



Student/Guardian Handbook 2023-2024

550 East 124th Ave.
Thornton, CO 80241

Main Line: (720) 972-6560
Attendance Line: (720) 972-8276

Welcome to Independence Academy!

Dear Guardians and Students,

Welcome to Independence Academy! IA operates within Adams 12 Five Star Schools as a separate school program. Our mission is to provide intense, individualized, and comprehensive specialized instruction in a separate school setting for students grades 6-12. Students attending IA receive responsive, intense, and individualized instruction in social awareness, self-awareness, relationship skills, self-management and responsible decision-making as well as access to grade-level standards and academic interventions through a carefully developed and implemented multi-tiered system of support. Our goal is to teach students to effectively self regulate, problem solve, develop positive interactions with others, and increase classroom coping skills so they can access their education.

At Independence Academy, students receive academic instruction in the core content areas of math, language arts, science, and social studies, as well as electives through Edgenuity. Students also receive instruction and services from a school social worker including affective education groups, individual support, and family coaching. Related services (i.e., occupational therapy, speech/language therapy, etc.) are provided as outlined in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Through the combination of services, our goal is to provide each student with the necessary skills to make positive choices within the school setting and in the community.

Independence Academy supports an interconnected approach in educating students; we highlight the critical nature of partnership between all stakeholders on behalf of the student to reinforce the learning of new skills. While students are afforded opportunities to practice such skills, they develop trusting relationships with adults and peers. In doing so, students feel a sense of belonging and take pride in what they can contribute to the IA community. When families and community providers work alongside us, students begin to generalize new learning in a variety of settings.

The following information was developed to help you succeed in this school program. This handbook provides detailed information regarding our purpose, school expectations, and the framework by which students may return to their comprehensive schools. If you have additional questions after reading the handbook, please feel free to ask myself or any one of our staff. Again, welcome to our program and we look forward to working with you this upcoming school year!

Sincerely,



Kendra Billen, M.Ed., BCBA
SSS Coordinator at IA

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"FOR THE STRENGTH OF THE PACK IS THE WOLF, AND THE STRENGTH OF THE WOLF IS THE PACK." – RUDYARD KIPLING

IA VISION

As the most restrictive special education program in the Adams 12 continuum of social/emotional learning, Independence Academy offers intense, individualized, and comprehensive specialized instruction in a separate school setting for students grades 6-12. Students attending IA receive responsive, intense, and individualized instruction in social awareness, self-awareness, relationship skills, self-management and responsible decision-making as well as access to grade-level standards and academic interventions through a carefully developed and implemented multi-tiered system of support.

SCHOOL HOURS

Student hours are from 8:00 AM to 1:45 PM, Monday through Friday.

SCHOOL VALUES

At IA our staff behaves in a way that is in line with our core values:

- *Respect*: We believe a lot can be achieved by treating people with respect and dignity under any and all circumstances.
- *Integrity*: Integrity is what you do when nobody's looking. At IA, all staff behave professionally *at all times* in order to make decisions that take into account students' best interests.
- *Service*: We believe that everything we do should serve the purpose of creating a safe, inclusive learning environment where students feel seen, valued, and heard.

REFERRAL PROCESS

Referrals to IA are made through the special education process IEP within Adams 12 or in conjunction with special education departments through outside referring school districts. The IEP team must review the student's current IEP, including their academic and social/emotional levels of functioning, and determine as a team (with administrative level approval) that the student meets the criteria for placement in a separate school setting.

TRANSITION PROCESS

Once students are demonstrating transition readiness skills based on our school level system, an individualized transition plan is created by members of IA in conjunction with the receiving home school team to ensure a smooth transition for the student.

BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

Breakfast and lunch will be served at IA. Students may purchase breakfast or lunch or bring meals from home. Beginning August 2023, all meals are free to all students. Meals are prepared and delivered to IA from Mountain Range High School. *If you are going to be late, please notify us ASAP, so we can order lunch for your student.*

Despite meals being free, guardians must complete an application for free and reduced lunch for each student enrolled at IA. Families must **reapply** each new school year. Please notify staff of any dietary restrictions. Students are not allowed to sell or share their food with other students.

Apply online at <https://www.myschoolapps.com/Application>.

