 23 years. For 21 years, she worked with Regions Bank as a bank secrecy anti-laundering analyst and officer. She currently works in the commercial real estate department with Synovus. Ms. Stewart is a member of the Junior League and runs a nonprofit organization for economic empowerment for women. Recognizing the need for additional educational options for Fairfield families, Ms. Stewart commits to ensuring iPrep becomes a high-quality option for her community.

Mrs. Jewel Washington Taylor, Proposed Board Chair
As an employee champion and change agent, Mrs. Washington is a 22-year veteran in human resources. She currently serves as a Human Resources Business Partner with Shipt, responsible for aligning business objectives with partners across the industry. Before Shipt, Mrs. Taylor served as the VP of Human Resources Business Partner for six years with BBVA. A longtime parent advocate for school choice, Mrs. Taylor recognizes the importance of parents having options to meet their children's needs. Her Board appointment allows her the opportunity for continual advocacy for quality school options in Fairfield.

Ms. Christa Thomas, Proposed Board of Director
Ms. Thomas has fifteen years of experience working in schools to create equitable outcomes and a transformational experience for students, families, and communities. Through her prior role as Vice President of Schools for IDEA Tampa Bay Public Schools, Ms. Thomas was the principal manager for principals launching new schools to provide high-quality options for families. In addition, she was the founding school principal of KIPP Nashville College Prep Elementary (KNCPE) School. As a longtime educator and former school founder, Ms. Thomas desires to increase her impact in supporting quality school options for all children.

Mr. Courtney Turner, Proposed Board Vice Chair
As a native and current resident of Fairfield and graduate of Fairfield High School, Mr. Turner recognizes the impact of quality school options on the community's improvement. He desires to leverage his relationships and city connections to ensure iPrep's success. He is a motivated leader with superior business acumen, over 17 years of progressive experience in environmental health and safety, and four years in emergency medical services. He currently serves as a Process Safety Consultant with DEKRA North America, guiding to support safety improvements for domestic and international clients in various industries.

Attachment 19 provides signed disclosure forms for each proposed Board member.

Elected Officers
The Bylaws indicate that the Board will include four elected officers to meet specific organizational needs. Each officer will serve a renewable two-year term for a maximum of three consecutive terms.

The Chair is part of the leadership structure of the organization. The Chair:
- Presides over all meetings of the Board of Directors and other meetings as required
- Coordinates with the school leader, officers, and committee chairs to develop board meeting agendas
- Reviews operational effectiveness and sets organizational priorities for future development
- Serves as *ex officio* member on all committees
- Monitors the effectiveness of governing processes and addressing deficits in Board operations

The Vice-Chair:
- Carries out special assignments as requested by the Board Chair
- Understands the responsibilities of the Board Chair and can perform duties in the Chair's absence
- Serves as the chair of the Governance Committee

The Treasurer is entrusted with the financial responsibilities of the Board, which include:
- Serving as the Chair of the Finance Committee
- Ensuring that the school complies with the district, state, federal, and other statutory reporting requirements
- Ensuring financial records are current and accurate
- Participating in the preparation of the annual budget
- Vetting an external auditor for the annual financial audit
- Ensuring the Board understands the organization's financial health

The Secretary is the chief record keeper for the Board. Specific duties of the Secretary include:
- Keeping hard and electronic copies of bylaws as amended or otherwise altered to date
- Recording official minutes of all meetings as defined in the bylaws
- Keeping copies of agendas and minutes, making these documents available to the public
- Ensuring that all notices are given as required by law

As outlined in **Figure 3.1**, the founding team has selected the Board of Directors' first officers, subject to the Board's approval and majority vote upon authorization.

Figure 3.1: Inaugural Roster of Officers

Officer Position	Proposed Board of Directors
Chair	Mrs. Jewel Washington Taylor
Vice-Chair	Mr. Courtney Turner
Treasurer	Mr. Courtney Dennis
Secretary	Ms. Kristy Stewart

Committees

Our Bylaws indicate that the Board of Directors will have standing committees. Additional Board committees or task forces may be added as needed by the resolution of the Board. Committees or task forces include members of the Board, staff members, parents, and community members, as determined in the resolution, except for the Governance, Finance, and Academic Accountability Committees. Each committee meets once per month and is composed of a minimum of 2 active Board of Directors, except for the Governance Committee, which comprises three active members.

- *Governance*. The purpose of this committee is to ensure the Board has the necessary strength to govern Independence Preparatory Academy. In addition, the Governance Committee will create tools for evaluating the strength of the Board and provide development opportunities for members. The Governance Committee will also be responsible for new members' identification, recruitment, nomination, and training.
- *Finance*. The purpose of this committee is to closely oversee the school's financial management and work with the Executive Director and back-office financial provider to ensure fiscal responsibility and sustainability. The Finance Committee's tasks will include reviewing monthly cash flow statements, preparing financial reports, presenting these reports to the Board, and taking the lead in hiring the school's auditor and interpreting the financial audit results for the Board as a body.
- *Academic Accountability*. This committee aims to work with the Executive Director to analyze students' academic progress and ensure that the school meets accountability goals as outlined in this charter petition and any additional internal measures of success that the board and school leadership may establish. During the start-up phase of the school, this committee will also support the recruitment and enrollment efforts of the school.

Code of Ethics and Conflicts of Interest

Attachment 20 is iPrep's code of ethics and conflicts of interest policies.

Board Training and Evaluation

The Founding Team is currently completing approximately 10 hours of training, and these sessions include studies of effective governance, discussions of effective school missions and design elements, and community engagement.

BES will support the Board during its planning year and the first two years of operation, and NSFA will provide support in subsequent years. In addition, an annual self-evaluation will occur, supported by BES and NSFA. Per BES, this tool will come at the end of each fiscal year and evaluate a board member's attendance, committee participation, contributions to fund development, and feedback to increase the overall effectiveness of the Board, contributing to the school's achievement of academic, fiduciary, and organizational goals.

Upon authorization, the Board of Directors will participate in an Organizational Meeting to ensure a smooth transition from the founding board to governing board. This will include in-depth training on the following:
- Alabama Open Meetings Act
- Parliamentary Procedure and Robert's Rules of Order
- Board Officer Elections
- Board Committee Formation
- Board Policy Formation and Approval
- Executive Director Hiring, Support, and Evaluation
- Internal Accountability Goals

After the Organizational Meeting, the Board meets again during a Strategic Planning Session facilitated by BES to continue reviewing the distinction between governance and management, establish committee SMART goals, develop action plans for the planning year, and create critical tools for Board action and accountability.

