



# INDEPENDENCE ACADEMY

## BE YOUR BEST!

### MISSION

Independence Academy will provide an individualized, safe, supportive learning environment for youth with challenging behaviors. Our goal is to teach students the behavioral and academic skills necessary to be successful in their education and lifelong goals.

### VISION

We are committed to teaching academic and behavioral skills in order to develop accountable, safe, respectful and positive individuals who are ready to transition to a traditional school setting.

### VALUES – We believe in...

#### AccountaBility

- Teachers and students will show up everyday ready to teach and learn
- We believe in taking responsibility for our actions

#### SafEty

- Teachers and students will create an environment where all individuals feel safe
- We believe in respecting personal boundaries

#### ReSpect

- Teachers and students will support and celebrate individual differences
- We believe in supporting positive choices with Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support

#### PosiTive Attitude

- We believe that all students can learn and progress

## WE ARE INDEPENDENCE ACADEMY...

Independence Academy provides each student a safe, relevant and rigorous learning environment. We believe that students with behavioral challenges deserve a high quality education and are able to learn the interpersonal development skills necessary to be successful in their traditional school setting, their community, and their lifelong goals. Our staff is well equipped to serve students of diverse needs and backgrounds as well as students in special education. Each student who enters our school has the special opportunity for a new start and the appropriate programming to meet their academic, social, emotional, and physical needs. We work hard to form strong relationships with our students and families.

At Independence Academy, each student has the opportunity to “Be Their Best” every day. Our program focuses on four key expectations:

**AccountaBility:** Students will show up on a daily basis and be responsible for their actions. Students need to participate appropriately in class and follow staff directions.

**SafEty:** Students will keep their hands and feet to themselves and will use property appropriately.

**ReSect:** Students will use appropriate language and tone.

**PosiTive Attitude:** Students will try their best every day. Students will begin to develop and use new skills as well as develop a portfolio of learning.

Independence Academy staff, with student input, will monitor student’s behavior in these four areas on a daily basis. Students are required to carry a daily point sheet and present that point sheet to their teacher in each class. Points are rewarded at the end of each class period; this is a private discussion between the teacher and the student. Points will not be awarded at the end of the day, points are only given on a class-by-class basis. Points earned for the day will be used to track a student’s progress in our Level System. Upon entry to Independence Academy, a student will start on Level One. Level One students are provided with a weeklong orientation to our program. This provides students with a chance to learn about our program and our expectations; as well as gives staff a chance to get to know students in order to plan and prepare for their program at Independence Academy. As students acquire and demonstrate new academic and behavioral skills, they will progress through the Level System. When students reach Level Five a transition meeting is held to discuss the students’ next steps in their education. The Level System is clearly outlined in following pages.

We know that changing behavior takes more than just a strong, structured behavior management system. Students with challenging behavior have lagging skills in the areas of

emotional regulation, cognitive flexibility, executive functioning, social skills, and language processing. Our program provides intensive instruction in affective skills development in order to address those lagging skills. We use a variety of research-based curriculum and techniques to identify what skills students need to learn and how we will teach students those skills. We provide numerous opportunities for students to practice and generalize those skills, and frequent, specific feedback and reinforcement when students use their new skills.

We also know that providing students with high, quality academic program is just as important as providing a strong affective program. Independence Academy provides courses in the four core areas: language arts, math, science and social studies. Our teachers use the Colorado Model Content Standards, District approved curriculum, and the District Teaching and Learning Cycle to plan and implement academic instruction. The TLC is a comprehensive and strategic structure to support educators in achieving High Quality Instruction, for Every Child, In Every Classroom, Every Day. The TLC has 2 critical components (Collaboration and Mission/Vision) and six phases (Study, Select, Plan, Implement, Analyze and Adjust) that serve to answer the following questions:

- What do we want educators to know and be able to do?
- What do we want students to know and be able to do?
- How will we effectively teach to ensure students learn?
- How will we know the students have learned?
- What do we do when students don't learn or reach proficiency before expectation?

IA staff believes that in order to provide your student with the highest quality of education, we must create a learning environment that has a balanced focus on students' understanding and application of new skills, academically and behaviorally. We believe that learning is more than learning new skills. It is the understanding of underlying concepts and principals that can be applied to new problems and in new situations, both in the academic and in the behavioral worlds. Our teaching staff will strive to teach big ideas and the understanding of problems and challenges, so that students can understand concepts at a deeper level.

Our staff will strive to create authentic assessments that focus on how, where and why students use new skills. We believe that in order to provide students with valid measures of their understanding, we must create assessments that promote generalization of skills necessary for success in life, as well as in school.

The staff at Independence Academy strives to make data-based instructional decisions on a regular basis. Upon entering IA, your student will be assessed in all areas (reading, writing, math, affective needs) in order to determine the most appropriate academic and behavioral programming placement. Throughout their time at IA, students will be assessed regularly to measure progress towards both their individual and standards-based goals. This progress will be reported to parents. If, at any time, there are questions about where your student is functioning both academically and/or behaviorally, please feel free to contact your student's service coordinator for details.

The TLC, in conjunction with your student's Individualized Education Plan, will drive out instruction to meet the needs of every student at Independence Academy.