ATTENDANCE

If staff mark students absent for one or more periods per day, guardians will be notified via phone by the end of the school day. Regular attendance at Independence Academy is critical to academic and social-emotional success. It is expected that all students attend school unless there is an illness or family emergency. Please contact the attendance line at 720-972-8276 by 8:00 a.m. on the morning of the absence, as well as transportation to notify them that your child will not be riding the bus: 720-972-4300. (**District Policy 5020**)

- **Excused absences:** It is the guardian's/guardian's responsibility to provide the school with a note or verbal excuse verifying each student's absence. The school office will change the absence to reflect the reason for the absence. If the parent/guardian does not notify the school of the reason for the absence within two school days of the last school day absent the absences will remain unexcused. When recording an excused absence in Infinite Campus, it is important to add notes that clearly state the reason for the absence, if there was documentation or if the absence was one of the five call-in excused absences that are allowed under Adams 12 attendance policy. Guardians and students should be provided various forms of communication regarding where their students stand under the attendance policy in order to reduce misunderstanding and miscommunication.
- **Unexcused absences:** All absences that do not meet the definition of an excused absence, as defined in this section, will be marked as unexcused. This attendance code is most often used when a student is not in class after the tardy period has elapsed and no call from the guardian excusing the absence has been received.
- **Habitually Truant:** A "child who is habitually truant" means a child age six (6) to sixteen (16) years old with either:
 - four (4) unexcused absences from public school in any one month; or
 - ten (10) unexcused absences from public school during any academic year (school year)

Each school district's local board of education is required to make all reasonable efforts to assist habitually truant children, including meeting with the children and their guardians and developing plans with local community services groups. The goal is to keep up school enrollment and prevent the child from becoming a dropout.

STUDENT ARRIVAL

Students should arrive no earlier than 8:00 AM. Students will be allowed in the building starting at 8:00 AM. Staff will greet students at our entrance, complete a safety check, and direct students to the Flex Room to get a breakfast and choose a lunch. Staff will be located in the cafeteria ready to take lunch orders, and direct students to their homeroom.

If a student is late to school, that student must enter through the main front doors of the building. The student will check-in with the front office and wait for an IA staff member to meet them for a safety check before coming upstairs. For early departure during the day, the guardian must check the student out through the front office and sign the check in/out sheet.

STUDENT DISMISSAL

Upon dismissal, students are required to go directly home. If the student utilizes district transportation, students are expected to go home on the bus unless they have guardian permission to go home an alternative way. Students are escorted to their assigned bus by

school staff. Teachers will wait with their students until all students are gone. If a guardian fails to pick up a student or if a student misses their bus, school staff will attempt to call the student's guardians. If staff is unable to contact guardians within a reasonable amount of time, the Student Resource Officer may be called to transport the student.

If a student refuses to go home, guardians will be notified and asked to come get their student.

ELOPEMENT POLICY

Independence Academy is a closed campus. Students will not be given permission to leave campus without guardian or administrative approval. Students are not allowed to drive their own vehicles to IA.

A student who leaves Independence Academy without authorization will be considered an eloped student. If the staff assess that the student could pose a danger to themselves and to the community after leaving IA, a physical management may be used.

Due to the significant behavioral concerns of our students, eloping from IA is considered to be a serious event with some possibility of harm being inherent. When deemed appropriate and in accordance with the student's safety plan IA staff will follow students with the intent of maintaining a line of sight and supporting their return to campus. Staff will make every effort to support the student's return in a manner that is safe for the staff member and the student. For all students and scenarios, a parent/guardian will be notified by phone in the event that their student elopes off school grounds. At times, it may become necessary to contact the police when a student has left the building and is out of sight to ensure their safety during school hours.

FIELD TRIPS & COMMUNITY OUTINGS

Field trips and community outings are planned by staff and designed to enrich the curriculum and allow for practical application of learned skills. Staff complete a field trip form and obtain administrative pre-approval for all field trips and community outings, identifying the academic or programming relevance of the trip. A note and permission slip will be sent to guardians in advance of any field trip or community outing and will include trip details. The permission slip must be signed and returned to the student's teacher in order for the student to participate in the trip. District policy requires that parents/guardians sign and return this form to the student's teacher before he/she is allowed to participate in the activity. Verbal permission from guardians cannot be accepted.

Students must demonstrate safe and compliant behavior 4 consecutive days prior to any off campus activity. This is evidenced by the absence of any behavior referrals during those 4 days. On the day of the outing, staff have the ability to determine if a student can attend the outing due to safety concerns occurring at the time.