With the support of BES and NSFA, each member of the founding team went through an extensive vetting process to determine mission fit and was carefully chosen for their dedication to education, expertise, and experience necessary for a governing body of a public charter school, service to the community, and unwavering belief in our mission and vision. The Lead Founder leveraged her networks and connections to the community to source potential board members. After rounds of engagement, the Lead Founder, in collaboration with BES, conducted final interviews before official offers were extended. Leveraging this process, iPrep plans to increase board capacity throughout the authorization process and its planning year. Additional real estate, law, and finance expertise is needed to ensure iPrep a strong start.

GRIEVANCE/COMPLAINT PROCESS

We deeply respect, acknowledge, and welcome families as partners in ensuring the academic and leadership development of every iPrep student. We are committed to providing the best conditions for our students and families, including an open-door policy and fair and honest treatment, free of discrimination or harassment. If our families issue a complaint with Independence Preparatory Academy that remains unresolved through traditional interventions, we utilize a straightforward, defined grievance procedure to resolve complaints.

If the complaint involves the Executive Director, a formal letter of complaint is sent to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors shall review the complaint and issue a response within 30 days.

If the complaint involves iPrep teachers or staff, families are encouraged to meet with the teacher or staff first to mitigate the concern. Teachers, staff, or families may request that the Executive Director or designee be present.

Step 1: If unresolved, families can request a conference with the Executive Director to discuss the complaint and seek resolution.

Step 2: The Executive Director interviews appropriate stakeholders within five business days. The Executive Director informs all stakeholders of the result of the grievance.

Step 3: Families can appeal the Executive Director's decision with the Chair of the Board of Directors through a formal grievance letter. The Board of Directors reviews the complaint and issues a response within 30 days.

Step 4: Families can appeal to the Alabama Public Charter School Commission if the grievance remains unresolved and involves an alleged state or federal policy violation.

STAFF STRUCTURE

iPrep's staffing model aligns with our mission and vision to maximize achievement, maintain fiscal wellness, and plan for our growth. To remain in response to student needs, we maintain a low student-to-teacher ratio in all grades and staff cohorts of 66 students with three teachers and two teacher associates. This allows for a maximum of 10 students per teacher during literacy and math and 20 students per teacher during other times

of the day. In grades 6-8, we maintain a ratio of 1:20. Over the first five years in operation, the adult-to-student ratio averages 1:7.

In the first two years of operation, the Executive Director (ED) maintains many responsibilities of a principal while overseeing the school's overall progress toward organizational goals. In year 3, a director of the lower school is selected to ensure time for key instructional processes that lead to long-term academic success.

In year 1, iPrep's leadership team is comprised of the ED, the Director of School Operations (DSO), the Dean of Academics (DoA), the Student Supports Coordinator (SCC), the Literacy Specialist, the Counselor, and the Student Culture Manager (SCM) and manages iPrep staff through collaboration and shared leadership. The DSO organizes the school's business model and establishes processes and procedures to maximize instructional time and safety. In addition, they manage the operation team, partnerships, and vendor relationships. The DoA is responsible for the oversight of academic programming and supervises the Literacy Specialist and teachers. The SSC oversees SPED compliance and delivers SPED services to students in the first year of operation. In addition, they manage SPED teachers and teacher associates, ELL teachers, and contracted SPED services. Finally, the SCM oversees student culture and behavior support, while the Counselor provides social-emotional support to all students and manages the SCM.

Attachment 21 is the complete staffing chart for iPrep for the next five years.

Staffing levels adjust as necessary, given our alignment with organizational goals and through the annual budget cycle to ensure all iPrep students are appropriately supported.

STAFFING PLANS, HIRING, MANAGEMENT, AND EVALUATION
iPrep recognizes that high-performing and qualified teachers positively influence students' short-term academic growth and long-term educational success.[72] Given the nationwide teacher shortage and the competitive market for quality teachers, iPrep is confident that teachers will be attracted to iPrep because of these distinct features:
- Focus on student-centered instruction
- Authentic relationships with colleagues, families, and students as the foundation for culture and character building
- Non-traditional school daily schedule, with time for teachers to adequately plan collaboratively and support in responding to the individual needs of students
- Protected 60-minutes of meeting-free, duty-free planning daily
- Prioritized and personalized professional development, including 2 hours each Friday
- Small school model with small caseloads of students
- Competitive salaries

iPrep intends to fill classrooms with exceptional educators with at least three years of teaching experience, prioritizing those holding Alabama certification. Our ideal candidate has enough experience to know the basics

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[72] Lee, S. W. (2018). Pulling back the curtain: Revealing the cumulative importance of high-performing, highly qualified teachers on students' educational outcomes. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 40(3), 359-381.

of teaching and is willing to learn and grow in practice. But, most importantly, iPrep teachers must live our mission and be ready to disrupt systemic inequities in the service of our students.

A Pipeline of Quality Teachers

iPrep intends to build a pipeline of quality teachers by implementing the Independence Educators Fellowship. In year 0, iPrep will host six experienced educators during six monthly meetings to collaborate in designing aspects of iPrep's academic programming. This allows for building relationships with Fairfield educators and developing their capacity to be the right fit for Independence Preparatory Academy. In year one and subsequent years, the Independence Educators Fellowship will support pre-certified professionals in obtaining teaching experience and alternative pathways to certification through programs like Teachers of Tomorrow. Participation and completion of programming at the expense of iPrep require a 3-year commitment after completion.

Teacher Recruitment

Utilizing our network connections is an essential first step in recruiting quality teacher candidates. Our recruiting networks include BES, New Schools for Alabama, Teach for America, LinkedIn, NewSchools Venture Fund, Charter School Growth Fund, Elevate Birmingham, national and local colleges and universities, and iPrep social media platforms and websites. Upon authorization and collaboration with consultants and iPrep's Board of Directors, the Executive Director will design a recruitment strategy to engage high-quality individuals to become founding teachers at iPrep.

Teacher Hiring Process

Candidates for teaching positions participate in a thorough selection process. **Figure 3.2** details our hiring process.

Figure 3.2: iPrep's Hiring Process

Resume Screening	- The Executive Director (ED) and Dean of Academics (DoA) review the resume for professionalism, communication ability, education/certifications, and experience. - Candidates are contacted for a brief screening interview to verify resume information.
Phone Interview	- The ED and DoA ask candidates pre-selected questions to determine mission alignment, personal beliefs, core values, and expectations. All candidates are asked the same questions. - If advancing to the next level, candidates are asked to submit a 10–15-minute recent video of their classroom teaching.
Instructional Video Screening	The ED and DoA review the video of candidates teaching a lesson and use a standard rubric to determine strengths and areas of growth. In addition, instructional videos are screened for evidence of communication, differentiated instruction, culture, classroom management, and instructional strategies and practices.

