

# IOWA

The Belin-Blank Center

# IOAPA MENTOR HANDBOOK

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The Iowa Online AP Academy (IOAPA) guide for mentors and site-coordinators, updated for the 2023-2024 school year.

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## WELCOME TO IOAPA!

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the Iowa Online AP Academy. IOAPA is a program run by the Belin-Blank Center, part of the University of Iowa's College of Education. This academy was started with a federal grant in 2001, with the goal of extending College Board, Advanced Placement course-taking opportunities to students in Iowa schools without such course offerings. Now, the program is generously funded with support from the state of Iowa, and we have expanded to include AP-preparatory courses for eligible middle school students.

Since the beginning of the program, one of the greatest strengths has been the personnel in the student's home school district—that is, the administrators, site coordinators and mentors who go out of their way to make sure these above-level course offerings are available to their students and those who support students through this challenging academic endeavor.

I hope you find the contents of this handbook useful and encouraging as you continue to work to support your students in the Iowa Online AP Academy. If at any time we can help with the implementation of this program in your school, **please do not hesitate to contact us with questions, comments, or concerns.**

Thank you again for working with us to give your students this great opportunity!

Sincerely,

**Ann Lupkowski-Shoplik, Ph.D.**

Iowa Online AP Academy Administrator  
Belin-Blank Center  
The University of Iowa

**Randolph Lange, Ph.D.**

Iowa Online AP Academy Administrator  
Belin-Blank Center  
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## Getting Started With IOAPA

View our [Getting Started Guide](#) on our website ([belinblank.org/ioapa](http://belinblank.org/ioapa)) especially if you or your school are new to the Iowa Online AP Academy. IOAPA's website has most of the information you might need as a mentor, including semester start and end dates, links to useful documents (like this one) and the registration link.

All IOAPA courses are offered by one of two course vendors, ALVS (a subsidiary of Edmentum), which uses the "Genius" course platform) and Project STEM. If you ever have any questions, including technical issues or problems with the course vendors, you can reach out to [ioapa@belinblank.org](mailto:ioapa@belinblank.org), our dedicated support email.

## Policies and Requirements

This Mentor Handbook outlines the policies and requirements of the IOAPA program. The information listed on the website and in IOAPA's informational handouts may not include all requirements for the program. Schools should always refer to the Mentor Handbook or reach out to [ioapa@belinblank.org](mailto:ioapa@belinblank.org) with any questions on matters of policy. **The IOAPA team retains the ability to handle program policy matters on a case-by-case basis.**

General program requirements can be found under Eligibility (below). Requirements and policies relating to personnel are in the [Roles and Responsibilities](#) section. Information on registration requirements can be found under [Registration and Student Enrollment Process](#). The checklist in [Appendix B](#) lists the items that schools agree to during the registration process.

## Eligibility

**Schools** are eligible to register for an Iowa Online AP Academy course if the course is not currently offered within the school district (or, in the case of middle school students, if the course is not offered at the student's grade level). Schools must be accredited in the state of Iowa. Home schooled students must register through an accredited school or home school assistance program. Please see our website for a full list of school eligibility requirements. **IOAPA courses must be taken during a regularly-scheduled time during a student's school day.**

In order for **high school students** to be successful in IOAPA courses, they should be able to handle the academic rigor of a college-level course, and have the self-discipline and motivation necessary for online learning. Additionally, students should not be over-committed in their curricular and/or extracurricular activities. Review suggested prerequisites listed in the [Course Catalog](#) and each course's associated link. For example, AP Computer Science A students are recommended to have taken Algebra I and Algebra II. We also suggest using pre-tests for AP Calculus AB, AP Chemistry, AP Physics B, and AP Statistics.

Consider using the Student Readiness Checklist ([Appendix A](#)) to help inform areas in which each student may need individual attention. Some students may have the ability to complete high-level coursework, but struggle with the independence of an online course. This checklist may be helpful in identifying potential problems for the students so that supports can be put in place.

**Middle school students** are encouraged to participate in above-level testing before enrolling in an IOAPA course. We generally recommend that students score at the 90th percentile or above on a grade-level test (e.g., Iowa Assessments, ISAP) and/or at the 50th percentile or above on an above-level test (e.g., I-Excel for 6th-graders, ACT for 7th- and 8th-graders). Above-level testing can be arranged through the Belin-Blank Center, and funding may be available; to get started go to <http://belinblank.org/bests> or contact the testing team ([assessment@belinblank.org](mailto:assessment@belinblank.org)). Please see our website for a full list of [guidelines](#).