TRANSPORTATION

The district provides transportation to and from each student's home and for community outings and field trips. Every IA student is required to be transported to and from school by district transportation or a parent/guardian. Transportation staff may issue a bus referral, per district transportation guidelines, for unsafe, inappropriate behaviors. Continued unsafe or inappropriate behaviors could result in further discipline or the development of a bus plan.

ILLNESS OR ACCIDENTS AT SCHOOL

If an accident or illness occurs at school, the following procedures will be followed:

1. Provide the student with care in the health office. If the injury or illness is life threatening, 911 will be called.
2. Notify the student's parent or guardian.
3. A student who is determined to be injured or ill per health office guidelines will be allowed to go home when accompanied by a parent, guardian, or designee.

COVID-19 POLICY

IA follows current district guidelines for staff and student COVID-19 infections. Please check the Adams 12 website for updated information.

DISTRIBUTION OF MEDICATION

If your child requires medication at school, guardians must follow the appropriate steps:

1. A completed "Health Care Practitioner's Signed Order for Medication Administered at School" form and, when applicable, a Health Care Action Plan (including a Section 504 Plan, or Student Accommodation Plan, or other like form) must be on file in the school; and
2. The medication must be supplied by the parent/legal guardian in a container dispensed by the pharmacy or original over-the-counter container and labeled with the student's name, name of medication, when the medication is to be administered, the dosage and, where appropriate, the date the medication is to be stopped.
3. A new permission form must be signed for each medication, each change of medication, and at the beginning of each new school year. **(Policy 5420)**

DRESS CODE

Students are expected to follow the District Dress Code (**Student Dress Code Supt. 5060**). Except when other contributing policy violations or safety concerns exist, the typical progression of intervention for dress code violations is below. Hats are a privilege of the level system at IA.. Hats are not allowed unless your student has reached a certain level. If your student is in violation of the dress code, IA will offer alternative clothing. If alternative clothing is not available, IA staff will call the student's guardian to bring a different pair of clothes.

SAFETY CHECKS

The safety of our students and staff at IA is our highest priority. Safety checks are conducted every morning with each student as they enter the building. The purpose of the safety check is to ensure that contraband and weapons are not entering the building. The safety check process involves students showing pocket contents, including clothing and backpacks while staff observe, and wand.

"Contraband" is defined in Adams 12 District Policy as "all substances or materials prohibited by District and/or school policy, state law, or the municipal code of the location of the material. Examples of contraband may include but are not limited to drugs, drug paraphernalia, alcoholic beverages, guns, knives, weapons, tobacco, graffiti instrumentation, items suspected of being stolen, and/or material or items which present an imminent danger of physical harm or illness."**(District Policy 5130)**

If a student refuses to turn in contraband and it does not pose a safety issue within the building, the student will be expected to participate in class, but the refusal will be considered “off program” and not earning points toward daily progress and level progression until the contraband is turned in to staff.

If a student refuses to comply with the safety check process and staff have concerns that a student has contraband on their person that may pose a safety risk to the school, the student will not be allowed to enter the classroom and will remain under staff supervision until he/she completes the safety check process. The School Resource Officer may be called for additional support.

Throughout the day, if any staff member has a suspicion that a student may have contraband on their person, staff can require that the student participate in additional safety checks.

During safety checks, all cell phones and personal electronic devices will be collected by staff and locked in a secure location until the end of the school day. *It is highly recommended that students not bring these items to school.* (Policy 5130)

DRILLS

Safety drills are required by law and are an important safety precaution. IA will follow the district’s guidelines for frequency and timing of all fire, lockdown, and shelter in place drills.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY (PHONES AND COMPUTERS)

The use of computer technology in Adams 12 is considered a privilege and district guidelines will be followed. “Use of District technology and the Internet and electronic communications demands personal responsibility and an understanding of the acceptable and unacceptable uses of such tools... Violations of this policy may result in the loss of the privilege to use these tools, as well as disciplinary action and/or referral to law enforcement. The District may deny, revoke or suspend access to District technology or close accounts at any time and without notice.” (District Policy 2035)

District technology is owned by Adams 12 and there is no expectation of privacy when students utilize their computers. Unacceptable use of district technology includes, but is not limited to: content that promotes violence, obscene content, use of technology to harass, intimidate, or bully, inappropriate language or writing, and downloading, installing, storing or using malicious software, viruses.