	● If candidates are advanced to the next level, they are contacted to schedule an in-person interview.
Reference Checks	● The DoA calls references and asks specific questions to all references for all candidates. Consistently positive references advance to the final round of interviews.
Final Interview and Sample Teach	● The ED and DoA observe the candidate's sample teaching in a classroom or simulation of one, looking for evidence of communication, differentiated instruction, culture, classroom management, and instructional strategies and practices. ● Candidates answer preselected questions. All candidates are asked the same questions. ● Candidates advancing receive a job offer.
Offer	The ED contacts the candidate to offer the position and follows up with a written offer letter.

The timeline for hiring during our planning year is as follows:
- October 2023: Job descriptions on social media and website; resume drop for candidates
- November 2023: Advertise open positions and send referral emails to our network
- December 2023: Resume review
- January 2024: Phone interviews, instructional video screenings
- February 2024: Reference checks, Final interviews, Sample Teach
- March 2024: Final Decisions
- By April 1, 2024: Offers Extended

iPrep employees receive annual employment contracts outlining the terms of employment, annual pay, direct manager, and roles and responsibilities. Contracts are eligible for yearly renewal and represent the expectations of iPrep and its employees. iPrep recognizes the criminal background check requirements of the ALSDE and agrees to comply with and implement necessary steps to ensure we maintain a safe community for our students.

Competitive Salaries and Benefits
iPrep is poised to offer competitive salaries benchmarked to the 2022-2023 Fairfield City Schools Salary Schedule with an additional 2%. The average teacher salary is budgeted between $47,773 and $52,544. Salaries are determined by prior teaching experience, educational attainment, and certifications. iPrep benefits include health care, dental care, vision care, and a retirement savings plan. This aligns with packages offered by other public schools in Fairfield and surrounding areas.

iPrep's Teacher and Leader Effectiveness System
iPrep's approach to teacher and leader effectiveness focuses on developing overall capacity. iPrep's Teacher Effectiveness System comprises three components contributing to an overall teacher effectiveness calculation: **assessment on iPrep's iTEACH rubric**, **professional growth**, and **student achievement**. The Leader

Effectiveness System contains four components contributing to an overall leader effectiveness calculation: **assessment of iPrep's iLEAD rubric**, **professional growth**, **student achievement**, and **school climate**.

The expectations for leader performance are defined by the iLEAD rubric adapted from Georgia's Leader Assessment on Performance Standards, and IDEA Public Schools School Leader Levers included in **Attachment 23**. The expectations for teacher performance are defined by the iTEACH rubric adapted from Georgia's Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards and IDEA Public Schools Guideposts to Excellent Teaching Rubric included in **Attachment 24**. This allows for a fair and comprehensive evaluation system with sufficient detail and accuracy for teachers and evaluators to understand performance expectations fully.

Professional growth is measured by progress toward or attainment of professional growth goals. These goals reflect areas of opportunities, individual professional goals, or school priorities and initiatives. Student achievement is measured by progress toward or attainment of student achievement measures. School climate is measured through student, staff, and family surveys. For leaders, student achievement is measured by progress toward or attainment of school academic goals.

Assessment on the iTEACH rubric, professional growth, and student achievement contributes to the overall teacher effectiveness calculation. Each component is weighted: iTEACH – 50%, professional growth – 20%, and student achievement – 30%. Assessment on the iLEAD rubric, professional growth, student achievement, and school climate contributes to the overall leader effectiveness calculation. Each component is weighted: iLEAD – 30%, professional growth – 20%, student achievement – 40%, and school climate – 10%. These measures determine an overall rating of exemplary (3.5 points and higher), proficient (between 2.5 and 3.4 points), needs development (between 1.5 and 2.4 points), and ineffective (less than 1.5 points).

iPrep's Staff Development Cycle

The process by which the iTEACH or iLEAD portion of the Teacher or Leader Effectiveness System is implemented is depicted in **Figure 3.3**. This process supports but does not replace the ongoing coaching processes, such as informal coaching, classroom observations, data conversations, and weekly check-ins.

Figure 3.3: iPrep's Staff Development Cycle

Self-Assessment	Reflecting on professional practice is an essential step in the process. Using teacher or leader performance standards, staff reflect on their strengths and areas for growth. This informs the professional learning plan.
Goal-Setting and Professional Growth Conference	Managers facilitate pre-evaluation conferences. The staff sets individualized goals for the year aligned with school goals and professional growth areas. The professional learning plan is finalized, and the evaluation rubric is discussed to clarify expectations.
Formative Assessment Process	iPrep teachers receive a minimum of 6 formal classroom touchpoints, including four walkthroughs (10–15-minute observations on a limited number of standards) and two complete observations (at least 30 minutes and based on all ten standards) throughout the year. These touchpoints may be announced or unannounced. iPrep leaders are formally evaluated twice a year.

2x2 Conversations	These conversations happen mid-year and allow the manager to share two strengths and two improvement opportunities for the teacher. Likewise, the teacher shares two strengths and two pieces of adjusting feedback for their manager. Additionally, this conversation focuses on student growth data and the professional learning plan. Finally, teachers and leaders needing support to meet targeted performance standards and student achievement goals midyear engage in intense coaching, external professional development, or a formal performance improvement plan.
Summative Assessment Evaluation	A summative assessment evaluation is conducted at the end of the school year and is based on observational data and documentation. This evaluation, conducted by the Executive Director, establishes a final rating on all standards based on the totality of evidence and consistency of practice.
Annual Performance Review	This conversation celebrates achievements, reflects on areas of improvement, and plans for growth in the coming school year. The summative assessment evaluation results are shared, student data trends are reviewed, and the professional learning plan is addressed. Annual performance reviews determine the renewal of annual contracts.

Appendix H details the evaluation process for the Executive Director.

Staff Retention and Turnover

We are confident that the iPrep Way will draw and retain our area's most talented teachers and leaders, and we recognize the importance of maintaining quality staff. However, according to the Learning Policy Institute," Poor teacher retention has been shown to negatively impact students' educational achievement"[73] (November 2022, para 9). **Figure 3.4** outlines iPrep's recruitment strategy.