## Roles and Responsibilities

IOAPA is successful thanks to the administrators, site coordinators, and mentors in the school district who work hard to provide this opportunity to Iowa's students. Each school that partners with IOAPA designates a mentor and a site coordinator when signing up.

### What is a Mentor?

Mentors are responsible for proctoring exams/assignments, supervising students, and providing moral support, encouragement, and assistance to students as needed. **Mentors must be licensed educators in the state of Iowa.** Mentors are not responsible for answering questions about course content; rather, they can encourage students to contact their course instructors. A school can have more than one mentor.

Mentors must be available to meet with students face-to-face daily. Students and mentors may decide to meet less frequently depending on schedules and circumstances. Please remember that students must take IOAPA classes during a specified and regular block of their school day as they would any other class. It is preferable, but not required, that the mentor be available during this time specifically, as long as they are able to meet face-to-face for an adequate length of time at some point during the school day.

As a way of thanking and supporting mentors for taking the extra time to provide opportunities for Iowan students, IOAPA provides a per-semester stipend. The current stipend rate is **\$250**. IOAPA will automatically split stipends for schools with more than one mentor. Information on the stipends is sent out each semester via email.

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#### Note for all AP Computer Science mentors:

Project STEM (unlike Edmentum) is **solely a curriculum provider** for their courses. This means that AP Computer Science mentors will need to be listed as the teacher of record on the AP course audit. However, the College Board does not allow the teacher of record and AP coordinator to be the same person. So, although our policies do not require that the two roles be filled by separate people, this will be necessary for any Project STEM AP courses. Therefore, schools where the same person usually fills the AP Coordinator and mentor roles will need to consider alternatives. Step-by-step instructions for completing these course audits can be found at the following links for [AP Computer Science A](#) and [AP Computer Science Principles](#).

Additionally, the AP Computer Science Principles course requires more time than other IOAPA courses. The IOAPA mentor is required to grade some essay-type assignments. Any assignment that is not auto-graded will have a rubric available in the Teacher Resource Sidebar, which will be invaluable when evaluating the students' work. Also, help is available in the Teacher forum where Project STEM's TA team can provide guidance about specific questions teachers may have.

### What is a Site Coordinator?

Site Coordinators are responsible for registering their school, enrolling students, making arrangements for course materials, and allocating time in the student's regular school day and space in the school building for the student to work on the course. Site coordinators are typically teachers, TAG coordinators, and/or guidance counselors. The mentor and the site coordinator can be the same person, but do not have to be.

## Registration and Student Enrollment Process

The entire registration process must be completed before students can enroll in Iowa Online AP Academy courses for the 2023-2024 school year. Schools must re-register each year. Please see the [IOAPA Timeline](#) or check the [website](#) for registration dates and deadlines.

### Registration Process

1. Register your school and assign a site coordinator and mentor using the link on IOAPA's [website](#). This step must be completed once per school year.
    - a. New schools should have their principal register for the first time. The principal can either set themselves as the site coordinator, or nominate another administrator. For returning schools, the site coordinator should complete registration with their principal's consent.
    - b. As part of this step, schools agree to program requirements as outlined in this document.
    - c. *Optional:* All IOAPA mentors are eligible for a **stipend** for each semester they teach. Mentors must fill out a [form](#) once each year in order to indicate their interest and update their information. Starting in 2023, mentor stipends will be distributed once a year in the spring.
  2. Send invitations to the student(s) taking IOAPA course(s). Up to six students can register per course.
    - a. At the end of the registration process, the registrant can enter their email address. The registrant will receive a confirmation email with a link.
    - b. Clicking on this link will take the registrant to a school and site-specific page from which they can send invitations to students.
  3. Confirm that the student has self-enrolled in the course.
    - a. Once the student has been invited, an email will be automatically sent to the student for the student to enroll themselves in the course. Be sure to have students check their junk mail folders, as the automated emails sometimes get filtered there. Students must finalize their enrollments. **It is recommended that the site coordinator be in the room with the students to ensure that they are actually finalizing their enrollments.**
  4. The IOAPA team uploads all of the enrolled students' information to the course vendors. The course vendor will use the email addresses provided during the registration process to send information about next steps, which generally come shortly before the first day of class. **For computer science courses, this goes directly to the mentor. For all other courses, students will receive emails as well.** If you ever have any questions about the registration process, or want to double-check that your students are registered correctly, please reach out to [ioapa@belinblank.org](mailto:ioapa@belinblank.org).
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### After Registering