Cell phone use and possession are not allowed at Independence Academy. All cell phones and personal electronic devices will be collected and locked in a safe place for the entirety of the school day. “Under all circumstances students shall be personally and solely responsible for the security of their cell phones and personal electronic devices. Adams 12 Five Star Schools shall not assume responsibility for theft, loss, or damage of any such device and will not be responsible for investigation of such incidents.” (District Policy 5030).

Cell phone use during the school day is a privilege of the level system. Cell phone privileges begin at Level Green. Students entering Green will be asked to review and sign an [IA Personal Technology Contract](#).

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

IA offers in-person core instruction in the areas of Math and Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and SEL. Electives are currently offered through Edgenuity, an online format. All courses are taught and monitored by Special Education teachers. If a student's IEP dictates related services that include ELD, OT, PT, Speech, etc. those will also be provided during the regular school day at Independence Academy.

- ***Social Emotional Learning (SEL)***

Students attend a daily affective education class with their classroom cohort, which is taught by the Special Education teacher or School Social Worker. A variety of topics are addressed based upon the presenting needs of the students, and these topics may include, but are not limited to: emotion regulation, anger management, conflict resolution skills, mindfulness, social skills, problem-solving and goal setting, and communication skills.

Certified staff may utilize a variety of evidence-based curriculums during affective education classes, such as: Second Step, Zones of Regulation, Owning Up, PATHS, School Connect, AIM, and Random Acts of Kindness.

- ***Mental Health Services***

School social workers provide individual support to students on a regular basis, the extent to which is determined by individual need and a student's IEP. Students may access their social worker for individual support in a variety of ways, whether through pre-scheduled meeting times, by request, or during times of crisis for direct intervention and support of skill acquisition. Individual support with a school social worker aims to address the emotional and behavioral issues that create a barrier to effective learning and social relationships in the school setting, and to learn skills related to a student's individual social/emotional IEP goals.

HOMEWORK & MAKE UP WORK

Independence Academy does not require students to complete homework under most circumstances. We believe that our students often have interpersonal skills that need more work than academic skills, and would prefer that students spend time outside of school working on these skills. Students are given time in class to complete all academic assignments.

We also know that students, who are below grade level in reading, only improve if they are spending extended time in text, so we highly encourage families to set aside reading time for their student every night. If you are interested in additional reading support, please reach out to the student's case manager.

GRADING

We know that students can show proficiency toward a standard in a variety of ways, and we are committed to providing students a variety of ways to show what they know and are able to do. Teachers use a variety of assessment techniques to determine students' grades. We encourage students to participate and engage in each of their classes – this can be monitored through their daily point sheets. Their grade for a course reflects a student's mastery of a standard within the content area.

There are 4 grading periods during a school year (quarters). All middle school teachers will report student progress utilizing a standards-based grading system with the following scale and descriptors:

- 4 Advanced Understanding of the Standard
- 3 Meets Expectations of the Standard
- 2 Approaching Expectations of the Standard
- 1 Does Not meet Expectations of the Standard
- / Not Assessed
- INS Insufficient Evidence

All high school teachers will report student progress using letter grades with the following numerical scale:

- A 89.5 – 100%
- B 79.5 – 89%
- C 69.5 – 79%
- D 59.5 – 69%
- F Below 59.5%

High school students graduating with a traditional diploma require 23 credits to graduate. Contact your student’s case manager for more information if needed. (**District Policy 6310**)

BEHAVIORAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Independence Academy’s behavior management model operates through a strength-based model based in behavior analysis which uses a schoolwide positive behavior support system to provide a continuum of behavior support for all students. In addition to this tier of support, all students are afforded the opportunity to have a Behavior Improvement Plan (BIP) that is individually designed based on their unique characteristics and needs. The BIP relies heavily on information gained through a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA), this process is described more thoroughly below, but is instrumental in targeting behaviors that serve as a barrier to students both academically and socially. The FBA guides the team in developing a BIP that helps to design a learning environment that limits distractions and helps foster growth. The BIP will outline long term behavior goals and proactively incorporates techniques and strategies that move a student closer to those goals. The plan will also outline how a team responds when problem behavior does occur in a manner that decreases the likelihood

of it occurring in the future while also maintaining safety and dignity. As mentioned above, Independence Academy is committed to maintaining a strength-based model and rewards students for their hard work in utilizing positive decision-making skills and displaying self-regulation.