Figure 3.4: iPrep's Recruitment Strategy

Teachers are treated as professionals.	Retaining talented teachers requires treating them as professionals. We operate in shared decision-making, so our teachers have a say in significant school decisions through the Instructional Leadership Team and board meetings. iPrep teachers belong to a professional culture that values learning and growth.
Self-Care is standard.	iPrep is a healthy environment to support students in pursuit of their dreams. To achieve this, we must create structures and supports to enable staff to develop emotional, mental, and physical health.
Staff culture is joyful and inclusive.	iPrep creates a school culture that is inspiring and joyful. We work together to uphold our core values and expect to live them with integrity. Transparent decision-making, open and honest communication, and valuing others' strengths are critical.
We meet the mission.	One of the best retention strategies of great organizations is that staff feel successful. iPrep retains excellent talent by ensuring we successfully meet our ambitious vision of creating a high-quality school option for Fairfield students to master rigorous work in pursuit of their dreams.
We work hard and	People want to be appreciated for excellent work. For this reason, iPrep implements a teacher career pathway retention program (TCP). iPrep's TCP is a differentiated reward and recognition program that places teachers on a five-tier pathway based on performance.

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[73] Teacher retention: Preventing teacher turnover. School of Education Online. (2022, November 19). Retrieved January 28, 2023, from https://soeonline.american.edu/blog/teacher-retention/#:~:text=Poor%20teacher%20retention%20has%20been,particularly%20in%20reading%20and%20math.

celebrate harder.	Each pathway has its own set of supports, rewards, and recognition, including financial rewards and leadership opportunities.

iPrep's effectiveness system and staff development cycle support the growth and development of all staff. Still, we recognize times when staff behavior does not align with our mission, vision, and core values. In such cases, iPrep employs a progressive discipline approach to dismissal procedures:

1. A verbal warning is used for minor infractions or early signs of poor work performance.
2. Written warnings are used for repeated minor or more severe infractions.
3. A performance improvement plan is used for repeated major or severe infractions. The Executive Director and staff manager determine the course of action to improve staff performance. Lack of performance by the specified date may result in termination.
4. Up to 14 days, a suspension is used for repeated minor infractions or major or more severe infractions.
5. After consulting with the staff member and manager, the Executive Director decides when termination is appropriate. Staff can appeal the termination to iPrep's Board of Directors. The Board of Directors' decision is final.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Exemplary teachers get exemplary results. At iPrep, we promote growth and development by teachers engaging in almost **900 hours** of professional development throughout the school year facilitated by iPrep's leadership team.

iPrep leaders facilitate summer PD for **105 hours** before the first day of school. The goal is to lay a foundation for why this work is important, how we will honor our commitments to families, and how we will ensure that procedures and routines are delivered at high levels daily. **Appendix G** provides a detailed schedule for summer PD.

The first week of summer PD focuses on **"Knowing the Mission"**. iPrep staff ground their personal why into the broader mission and vision. The first week concludes with teachers experiencing our culture in action to begin unpacking schoolwide routines and procedures. Week 2 prioritizes **"Protecting the Mission"** of iPrep through curriculum and instruction. Teachers engage in internalizing lessons, participating in and analyzing strong lesson models, engaging in instructional and cultural routines, and engaging in feedback rounds to strengthen lesson prep and execution. Week 3 prepares teachers to engage in **"Living the Mission"**. This week supports teachers in mastering cultural and instructional routines. The week concludes by reviewing and practicing schoolwide systems to manage arrival, dismissal, transitions, and lunch procedures in preparation for day one readiness.

Ongoing Teacher PD

iPrep teachers engage in 2 hours of professional development every Friday for **72 hours** a year. The first Friday of the month is dedicated to whole group professional development around instructional and cultural priorities for the year. Bambrick-Santoyo's Get Better Faster Scope and Sequence, which includes top action steps around rigor and management used by instructional leaders to launch a teacher's development, will set the year's learning sequence. Weeks 2 through 4 are dedicated to continued content development and math

and literacy curriculum. In small content groups, teachers will collaborate around lesson planning and internalization, model lessons and instructional routines aligned to the curriculum, and receive feedback from their managers and peers.

Teacher Planning Time

In addition to the 2 hours weekly of group professional development, iPrep teachers have 4 hours a week for individual instructional planning time for a total of **576 hours** per year. Teachers engage in lesson planning and internalization in preparation for strong instructional delivery, review student data for lesson planning, and grade daily exit tickets. iPrep leaders support teacher development during this time by engaging in one-on-one lesson planning support and model lessons.

Teacher Coaching

iPrep teachers engage in weekly coaching cycles managed by the Dean of Academics and content specialists. The cycle begins with 30-minute observations weekly, followed by a 60-minute coaching conversation at least 24 hours after the observation for **54 hours** in individual professional development for the year. Based on these observations, leaders create an action step - a specific, granular shift in teacher practice - which outlines a formula for closing the gap in student learning. This is influenced by the Teach Like a Champion approach, where the 'moves' of teaching are front and center in teacher development. We leverage [Bambrick-Santoyo's feedback framework - See it, Name it, Do it](#) (SND) to drive our coaching conversations. This model supports teachers in seeing a model of the prescribed technique and then analyzing the gap between the model and their current practice. iPrep leaders then name the strategy teachers adopt using concrete, shared language. To ensure successful implementation, teachers use deliberate practice to ensure successful action step performance. Leaders monitor performance in routine, consistent follow-up observations until mastery of the action step.

Data Meetings

When teachers use data to drive their decisions and plans, they can respond to problems more effectively, construct new teaching methods, and advance skill sets faster.[74] Data meetings are facilitated after all large-scale assessments. Before data meetings, teachers review the assessment exemplar and categorize students into three groups - high, medium, and low. After categorization, teachers name the gap in student understanding based on the standards aligned to each assessment item. During the meeting, teachers see past success and the exemplar and analyze the gap with their peers. Finally, the error and conceptual misunderstanding are stamped, and a plan for reteaching is defined and practiced.

Mastery Check Huddles

iPrep teachers engage in daily mastery check huddles for 15 minutes at the end of every day for a total of **30 hours** for the year. These huddles push to close gaps in student learning by identifying critical student errors and misconceptions to adjust instruction or plan an aligned reteach. Teachers leverage Bambrick-Santoyo's framework of See It, Name It, Do It to determine the most pressing gap.

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[74] Holley, M. (2017, November 21.). The benefits of data-driven education. MethodSchools.org. Retrieved January 4, 2023, from https://www.methodschools.org/blog/the-benefits-of-data-driven-education

1. See the exemplar - teachers review the exemplar of the mastery checks to determine what is critical in an ideal student response and stamp the criteria for success.
2. See the gap - teachers review non-mastered mastery checks to determine what gaps they see in the student work between the exemplar and those that did not master. Then, teachers decide what teacher action or inaction led to the gap.
3. Name it - based on the gap in student work, teachers decide the critical student error and the misconception behind it.
4. Do it - teachers decide how to adjust instruction the next day to address the common misconception and stamp the next steps.