Some courses require materials, including **textbooks** and **lab materials**. It is the school's responsibility to order these. Schools must also provide adequate lab space if required. A complete list of required and suggested materials can be found by clicking "Learn More" on any class in IOAPA's [Course Catalog](#). While procuring materials is the responsibility of the school, please inform [ioapa@belinblank.org](mailto:ioapa@belinblank.org) if the financial burden of purchasing said materials would prevent your school from offering the course.

Project STEM courses have specific technical requirements. While a majority of modern computers meet these requirements, please make sure to confirm on [Project STEM's website](#). Please also look at the information in the "[What is a Mentor](#)" section relating to Project STEM courses.

### For Courses with AP in the Title:

1. Register your school with the [College Board](#).
2. Complete the [AP Course Audit](#) process for offering Online/Distance Learning courses by January 31 in order to be able to label courses as "AP" on students' transcripts.
  - a. Information on completing the course audit for computer science courses can be found here for [AP Computer Science A](#) and [AP Computer Science Principles](#).
3. Encourage high school students to take the AP exam, and order all [AP exams](#) by November 15.

College Board offers [calendar of important AP dates](#) for the 2023-2024 school year to help keep track of AP-related deadlines.

### Additional Note on AP Exam Ordering: Spring Courses

AP Coordinators will need to order AP Exams for spring courses by **March 15, 2024**. Courses that began after November 13 are included in this deadline. This is also the deadline to make changes to existing orders (click [here](#) for instructions and additional deadlines). Unfortunately, we cannot do this for your school; each school must order their own exams. However completing the process below, should ensure that schools are not charged fees for late orders. Below is an excerpt from page 65 of the [AP Coordinator Manual Part I](#).

Additional information about exam administration can be found [here](#).

## Supporting Students and Facilitating Class

Mentors are the first line of support for students navigating online coursework. As mentioned in the "[What is a Mentor](#)" section, mentors are not expected to be subject area experts. While it is appropriate for mentors to answer content-related questions when they are able, the primary role of the mentor is to provide encouragement and help the student to communicate with their course instructors when they have questions or concerns. Mentors can always copy/cc IOAPA's support team, [ioapa@belinblank.org](mailto:ioapa@belinblank.org) on communications with a course instructor. For more information on helping students who fall behind, see the tips on this [blog post](#).

## Course Platforms

IOAPA's two course vendors, ALVS/Edmentum and Project STEM use two different course platforms. Edmentum's course platform has two layers. The first is called [Genius](#), which is the website that students and mentors log-into. Student progress, communications from the course teacher, and a number of administrative functions are visible on this site. Because IOAPA's courses are offered by a subsidiary of Edmentum, called ALVS (sometimes referred to as Apex Learning), mentors view IOAPA students' progress by accessing this ALVS view. A handout on how to do so is available on demand from the IOAPA support staff. Edmentum also sends this document at the beginning of the year. As Edmentum and ALVS become more integrated, this feature may no longer be necessary.

Project STEM uses its own [platform](#). Some Project STEM courses may require that a mentor also manage progress checks in AP Classroom. Instructions on how to do so can be found [here](#).

## Common Issues for Students

### Interacting with the Online Instructor

Students often struggle to form a relationship with their online course instructor, and can be uncomfortable letting the instructor know of scheduling conflicts or asking questions about grades and course content. Mentors should help students communicate their concerns to the course instructor. It is the expectation of the IOAPA and Edmentum that course instructors respond in a timely manner. Edmentum instructors have posted virtual office hours; however, if the office hours do not work in the student or mentor's schedule, please contact the online instructor to set up another time to address questions/concerns. More details on live help [below](#).