The following evidence based models are the foundations of the behavioral management system being implemented to support our students:

1. Strength-based practices
2. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
3. Functional Behavioral Assessments/Behavior Intervention Plans (FBA/BIP)
4. Crisis Prevention & Intervention (CPI)

Strength-Based Practices

Literature indicates that a strengths perspective both improves the well being and the coping of individuals with emotional disabilities. The strengths-based approach focuses on a student's strengths, capabilities, resources, and success, and uses successive approximations (or shaping behavior in steps) to achieve student goals. This approach promotes the belief that every individual has potential, and their unique strengths and capabilities – not their limitations – determine their success.

Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS)

PBIS is the recommended form of intervention when working with challenging behavior in children with disabilities by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education. PBIS provides a framework designed to promote positive student behaviors as well as create a climate of greater productivity, safety and learning. According to the Office of Special Education's Center on Positive Behavior Interventions & Support, PBIS schools:

- Develop a continuum of scientifically based behavior and academic interventions and supports
- Use data to make decisions and solve problems
- Arrange the environment to prevent the development and occurrence of problem behavior
- Teach and encourage prosocial skills and behaviors
- Implement evidence-based behavioral practices with fidelity and accountability
- Monitor student performance and progress continuously

Schoolwide PBIS Reward System

IA utilizes a schoolwide reward system that reinforces positive behaviors. In addition to natural and direct reinforcement of students' positive behavioral choices, we use token reinforcement. Token reinforcement involves rewarding students Wolf Bucks for appropriate behavior. The Wolf Bucks can be exchanged for preferred items in the school store including fun school supplies, small toys, snacks, or earned activities/privileges.

The general areas of positive behavioral expectations are entitled "WOLF" behaviors, and include: **W**ork hard, **O**wn your behaviors, **L**isten and learn, and **F**ocus on safety and respect as well as a student's individualized personal goal(s).

- *Work hard*: Students will work on their personal learning goals by engaging in academic instruction and tasks.
- *Own your behaviors*: Students will take responsibility for their behaviors by acknowledging, owning, and repairing their behavior.

- *Listen and learn:* Students will actively participate in their learning by raising their hand, following the teacher's directions, and asking questions.
- Focus on safety and respect: Students will maintain boundaries, keep their bodies safe, respect the property of others and the school, and use appropriate language, volume, and tone when speaking to others.

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) & Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)

A Functional Behavior Assessment is a *process* used to determine the function or the “Why” a behavior occurs. This process will clearly define the problem behavior in objective and helpful terms that outline how often it occurs and when or where the behavior is most likely to happen. Most importantly however, this process will help the team identify more productive ways for a student to get their needs met without having to rely on problem behavior.

- For example: if a student is cursing and leaving the classroom when frustrated with difficult work, the team can work with the student to ask for help or take a break. This allows the student a better way to avoid frustration without disrupting the class or interrupting their learning or ability to be a part of the group. Likewise, the team can also work to identify academic strategies that will help decrease learning gaps.

By replacing the problem behavior the student now will have more access to important instruction and also gets to practice important skills that will serve them well as they enter into adulthood.

Crisis Prevention and Intervention (CPI)

Due to the behaviors associated with each student’s disability, Independence Academy utilizes strategies as outlined by the Crisis Prevention Institute. Staff members at IA are trained in the CPI model to effectively utilize verbal de-escalation techniques and nonviolent physical interventions with students who are escalated and are presenting as a danger to themselves or others. In this emergency situation, if staff has utilized all methods of verbal de-escalation with the student unsuccessfully, as evidenced by the student’s behavior continuing to compromise the safety and well being of themselves or others, school personnel will initiate the CPI method of physical intervention. guardians will be notified if restraint or seclusion is utilized and staff will follow district and state guidelines for documentation.

“To maintain a safe learning environment, district employees may, within the scope of their employment and consistent with state law, use physical intervention and restraint with students in accordance with this policy. Such actions shall not be considered child abuse or corporal punishment if performed in good faith and in compliance with this policy.”
(District Policy 5150)

BEHAVIOR REFERRALS & SUSPENSIONS

IA staff will collect ongoing frequency data on target behaviors identified in each student’s BIP. A formal behavior referral will be issued if these target behaviors occur at a rate far above baseline or the behavior is a serious danger to others. If a suspension does occur as a result of a behavior referral, the suspension will be as minimal as possible so IA staff can conduct a problem solving meeting to determine next steps and develop a plan for the student’s safe return to school. All students are required to have a re-entry meeting following a suspension.