Culture Clinics

iPrep prioritizes strong culture to ensure scholars have limited to no distractions during instructional time. To ensure consistency between all iPrep classrooms, our teachers spend several hours during summer professional development and unpacking and practicing cultural elements throughout the year. Additionally, any iPrep teacher identified through culture rounds or coaching which is not proficient in these cultural elements or needs extra intervention based on cultural trends will participate in 45-minute weekly culture clinics for **27 hours** for the year. The Executive Director will support teachers in gaining and maintaining proficiency in iPrep Cultural Elements through See It - Name It - Do It practice clinics with bite-sized actions that lead to strong classroom management and culture.

Lesson Planning Clinics

Since iPrep teachers leverage high-quality curricula with scripted lessons, teachers must decide how to implement these lessons based on student needs. To ensure this is done excellently, teachers leverage a guide similar to KIPP's Content Teams Lesson Internalization Guide to prepare for instruction. This guide assists in gaining clarity on the logic of the lesson, establishing priorities for instruction, and thinking through student needs. iPrep teachers submit lesson plans every Wednesday. Based on the internalization guide, teachers' lesson plans are evaluated to ensure robust plans are ready for implementation the following week. Weekly lesson planning clinics (45 minutes weekly/**27 hours** yearly) provide one-on-one support for any iPrep teacher not proficient with lesson planning and struggling to turn around weekly feedback given by iPrep leaders. The Head of School will support teachers in gaining and maintaining proficiency in lesson planning through See It - Name It - Do It practice clinics with bite-sized actions that lead to strong lesson internalization and delivery.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The Alabama Charter School Commission evaluates the performance of every charter school annually according to a set of academic, financial, and organizational performance standards. The academic performance standards consider status, growth, and comparative performance based on federal, state, and school-specific measures. The financial performance standards are based on standard accounting and industry standards for sound financial operation. The organizational performance standards are based primarily on compliance with legal obligations, including fulfilling the governing board's fiduciary duties related to proper governance.

Educational and Organizational Goals

In addition to state academic, financial, and organizational performance standards, iPrep adopts aligned with our mission, vision, and core values. These goals use data from the proposed population as a baseline to ensure that goals are ambitious yet attainable.

1. 80% of students will meet or exceed grade level proficiency in foundational skills on the Star Early Literacy Test.
2. 80% of students achieve at least one year of growth in ELA and math on the i-Ready Diagnostic.
3. 80% of students will score 85% or higher on benchmarks in reading and math.
4. 90% of students report they agree or strongly agree that they "can apply the mindsets, skills, attitudes that help them succeed in school, career and life" as measured by annual surveys.
5. 90% of families report they "feel welcomed and connected to teachers and to what students are learning and doing in school" as measured by annual surveys.

Comprehensive Assessment Plan

Research-based measures implemented at strategic intervals throughout the school year allow for close monitoring of student progress and frequent evaluation of instructional resources and strategies at Independence Preparatory Academy. **Figure 3.5** illustrates iPrep's comprehensive assessment plan.

Figure 3.5: iPrep's Comprehensive Assessment Plan

Content/Grade Bands	Assessment	Purpose	Frequency
Reading Foundational Skills; K-3	Star Early Literacy	Determine student's reading levels	BOY, MOY, EOY
Reading & Math; K-8	NWEA Map Growth	Universal screener for MTSS academics	BOY, MOY, EOY
Reading & Math; K-8	i-Ready Diagnostic	Determines personalized learning pathways for reading/math acceleration and WIN	BOY, MOY, EOY
Reading & Math; K-8	i-Ready Growth Monitoring	Progress monitoring for Tier II and Tier III students for MTSS academics	Every two weeks
SEL Behavior; K-8	SAEBRS	Universal screener for MTSS behavior	BOY, MOY, EOY
SEL Behavior; K-8	DBR-SIS	Progress monitoring for Tier II and Tier III students with MTSS behavior	Every two weeks
ELLs; K-8	WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test	Determine and identify ELLs' placement and services	Prompted by status on Home Language Survey
ELLs; K-8	ACCESS 2.0	Monitor ELL's progress in acquiring academic English within school context	Once per year in January

ELA & Math; 2-8 Science; 4, 6, & 8	ACAP Summative	Measures student progress on the Alabama Course of Study standards	Once per year in spring
Reading & Math; K-2 All content areas; 3-8	Mid-Unit & Unit Assessments	Administered during class periods to assess mastery of taught standards throughout the school year	As indicated in curriculum maps
Reading, Writing, & Math; K-2 All content areas; 3-8	Interim Assessments	Comprehensive exams to measure standard mastery throughout 1st and 3rd nine weeks	Twice a year, at the end of 1st and 3rd nine weeks
Reading, Writing, & Math; K-2 All content areas; 3-8	Semester Benchmarks	Comprehensive exams to measure standard mastery throughout each semester	Twice a year in December and May

Evaluating Academic Progress

Each assessment measures progress toward academic goals for individual students, student cohorts, and the whole school throughout the academic year. In collaboration with the Dean of School Operations, the Executive Director designs a data dashboard to house formative and summative data points. This tool allows teachers, students, and families to access data in real-time and provides data snapshots at the student, class, cohort, and school levels. The Executive Director evaluates the most current performance data, tracks all assessment data, and publicly shares academic performance in a weekly dashboard. Reports for school-wide data are presented to the board and the families after school-wide benchmarks. Reports provide snapshots and growth throughout an academic year or across academic years over the charter term.

The Dean of Academics is responsible for managing academic data and coordinating teacher development in interpreting and managing student data. In addition, the Dean of Academics facilitates the professional development of literacy and math specialists to analyze data to be equipped to lead grade-level professional development.

Data reviews take place weekly during Early Release Friday. Led by the leadership team, teachers analyze reports on student progress and make decisions about instruction based on student needs. In addition, teachers manage classroom assessment data and communicate regular progress to parents. Standards-based reports compiling a variety of formative assessments are provided to parents quarterly. In Eagle Reports, small-scale data is reported to families daily (K-5) or weekly (6-8).