### Reaching Out to Classmates

IOAPA students are strongly encouraged to work with their peers also taking online coursework, but this is not always possible depending on enrollment. Even if a student does not have a classmate in the same course at their school, there are other Iowa students enrolled in the course through IOAPA, as well as students enrolled from around the country. The course vendors provide students with message boards to connect with other students enrolled in the same course. Information on these boards can be found in the [links](#) section.

Similarly, IOAPA mentors seeking guidance are welcome to reach out to [ioapa@belinblank.org](mailto:ioapa@belinblank.org) - the IOAPA team will help to pair them with a veteran mentor.



### Time Management

Schools and students are expected to schedule Iowa Online AP Academy courses into their regular school day—the academy courses are not meant to be “add-on” courses to a student’s already full schedule. In addition to providing in-person supervision and guidance, mentors are strongly encouraged to access student data to ensure that students are logging on and completing course assignments daily. The expectation for students enrolled in IOAPA courses is five to six hours per week outside of their scheduled course time for homework, readings, and preparing for tests and quizzes. Students enrolled in Iowa Online AP Academy lab courses can expect to spend additional time in the lab.

IOAPA’s support team makes an effort to contact course mentors if a student has not logged on to their Iowa Online AP Academy course in more than 7 days. However, **it is very difficult for a student to catch up on AP coursework once they fall more than 3 or 4 class periods behind**. Mentors are strongly encouraged to follow up with both students and parents when a student starts to fall behind in their coursework.

### Drops/Withdrawals and Extensions

Mentors are strongly encouraged to work with students who are experiencing difficulty or falling behind on their coursework before considering a withdrawal. If a student does decide to drop an IOAPA course, **mentors should not attempt to drop the student through the course platform**. Instead, please reach out to [ioapa@belinblank.org](mailto:ioapa@belinblank.org) and request that the student be dropped from their course. Please keep the following in mind:

1. **High school students who drop the course more than 14 days after the start of class will be charged a fee of \$350 per class.** IOAPA has a limited amount of funding each year, and after 14 days have passed, cannot get a refund on seats purchased from the course vendor. This fee will be charged to the school as an invoice. Students face no penalty when withdrawing inside of the grace period.
2. **Students who are inactive in their course for more than 21 consecutive days will be automatically dropped.** If the student is a high schooler, the drop fee will be assessed.
3. Final grades are at the discretion of the school – the end-of-semester report from the course vendor is a recommendation. If a student wished to drop due to fear of a low grade, a school could count the course as pass-fail or otherwise weight the grades from the course. Schools can adjust a student’s final grade based on extenuating circumstances, like unexpected absences.

**Extensions can be requested directly in the Edmentum platform.** Make sure to request extensions prior to the end of the semester, if needed. AP courses can be extended, although mentors should take caution when extending AP courses in the spring, as students who do not finish by the end of the normal IOAPA semester will not have gone through all of the course material by the time the AP Exam begins. This is not a concern for students who are not taking the exam. Project STEM courses do not need extensions, as students have continuous access throughout the academic year, even after IOAPA’s end date.

## Support Links and Contact Info

If you need help, IOAPA's dedicated support email, [ioapa@belinblank.org](mailto:ioapa@belinblank.org) is your primary contact. You can reach out to us for help on any aspect of the program. The IOAPA staff can also connect you directly with our partners at either of the two course vendors in case the standard support route is taking too long or is unhelpful. **Please do not hesitate to reach out to us with any questions or concerns.**

### IOAPA Main Support

[ioapa@belinblank.org](mailto:ioapa@belinblank.org)

(319)-335-6148

### Project STEM Courses

[info@projectstem.org](mailto:info@projectstem.org)

[Help Center](#) (Videos, FAQs, Step-by-Step Instructions)

[Video Onboarding](#)

### ALVS/Edmentum Courses

[support@edmentum.com](mailto:support@edmentum.com)

(800) 447-5286

[Genius Course Platform How-To Guide](#) (Only steps 4-6 are applicable on this page)

[ALVS Policies and Procedures](#)

**Edmentum Live Help:** Edmentum offers a live help option to provide an additional layer of support for all ALVS students. When students are feeling stuck, need homework or lesson help, they can use Live Help to engage with a qualified teacher, Monday through Friday, from 8 am-5 pm Central Time. During Live Help, students will use Zoom and can decide if they want to have their cameras on or off and if they prefer to chat, they can utilize the chat features in Zoom. Students can even share their screens to show their work and get the direct support from a qualified teacher in that subject area.