DESTRUCTION OF SCHOOL PROPERTY POLICY

Property damage includes, but is not limited to, holes in our walls, graffiti, broken doors, etc. In order to decrease the amount of damage, Independence Academy has incorporated personal responsibility for our students. For any student that damages school property, the following actions may be taken:

1. Guardians will be notified.
2. IA staff members will assess the damage and problem solve the incident, creating a plan if necessary.
3. Students may be assessed a fee. The fine will be based upon the cost of repairs and or replacement of damaged/broken items.

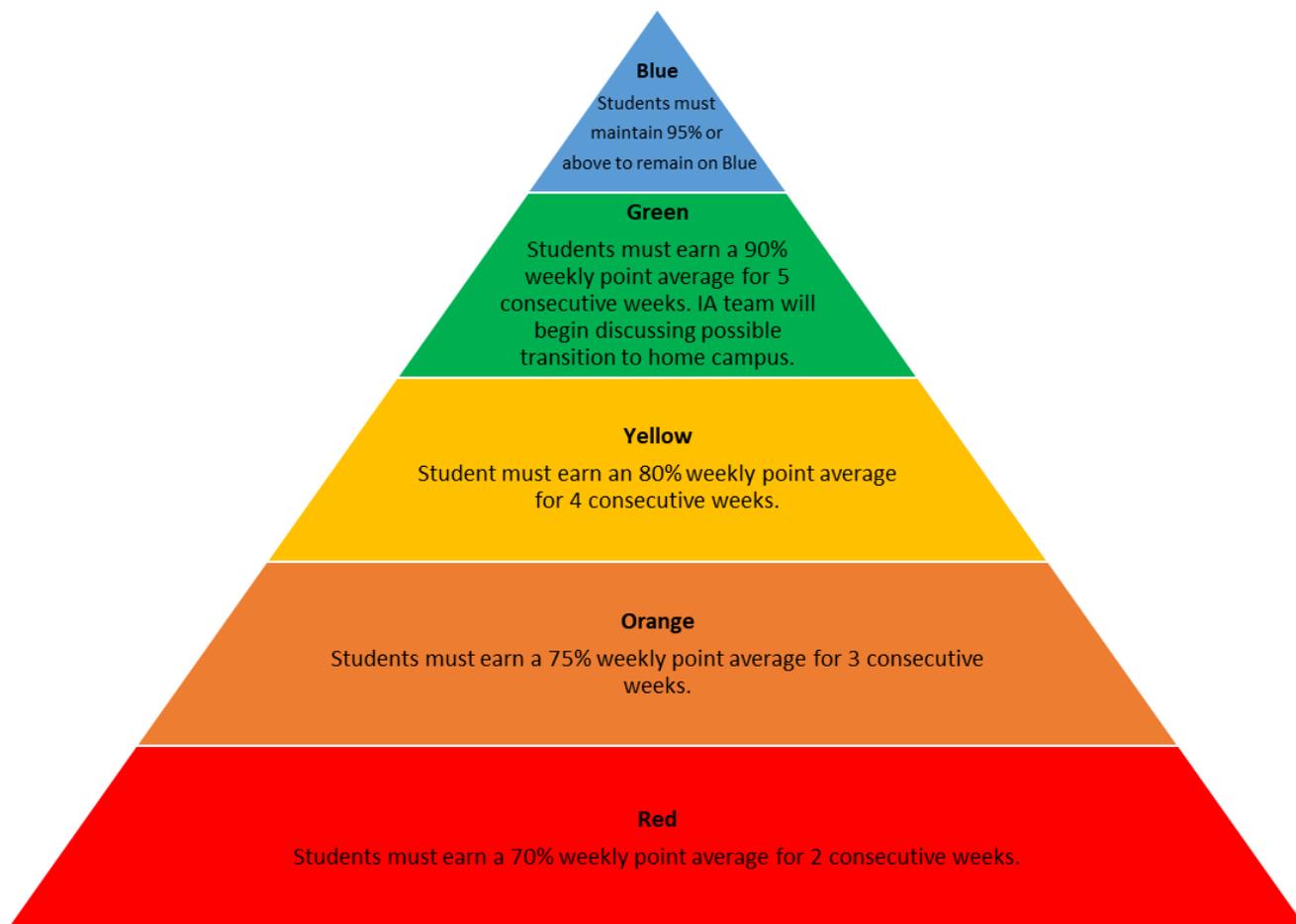
OFF-CAMPUS BEHAVIOR

“Behavior which takes place on or off campus may result in discipline sanctions up to and including expulsion from school when such behavior was or is likely to be detrimental to the welfare or safety of other students or of school personnel, including behavior that creates a threat of physical harm to the student or other students. Such misconduct may include, but is not limited to, any of the behavior violations identified in Superintendent Policy 5000, Student Code of Conduct.

In determining whether off-campus misconduct is or is likely to be detrimental to the welfare or safety of students or school personnel, the administrator shall consider, among other relevant factors: the extent to which other District students were involved in or present during the off-campus misconduct; the proximity to school and the school day; and the known or predicted negative impact or effect the misconduct had or is likely to have on the school environment. The existence of criminal charges and/or a criminal adjudication in relation to off-campus behavior may also be considered in determining whether the misconduct warrants school sanctions.” **(District Policy 5120)**

LEVEL SYSTEM

Independence Academy uses a level system to reinforce appropriate behavioral expectations and to encourage students to learn and develop more effective skills to be successful in an academic setting. Level advancements directly relate to the student’s ability to demonstrate new skills, manage their behavior and participate appropriately in the classroom and on community outings. Progression through the levels allows students to earn privileges and increasing amounts of responsibility within the school. All new students start on Level Red. Students will start each new school year on the level on which they ended the previous school year.



Point Sheets

Student movement through the level system is measured by daily point sheets. Throughout the school day, staff and students cooperatively monitor and reward the student's progress and behavior through the use of a point sheet. Point sheets can include the use of a Likert scale for the school wide behavioral expectations, as well as individualized goals. Using the Likert scale, students earn 3, 2, or 1 point during each class period based upon how well they meet the behavioral expectations. Other approved individualized point sheets may be used as deemed appropriate for the student's developmental ability including a simplified rating scale, sticker charts, and token boards. At the end of each day, points are calculated to represent an overall daily percentage of mastery. Case managers will share student data with guardians on a weekly basis. Point sheet data and level are available at any time upon guardian request.