Academic Corrective Action

Because students participate in frequent assessment cycles with data tracked in a dashboard, academic shortfalls can be predicted and identified early. If a classroom or grade levels are off track in meeting academic goals, academic corrective action strategies to be implemented might include but are not limited to:
- Adjustment of allocated time and enrollment in intervention programming to address students who are not meeting goals, including after-school tutoring, Saturday school, or adjustments to the daily schedule to afford more time or access to intervention programming held during the school day
- Increased and targeted professional development for instructional staff

- Adjustment to schedule to provide more time in a target content area
- Adjustment to unit plan to integrate target standards across content area lesson planning
- Temporarily placing Leadership Team members directly into classrooms

FACILITIES

The iPrep founding team is identifying a facility aligned with our mission, vision, and academic model. Finding adequate space is a top priority for our team if iPrep is approved. Year 1 facility requirements essential to our mission are:

1. The facility requires 10,400 square feet with an 8-10 classroom capacity.
2. The facility must have or have the capacity to build kitchen/warming facilities, office spaces, a teacher work room, a gym or multipurpose room, general meeting space, small group quiet spaces, a nurse's office, and storage, and at least one ample space for school-wide gatherings, ideally a cafeteria.
3. There must be capacity for reconfiguration and renovation upon acquisition, if needed, to meet programmatic needs.
4. The facility will comply with all appropriate ADA and other legal requirements.
5. The facility lease, renovation, furniture, fixtures, and equipment costs would ideally fall within the total allotment included in iPrep's budget.

In partnership with Savills and New Schools for Alabama, iPrep has identified three prospective facilities in Fairfield. **Figure 3.6** describes each option.

Figure 3.6: Potential Facilities Options

Location	Size	Details
Flintridge Center – 6500 Aaron Aronov Dr, Fairfield, AL 35064, Suite 8 (former Winn Dixie)	47K + square feet available	Potential for all needed facility space, landlord willing to offer multiple free months instead of repairs, the lease is negotiable, needs HVAC
Western Hills Mall - 7201 Aaron Aronov Dr, Fairfield, AL 35064	17K – 58k square feet available	Potential for all needed facility space, the property has cosmetic renovations and new HVAC, potential cost per square feet aligns with the budget allotment for the first three operational years
Bellview Plaza - 7100 Aaron Aronov Drive, Fairfield, AL 35064	Up to 40,000 square feet available	Potential for all needed facility space, space conducive for easy access for families, needs HVAC, roofing, electrical work, and plumbing

Flintridge Center leads options in viability and affordability based on facility conditions and locations. If the charter is approved, iPrep is poised to move into immediate discussions with the property owner with intentions to negotiate purchase via a mortgage or a lease-to-own agreement. Our walkthroughs and site visits have indicated there may be improvements required. All improvements will align with the Alabama Building Code and Alabama Fire Protection Code and any other requirements outlined in Act 2015-3, including, but not limited to, restrooms, fire safety, campus security, air quality control, and weatherproofing. iPrep will follow construction requirements and procedures set forth by the Alabama State Department of Education and the Alabama Building Commission and is prepared to follow city and county planning review procedures before

renovations. Since the facility is vacant, renovations can begin as early as the summer of 2023 in preparation for school opening in August 2024.

Attachment 25 provides a letter of intent for the Flintridge Center property. **Attachment 26** provides supporting details for potential facilities options.

iPrep will continue to partner with Savills and New Schools for Alabama to find viable facilities and support in connection with contractors for possible renovations. In addition, NSFA has a partnership with New School Partners (NSP), a skilled nonprofit charter school facilities planning and development team that has managed, built, financed, and launched dozens of charter school facilities in the southeast – both as purchased or leased facilities. NSP supports Alabama charter schools with essential facilities-related technical assistance such as lease or purchase negotiation, architectural, design, building codes, general contractor bidding processes, and owner's representation services. The bulk of the services provided by NSP will be provided pro bono pending final determination of facilities design, and actual construction and renovation oversight, including owner's representation which will be significantly discounted or free.

START-UP & ONGOING OPERATIONS

The iPrep founding team has planned for nearly a year, and if approved, it will have almost two years to organize and execute its startup plan, detailed in **Attachment 27**. Designed in collaboration with BES and based on successful startup plans of high-performing charters nationwide, this comprehensive plan ensures iPrep has a strong start in the 2024-2025 school year. In addition, our startup plan is consistent with iPrep's year 0 budget, included in **Attachment 28**. If approved, iPrep is eligible to receive $1.5 million in CSP funds. iPrep has been awarded grants from New Schools for AL for $105,000 and BES Startup funding for $125,000 (see **Attachments 32A & 32B**). Additionally, iPrep applied for funding through Charter School Growth Fund and NewSchools Venture Fund for planning year funding totaling $465,000. As a result, we anticipate approximately $1.2 million in grant funding for year 0.

Transportation

iPrep intends to provide transportation services to our students, but the scope of transportation will be based on family demand and available yearly funding. Our early surveys of families indicate only 20% are requesting transportation, which is consistent with most families' preferences to transport very young children themselves. The financial model includes one bus route in year one and two routes in years two and thereafter. Additional routes can be added as needed and as funding resources allow. We plan to evaluate the geographic distribution of our students and work with the selected transportation vendor to design routing to provide access to the highest-demand areas. With our vendor and with support from NSFA, iPrep will work with the ALSDE Transportation Department to submit the appropriate route reports and annual transportation plans and partner with a transportation service provider to ensure compliance and access to available funding. Our intended goal is to meet basic daily transportation needs and, as we can, supplement necessary transportation that may be required for field trips and co-curricular activities.

School Safety

The safety and security of students, staff, families, and visitors are always a priority at iPrep. During summer PD, at the beginning of semester 2, and periodically throughout the year, all iPrep staff participate in mandatory safety training. This training will include crisis and emergency management, fire and inclement weather safety, and active shooter procedures.

iPrep uses a fully executed crisis and an emergency plan to handle situations that may arise. In partnership with local emergency responders, crisis and emergency plans and procedures are revised periodically. iPrep establishes partnerships with the local police and fire departments to develop a plan for an active shooter, conduct biannual tests of the fire hydrants near the school, conduct campus walkthroughs, and participate in drills. Monthly fire and weather safety drills are performed. A map of the school and the drills are posted in all classrooms.

iPrep's facility includes controlled-access entrances. In addition, Raptor Visitor Management System screens all visitors. This system screens visitors, organizes volunteers, and communicates with iPrep staff during emergencies. In addition, cameras monitor classrooms, hallways, and the campus perimeter. iPrep anticipates contracting security personnel to monitor and support school safety and security.

Comprehensive Insurance

iPrep partners with Ross & Yerger for comprehensive insurance coverage, including workers' compensation, general liability, directors/officers and educators' legal liability, and property and excess (umbrella) carriers aligned to state-required limits. **Attachment 29** provides a "will serve" letter from Ross & Yerger and an outline of the insurance program, including coverage needs and limitations.