Students can access the Live Help function from their Genius dashboard. On their dashboard menu they should just click "External Links". Then Click "Live Help 6-12" followed by the link for the Zoom help room for the respective subject area. The final step is completing an Entrance ticket for their desired topic of discussion. Visual instructions can also be found here.

**Course instructor issues:** if you have questions or concerns about an Edmentum instructor, please contact Edmentum directly at ALVS Services by either using the email address [support.alvs@edmentum.com](mailto:support.alvs@edmentum.com), or by calling (800) 447-5286. ALVS Services will create a case, investigate the problem, document, and follow up with everyone involved. They will also escalate the complaint to appropriate management, if needed. Please make sure to inform [ioapa@belinblank.org](mailto:ioapa@belinblank.org).

### College Board/AP

The following are links to College Board's websites relating to AP Coordinator, student, and teacher support.

- [Ordering AP Exams](#)
- [AP Exam Dates](#)
- [AP Coordinators](#)
- [AP Students](#)

## Scholarships, Grants, and Assistance

### AP Exam Scholarships

The Belin-Blank Center offers scholarships that cover the cost of the AP Exam to low-income students who are currently participating in IOAPA courses. The purpose of this funding is to increase the number of students taking AP exams from rural schools in Iowa. If schools are already paying for AP exams, they should **not** request this funding. Funding is only available for students who are taking an **IOAPA** AP course, and an AP exam in the same course.

**IOAPA principals, site coordinators, and mentors** can apply for this funding opportunity. Applications open prior to the deadline for both fall and spring AP exam ordering. The per-exam cost for the 2023-24 school year is \$62 for students eligible for free/reduced cost lunch. Schools would pay the \$62 per student to the College Board. Note this cost may vary, however the Belin-Blank Center will continue to match the College Board's exam cost.

To receive the scholarship, schools must submit an invoice to the Belin-Blank Center after students take the AP® exams along with documentation showing the school has paid the College Board for these students' exams. These invoices should be submitted by **June 1, 2024** via email: [ioapa@belinblank.org](mailto:ioapa@belinblank.org) or mail: Dominic Balestrieri-Fox 600 Blank Honors Center Iowa City, IA, 52242. There will be no reimbursement if a student does not take the exam.

### Program Grants

Starting in 2023, IOAPA has available a limited number of small grants between \$200 and \$1000 to help schools facilitate, enrich, and expand on IOAPA courses. These grants can be put towards materials, technology, registration fees, or other expenditures designed to enhance the experience of students taking IOAPA coursework.

The deadline to apply for a grant is October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023. All grants will be evaluated, but grants submitted earlier will be given priority. To apply for a grant, please fill out and submit the form linked [here](#). If you have questions about the grants, please reach out to [ioapa@belinblank.org](mailto:ioapa@belinblank.org).

### APSI Registration Assistance

In addition to IOAPA, the Belin-Blank Center partners with the College Board to offer 30-hour summer workshops that train educators to teach an AP course. Financial assistance for teachers from an IOAPA-affiliated school is often available. To learn more about the workshops, please visit [belinblank.org/apsi](https://belinblank.org/apsi). To learn more about financial aid opportunities for IOAPA-affiliated teachers, please reach out to [ioapa@belinblank.org](mailto:ioapa@belinblank.org).

### Mentor Stipends

Basic information on mentor stipends, including the current rate, can be found in the "[What is a Mentor](#)" section of this handbook. Mentors will receive a link to an online survey through email each year. Filling out this survey marks them as eligible for a stipend. After collecting the list of eligible mentors, the IOAPA Administrative assistant sends the list and payment information to the College of Education's payment processing department. Mentors can usually expect to receive a stipend within two months of the list being submitted, although delays are not uncommon and should not be a cause for concern.

The University of Iowa prefers to send payments electronically. New mentors must fill out a W9 with ACH (electronic banking) information included. Returning mentors who have previously received their payments by check are encouraged to fill out a form with ACH to switch to electronic payment. If your address or personal information change, please fill out a new W9. **The Belin-Blank Center securely and electronically disposes of W9s after they have been filed with the University.** To submit a W9, or if you have any questions about your W9 status, please reach out to [ioapa@belinblank.org](mailto:ioapa@belinblank.org).