Level Recovery Status

If a student does not earn the required weekly point average respective to that level, they will be placed on *Level Recovery* and have one week to bring their point average back up to 70%, 75%, 80%, 90%, or 95% respectively. During *Level Recovery*, the student has the privileges of one level below. If the student does not earn the necessary percentage during the *Level Recovery* week, they drop one level and begin the weeks and point average required of that level. If the student does earn the necessary percentage during the *Level Recovery* week, they maintain their same level and place within that level (i.e., weeks already earned on that level).

Off Program Behavior

Any student refusing to work, out of the classroom engaging in refusal or maladaptive behavior, eloping from the school building or classroom, or engaging in verbal or physical aggression will be considered “off program.” During this time students will not be earning points toward their daily averages or level. As soon as the maladaptive behavior stops, the student will begin earning points again.

Privileges

Students will gain access to more privileges throughout the school and within their classrooms depending on their level. Privileges may include more freedom within the building, the ability to watch or play preferred videos or games on computers (within district policy), and cell phone use (within district policy). Privileges for each level will be dictated by the student’s homeroom teacher.

Behavior Referrals, Incident Reports (IRs), and Level

Definitions:

1. **Behavior Referrals:** Major incidents documented in IC. Any behavior that results in a suspension, TA, or other disciplinary action will be documented as a referral.
2. **Incident Reports:** IA’s documentation system that captures behaviors that will affect a student’s level. Depending on the severity of the infraction, the incident may be documented as a behavior referral AND an IR.

Behavior referrals and IRs for students on Levels RED and ORANGE will not affect their level status. It is expected that students on red and orange are still building their skills. Students on red and orange can get behavior referrals for major incidences, but it will not affect their level until yellow. Specific information on how IRs affect student levels is available upon request and each student will be familiar with the process as a part of their programming.

WHAT IS AN IEP?

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a plan that is developed by school personnel and the guardian to prioritize and guide student success at school. The plan is reviewed at least annually and identifies specialized services, addresses specific goals, and measures student progress.