Meal Delivery and Wellness Plan

iPrep will provide a breakfast, lunch, and snack program managed by the School Food Wellness Group (SFWG) through a partnership with New Schools for Alabama. SFWG is a national school lunch technical assistance firm specializing in supporting food service startup for new schools and ongoing food service oversight on an outsource basis. SFWG oversees NSLP for charter schools and has specific expertise in charter schools. Their service includes establishing an NSLP-compliant program, managing provider bid processes, and overseeing point of sale, FRL, and monthly food service financial data. **Attachment 30** details our meal delivery and wellness plan.

OPERATIONS CAPACITY

iPrep's founding team includes a blend of local leaders dedicated to providing an additional education option in Fairfield and additional capacity from NSFA's technical assistance and back-office providers. The strong founding team, a robust board of directors, and critical outsourcing support from NSFA and its partners give iPrep the depth and breadth required to ensure strong operations capacity successfully. iPrep Board of Directors includes members with backgrounds in accounting and finance, recruitment and enrollment, teacher training, higher education leadership, nonprofit management, and human resources.

iPrep partners with New Schools for Alabama for additional operations capacity. NSFA provides COO-level technical assistance and arranges other providers for essential services. iPrep intends to use NSFA's carefully selected food service and facilities providers to ensure capable startup and operations functions occur in critical areas. NSFA's COO support provides senior leadership and advisory rarely available to small, startup charter schools and works with the board and leadership on startup and operations, facilities financing, and strategic planning. In addition, NSFA has a partnership with New School Partners (NSP), a skilled nonprofit charter school facilities planning and development team that has managed, built, financed, and launched dozens of charter school facilities in the southeast – both as purchased or leased facilities. NSP supports Alabama charter schools with essential facilities-related technical assistance such as a lease or purchase negotiation, architectural, design, building codes, general contractor bidding processes, and owner's representation services.

NSFA leadership has led or participated in specific facilities projects, including advising on lease and building renovations and district partnerships in Little Rock, AR, as well as the design, development, financing, and renovation of over 500,000 square feet of public school facilities in Michigan, Illinois, Texas, and Tennessee. These include district buildings, modular campuses, bank financing, capital projects, and New Market Tax Credit financing. For this reason, iPrep believes a partnership with NSFA will ensure iPrep develops and finances a facility in Fairfield in preparation for operational year 1.

To support facility acquisition, iPrep partners with Savills, a comprehensive property consultancy service to the education sector, which advises on existing options and provides strategic support in project management. Broker Lesa French of Savills has over 20+ years of experience supporting start-up charter schools in finding a facility to meet their unique needs and negotiating lease or purchase terms aligned with projected funding.

Key founding team members include Dr. Calandra Sales, with over 11 years of experience in hiring, leading teacher development, instructional coaching, and performance management. In addition, Mrs. Jewel Taylor has over 22 years of expertise in human resources policies and procedures.

UNIQUE/INNOVATIVE OPERATIONAL ASPECTS
iPrep offers unique operational aspects not offered in local schools, specifically connected to our aim to realize our mission.

Research suggests that high-performing and qualified teachers positively influence students' short-term academic growth and long-term educational success. Given the academic needs of Fairfield students, prioritizing teacher development is critical to supporting unfinished learning and ensuring quality first instruction. To this end, iPrep prioritizes teacher growth and development. We offer over 900 hours of on-site professional development for teachers, including early release Fridays to provide 2 hours of weekly development based on observations, student data, and our instructional model. Our innovative approach to teacher development includes specialized support in responding to student mastery daily, culture clinics to practice classroom management strategies, and lesson planning clinics to improve lesson preparation.

Attracting and retaining a pipeline of quality teachers is critical for student success. For this reason, iPrep develops a quality pipeline and retains them through a performance management system and reward and recognition plan. iPrep's Teacher Effectiveness System includes weighted components that comprise an effectiveness calculation. This calculation places teachers on a tiered-level career pathway. Each level has its own set of supports, rewards, and recognition, including financial rewards and leadership opportunities. This ensures that iPrep classrooms are always staffed with the highest-performing staff.

SECTION 4: FINANCIAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

Financial Plan

The financial goals of the five-year budget include:
- Financing an outstanding academic plan;
- Intentionally financing the social-emotional component of our program; and
- Maintaining positive cash flow and building up our savings with 90 days of cash on hand.

Financing a unique academic plan. We target class sizes of no more than 20 students and plan to hire special education staff, to ensure that students with disabilities and English language learners are supported. In addition to classroom teachers, all three classrooms at each grade level share two Teacher Associates. This staffing model, coupled with thoughtful professional development and dedicated positions to support curriculum development and instruction (as a Dean of Academics and literacy specialist in the early years, then as a Director of Lower School, Dean of Academics, and literacy and math specialists in later years), yields high academic results.

Intentionally financing the social-emotional component of our program. Funds are allocated to purchase a social-emotional curriculum and resources and to staff a Student Culture Manager and a Counselor beginning in year 1. Both positions and curricular resources support social-emotional well-being.

Maintaining positive cash flow, and building up savings to 90 days of cash on hand. We understand that positive cash flow and a growing savings balance are essential to our financial health. The budget submitted maintains positive cash flow year after year and exceeds three months of cash on hand by the end of year 2.

Financial Systems, Processes, and Controls

iPrep selects NSFA's back-office outsourcing partner to ensure strong financial planning, accounting, purchasing, and payroll function for the school. Outsourcing to a skilled provider ensures proper accounting procedures, state reporting, and compliance are in place, as well as appropriate levels of internal control and the use of the Harris NextGen accounting system preferred by and used by the state and almost every district in Alabama. Responsibility for accounts payable, payroll, benefits, taxes, purchasing, monthly financial statements, and bank reconciliations are provided by New Schools for Alabama. The school will utilize NSFA's recommendations for internal control and purchase order approval/payment processes as well as all payroll and related HR reporting. NSFA currently services six Alabama charter schools and the state has noted the quality of their service and the experience of their team which includes 50+ years of experience in Alabama public school finance, benefits, payroll, and compliance reporting. NSFA's outsource capacity allows the school

to direct more dollars to the classroom instead of investing in full time positions for CFO, Payroll, Federal Programs, and Foodservice. Costs for this service are included in the budget ($120K - $144K based on enrollment) and allow the Director of School Operations and the Executive Director to leverage a strong finance function from year 1.

The Director of School Operations, hired in December in year 0, is the primary financial leader charged with collaborating with outsourced providers and liaising with the board to ensure strong financial controls and reporting. Responsible for approvals of major expenses, the Executive Director and Board of Directors ensure a strong internal control and system to create an annual budget, financial forecasts, and related analyses to support the accounting and finance function of the school. Critical systems (payroll, benefits, bank reconciliations, etc.) are provided via outsourcing and include a method for approvals, POs, and purchasing that utilizes an outsourced accounting provider to ensure effective and accurate data and reporting. All financial-related items, such as the annual budget, executive compensation, and vendor contracts, are approved at regularly scheduled board meetings. Annual and monthly reporting will be uploaded to the state system on a recurring cycle by in accordance with ALSDE requirements and timelines.