## Building Your IOAPA/AP Program

### Informational Strategies and Materials

Both to advertise the opportunity and ensure that students are up to the challenge of taking advanced coursework in a more independent, online format, IOAPA provides a number of promotional materials.

- **IOAPA Info Nights** are a way to inform students and parents about IOAPA's course offerings and the way the program works. The site coordinator or another facilitator can invite parents to a presentation on the program, for which a powerpoint template is available on-demand from [ioapa@belinblank.org](mailto:ioapa@belinblank.org). These Info Nights are best hosted (1) in the middle of the fall semester, right before the spring course registration period begins, or (2) before the end of the school year, so that parents and students can consider signing up for full-year courses in time to meet the following fall semester's enrollment deadlines.
- **The Benefits of AP Courses [handout](#)** is a good way to introduce the subject to parents and interested students. It features three major benefits of AP courses and some introductory information about IOAPA.
- **Course descriptions** for every course are available on IOAPA's website. These are good to have when students or parents ask about a given course, and list the important materials for each course.
- Schools should consider inviting past IOAPA participants and/or mentors to informational sessions, or just to talk with new students about their experiences.
- Looking for something else, or need help recruiting students? IOAPA has other handouts and program data available on-request. Please reach out to [ioapa@belinblank.org](mailto:ioapa@belinblank.org) – the IOAPA team would be happy to assist.

### Advanced/AP Program Assistance

The Belin-Blank Center and IOAPA program are committed to helping Iowa's schools offer advanced coursework. If your school needs help building up its advanced course offerings or is interested in starting an in-house AP Program, the Belin-Blank Center can help.

## Appendix A: Iowa Online AP Academy Student Readiness Checklist

(Adapted from the Project Excel Teacher Recommendation Form developed by Hoffman Estates High School)

**Please indicate your perspective on the following information below:**

1 – Weakness                      2 – Average                      3 – Strength

### **School Work Habits/Independent Functioning**

- \_\_\_ Homework Completion
- \_\_\_ Self-Advocacy Skills
- \_\_\_ Organizational Skills
- \_\_\_ Note-Taking Skills
- \_\_\_ Willingness to Access Resources (i.e. tutoring, teacher assistance, etc.)
- \_\_\_ Class Preparedness
- \_\_\_ Class Participation

### **Classroom Function Behaviors/Motivation**

- \_\_\_ Ability to Stay Focused
- \_\_\_ Ability to Stay on Task
- \_\_\_ Desire to Do Well
- \_\_\_ Attempts All Tasks Assigned
- \_\_\_ Takes Responsibility for Own Learning

Each person has relative strengths and weaknesses. In addition to having taken the appropriate prerequisite courses, the above characteristics may be important for a successful experience in the Iowa Online AP Academy. Please discuss the areas that you or your mentor have identified as areas of weakness. How will you address these areas, as they relate to your participation in the Iowa Online AP Academy?

## Appendix B: Copy of Registration Agreement

The following is a copy of the checklist of agreements that appears in the IOAPA registration process:

The following terms apply to participation in the Iowa Online AP Academy, all course vendors' products (course vendor varies according to course), and courses. This agreement indicates your desire and intent to offer these programs and/or courses, through the Iowa Online AP Academy, to students attending your school. Please carefully read and check the following items to express your agreement to IOAPA's policies and requirements:

- I agree the school is responsible for providing required textbooks and other materials, including technology, as well as for providing appropriate space and scheduled time in the school day for the student to take the class. This includes laboratory space and qualified supervision when applicable.
- I agree the school will appoint a mentor to help monitor student progress, proctor exams, and provide support for students enrolled in online courses, among other expectations outlined in the mentor handbook.
- I agree the school is responsible for registering with the College Board for Advanced Placement exams and assigning an on-site proctor, when applicable.
- I agree to IOAPA's drop policy as outlined in the mentor handbook.
- I agree that no more than 6 students per school building may be enrolled in any given course, unless written permission is obtained from the IOAPA team at [ioapa@belinblank.org](mailto:ioapa@belinblank.org)
- Participation in the Iowa Online AP Academy is subject to the terms of the vendor's Terms and Conditions, Privacy Policy, and any other relevant policies, including College Board policies.
- I have read and agree to the policies and requirements outlined in the mentor handbook, including those not listed above.