- Types of IEP Meetings:
 1. *Eligibility (Initial) Meeting:* This is the initial meeting that occurs with guardian and school personnel once a referral to special education is made and assessment is complete. At this meeting, assessment results are discussed and the team determines if the student qualifies for special education and related services. If the student qualifies, the guardian and the school personnel develop the Annual IEP by creating specific goals and strategies to increase student achievement.
 2. *Annual Review:* This meeting occurs during the school year (within 12 months of the previous Annual Review) to review student growth and progress toward goals and to discuss changes that need to be made to the IEP.
 3. *Reevaluation Eligibility Meeting:* This meeting occurs at least once every three years; and, it is needed to determine if the student is still eligible for special education services. It is also held if a change of placement is being discussed.

Prior to the meeting, permission is given from the parent/guardian so school personnel can reassess or reevaluate the student and gather new information. At the meeting, the parent/guardian and team will determine if the student continues to qualify for special education services. If the student qualifies, the guardian and the school personnel will develop new goals and services for the Annual IEP.

4. *Amendment*: This occurs when minor changes need to be made to the IEP, but the changes can be made without holding a meeting provided the guardians and school personnel agree to the changes. This process saves time for guardians and school personnel. Amendments do not change the date of the Annual Review, and the Annual Review will still be held as usual.
5. *Manifestation Determination*: This meeting is convened to determine if a student's behavior or attendance is, or is not, a manifestation of the student's disability. This meeting occurs for the following reasons: if a student is suspended for more than 10 cumulative days in a school year while the student is on an IEP (and for every suspension thereafter); a change in placement for more than 10 consecutive days is being sought for disciplinary reasons; expulsion is being considered; and a student has missed more than 10 days of school without an excusable reason.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL IEP MEETINGS

Many guardians feel overwhelmed at IEP meetings. A significant amount of information is given to the guardian, and the time goes by quickly. It is important to remember that the school personnel want guardian input, as guardian involvement and participation is crucial to your student's success. The guardian is the expert on their student.

- *Before the Meeting*:
 1. Prepare a list of questions and ideas to share with school personnel about your student
 2. Consider how your student's strengths can be built upon
 3. Make a list of goals based on your student's educational needs
 4. Ask to be informed of assessment results before the meeting
 5. Develop an understanding of roles of the members of the IEP team
 6. Review your student's current IEP
 7. Look at the Notice of Meeting to see who will be attending the meeting
 8. Decide if bringing a trusted person is necessary. This person can be a friend, relative, community based service provider, or other caregiver. This person can provide additional support and is another set of ears to hear what is discussed.
- *During the Meeting*:
 1. Prepare a list of questions and ideas to share with school personnel about your student
 2. Take notes
 3. Ask questions and clarification about terms used in the meeting
 4. Ask for a continuance if time runs out before all questions have been answered
 5. Read/listen to the IEP documents
 6. Stay focused on your student's needs
 7. Ask for a copy of the IEP to take home and review
 8. Involve your student when appropriate
- *After the Meeting*:
 1. Review the IEP and make sure all of it is understood. If not, call and ask

for clarification. (The guardian can always ask for clarification on any part of the IEP)

2. Request another meeting if necessary
3. File the IEP in an accessible, safe place
4. Talk with your student about what was discussed at the meeting
5. Work with school personnel as part of the IEP team and stay focused on your student's goals

PARENT RIGHTS

- Guardians have the right to request that their student be assessed for special education by the local public school district. Guardians may also obtain evaluations from a private institution at their own expense.
- School personnel are required to get written permission to assess and place your student in a specialized program. Guardians have the right to be contacted prior to decisions being made about their student's educational program.
- Guardians have the right to bring any person to an IEP meeting with knowledge about their student including friends, community-based providers, advocates, or attorneys. If guardians plan to bring an attorney, please inform the child's case manager.
- Guardians have the right to be a part of IEP development, participate in the IEP meeting, and have their opinions heard and noted.
- Guardians have the right to review and receive copies of their student's educational records. These include grades, assessments, or any public school report kept in their student's file.
- Guardians have a right to privacy. Guardian written permission is required before individuals outside the school district are allowed to access their student's special education records.
- Guardians have the right to the least restrictive environment (LRE) where their student is provided services in a setting that promotes interaction with the general education population as much time as possible.
- Guardians have the right to appeal decisions made about specific parts or all of the IEP, student placement, and/or eligibility.