Financial Roles and Responsibilities
Upon approval, the iPrep Board of Directors will adopt policies in compliance with the Alabama code and ensure effective procedures are implemented for vendor approval, purchasing, payables, cash management, bank authorizations, and other financial management systems.

iPrep's Board reviews interim financial statements and approves a budget annually. The ED and Director of School Operations are responsible for preparing and adhering to an annual budget approved by the Board. The outsource accounting firm supports budget production by maintaining careful monthly financials and reporting and analytical support through budget development.

The Board's ultimate responsibility is for the school's financial administration. The ED and Director of School Operations are responsible for implementing the financial function timely and accurately, with appropriate transparency, as required by law. The school will avoid hiring and developing an in-house accounting team by utilizing an outsourced accounting firm for complete payroll, general ledger, and monthly financial statement preparation.

Process for Annual Audits and Financial Transparency
Each year, the board approves an audit by an independent accounting firm and provides it to the public. This audit is posted on the school's website along with the annual financial reports, monthly check register, and monthly financial reports. The process by which an audit firm is selected includes an RFP for an annual financial audit and any necessary government accounting reports.

Each year, iPrep adopts an annual budget in an open public meeting. Copies of the approved budget and prior year and monthly audited financial statements are available on iPrep's website and presented to families and community partners during the State of iPrep address.

Contracted Services and Insurance

iPrep anticipates contracting with skilled providers for accounting, payroll, insurance, and audit services. Anticipated costs for outsourcing accounting and payroll services are budgeted at industry standards (less than the cost of a full-time director of finance, software, and annual subscriptions), plus approximately $12k annually for an audit. Insurance is budgeted at $15,000.

The ED and the Director of School Operations determine the criteria for selecting such services, approved by the Board of Directors per financial policies and procedures. iPrep's Board is not obligated to choose the low bidder. Still, it bases its decision on the quality and merits of the proposal or quote, past experiences, estimated cost, and other factors.

Upon approval, iPrep will secure directors' and officers' insurance, employment practices liability insurance, and general liability insurance to protect the school, staff, and students per Alabama law. In addition, an umbrella policy increasing liability levels is included in the insurance package. Specifics of the coverage will be aligned with the insurance requirements of public charter schools in Alabama (see **Attachment 29**).

Budget Worksheet

Attachment 30 provides iPrep's 5-year budget worksheet, and **Attachment 31** provides the budget narrative.

Anticipated Funding Sources

As seen in our budget, iPrep is sustainable on the public dollar. iPrep does not rely on private fundraising to meet budgeted expense obligations. We intend to create something other than an academic model that relies on perpetual private fundraising for support.

In addition to securing grant funding from BES and NSFA totaling $230,000 (**Attachments 32A & 32B**), iPrep has applied for the following private funds:
- NewSchools Venture Fund - $215,000
- Charter School Growth Fund - $250,000

iPrep's founding team continues to pursue fundraising options to accelerate our progress toward financial and programmatic goals.

Contingency Plans for Under-Enrollment or Decrease in Funding

Because of early access to anticipated funds, we are uniquely positioned to begin building up a cash reserve during our planning year. Our budget model shows that we will end our planning year with $352,690. This will add to our contingency budget to contribute to financial security.

iPrep builds a 90-day operating cash reserve over time by saving cash surpluses from its annual operating budget, starting in the planning year. This cash reserve will serve as a buffer in the event of financial shocks of various forms, such as low enrollment, high facilities costs, or delayed per-pupil payments. We have included a

contingency into our multiyear budget that represents 1% of revenue to plan for a potential shortfall. Our tiered list of possible expense reductions includes:

- Reduce the leadership team to the Executive Director, Literacy Specialist, Student Supports Coordinator, Counselor, and Director of School Operations for year 1, saving almost $190,000; the ED and DSO will temporarily fulfill the obligations of the Dean of Academics and Student Culture Manager
- Reduce spending on contracted startup consulting, saving ~$15,000
- Modify the Literacy Specialist role to a Master Teacher, teaching literacy at one grade level and coaching the remainder of the day, saving ~$27,000

Upon authorization, iPrep will investigate establishing a line of credit with a local bank to cover us if there are other financial setbacks. We will establish this line of credit early and only draw on it if necessary.

Cash Flow Management

As part of its cash flow management, iPrep ensures that cash flow projections are prepared for its regular monthly close and reporting process. We contract with NSFA to support financial management and perform the technical work of preparing cash flow forecasts.

At the school level, the Executive Director is responsible for reviewing these projections every month. The ED works with NSFA to effectively project and manage cash flow from month to month. At the Board level, the treasurer and the finance committee will have oversight responsibility and review the cash flow projections during regular board meetings. The Finance Committee will review financial statements every month. The full Board will also receive the financial report as part of its monthly meeting packet. In a shortfall, iPrep is proactive in correcting the problem or lining up short-term financing.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

The iPrep founding team includes a blend of local leaders dedicated to providing an additional education option in Fairfield and additional capacity from NSFA's best-in-class technical assistance and back-office providers. A strong founding staff, a diverse Board of Directors, and critical outsourced support from NSFA and its partners give iPrep the depth and breadth required to ensure strong financial management capacity successfully. iPrep's Board includes members with backgrounds in finance, federal programming, fundraising, philanthropy, K-12 school experience, and community building.

iPrep partners with New Schools for Alabama for additional financial management capacity. NSFA provides CFO level technical assistance to their partner schools and arranges other providers for essential services. NSFA is iPrep's back-office provider, providing cloud-based accounting, internal control, purchasing, cash management, financial reporting, payroll, benefits, and HR functions. NSFA's CFO support provides senior leadership and advisory rarely available to small, startup charter schools and works with the board and leadership on annual budgeting, facilities financing, and financial planning.

Key partners that bring financial management capacity include NSFA's technical assistance team led by Chris Reynolds (a former charter leader with experience starting up and running ten schools in four states, including

major school facilities renovation projects) and Russell Raney (current CFO for NSFA and Former CFO of Pike Road Schools, Cullman City Schools, and Alabama Association of School Boards).

iPrep's Board of Directors has a combined 40+ years of banking and finance experience that gives the school strong functional expertise as well as direct experience in managing millions in educational and nonprofit spending – including accounting for federal and state funds and securing a range of vendors necessary to support a higher education campus.