

SOAR

SPRING 2026

THE PRENTICE DIFFERENCE

AN INSIDE LOOK AT STUDENT LIFE AND BEYOND



The Case for Executive Functioning

WHY BUILDING PLANNING, FOCUS, AND SELF-REGULATION SKILLS ARE CENTRAL TO EVERY STUDENT'S FUTURE

WELCOME MESSAGE

More than 39 years ago, a passionate group of parents united around a common goal: to build a school where students with dyslexia would be understood, supported, and empowered to thrive. From that vision, The Prentice School was founded.

What started as a small but determined initiative has evolved into a vibrant 6.6-acre campus featuring more than 25 classrooms and serving 150 students in grades 1 through 8.

Today, our commitment to that vision remains — to help students with language-based learning differences, like dyslexia, and co-occurring conditions, such as ADHD, realize that their differences are some of their biggest strengths, and that they are truly capable of anything. Through a supportive and nurturing environment, we foster confidence, creativity, leadership, and academic success beyond what many thought possible.

I'm honored to share the 2026 Spring Issue of our SOAR Magazine, which offers a meaningful look into the spirit of Prentice and the extraordinary community that continues to shape and inspire it every day.



Devon Green, Head of School



Ask a parent what they want most for their child and the answers are consistent: that their child will manage their responsibilities, advocate for themselves, persist through difficulty, and eventually navigate adult life with confidence. Ask a teacher what most gets in the way of a student's success and the answers converge just as consistently: difficulty starting tasks, losing track of assignments, struggling to manage time, shutting down when overwhelmed.

These two conversations are about the same thing. They are both about executive functioning, the cluster of cognitive skills that govern our ability to plan, organize, initiate, monitor, and regulate our own behavior. For students with learning differences and ADHD, executive functioning deficits are not a secondary concern. They are often the primary barrier standing between a student's potential and their performance.

Executive functioning is not a school subject. It is the operating system that makes all other learning possible.

WHAT EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING ACTUALLY IS

Executive functioning is a set of mental processes centered in the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that develops last and that is particularly affected in students with ADHD and language-based learning differences. The core skills include working memory, cognitive flexibility, and inhibitory control, and the downstream abilities these support: planning, prioritizing, task initiation, time management, and self-monitoring.

A student with strong executive functioning can break a long-term project into steps, work steadily, notice when they're off track, and submit on time. A student with executive functioning deficits may understand the project perfectly and still be



unable to do any of this. They are not lazy. Their brain's management system is working against them. Telling them to try harder is like telling a student with dyslexia to just read more carefully. The solution is not willpower, it is explicit instruction, consistent structure, and the gradual scaffolding of skills until they become internalized.

At Prentice: Executive functioning skills are embedded across every subject in the elementary years and taught explicitly in a dedicated class in Junior High, practiced in real academic contexts every day, not in isolation.

HOW PRENTICE BUILDS EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

In elementary school, EF skills are woven into every academic task rather than taught separately. When a student approaches a writing assignment, teachers break it into clearly the defined steps of brainstorm, organize, draft, revise, providing the structure that compensates for what the student cannot yet provide themselves. Visual schedules, checklists, and consistent organizational language across all classrooms mean students build habits through repetition. Over time, what begins as scaffolding gradually becomes an internalized strategy.

In Junior High, instruction becomes more explicit through a dedicated bi-weekly EF class that addresses planning long-term projects, tracking assignments, managing time across a week, and advocating for their own learning needs, the exact skills that determine success in high school and beyond.

SELF-ADVOCACY: THE SKILL THAT LASTS LONGEST

Among all the executive functioning skills Prentice develops, self-advocacy may be the most consequential. Students learn to understand their own learning profiles like how they process information, what strategies help them succeed, what accommodations they are entitled to and how to request them. For students who have felt defined by their deficits, this is a profound shift in identity. They move from seeing themselves as students who struggle to students who know themselves and have a strategy.

This is the outcome Prentice is working toward: not just students who graduate having grown academically, but young people who graduate knowing themselves well enough to keep growing wherever they go next. We do not just teach students what. We teach them how, and those are the skills that determine whether academic gains persist beyond graduation.



Learn more about how Prentice supports ADHD



Teaching the Way They Learn

A DEEP DIVE INTO THE EVIDENCE-BASED ACADEMIC PROGRAMS THAT DEFINE THE PRENTICE CLASSROOM

Walk into any Prentice classroom and something is immediately different. Students are not passively receiving information. They are tapping syllables on their desks, color-coding their sentences, sketching visual models on whiteboards, and talking through problems with their peers. The room hums with purposeful activity. This is rigorous academics, delivered in the way students with language-based learning differences learn.



Students with dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and ADHD have been educated in systems designed for a different kind of learner. They may have been given more time, quieter rooms, and accommodations that acknowledge a gap, but many times without support for growth. Prentice was founded on a different premise: that students with attention- and language-based learning disabilities need instruction that speaks directly to how their brains work. Every program at Prentice is built on this foundation.

ORTON-GILLINGHAM: THE GOLD STANDARD FOR READING



The cornerstone of Prentice’s literacy program is the Orton-Gillingham approach, widely recognized as the gold standard for teaching students with dyslexia. What makes it distinctive is its three principles: direct, explicit, and multisensory. Each concept is taught deliberately, practiced until automatic, and reinforced through simultaneous engagement of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic pathways. A student learning a vowel pattern doesn’t simply see it in a text. They say it aloud, trace it, tap it, build it with letter tiles, and read it in words.

At Prentice, OG instruction in Elementary takes place daily in small groups of three to five students, taught by teachers certified through the Dyslexia Training Institute’s rigorous nine to twelve-month program. For students who have spent years feeling confused or broken in traditional classrooms, it delivers something transformative: a system of rules that actually makes sense. Decoding stops feeling like guessing and starts feeling like code-breaking.

AMPLIFY CKLA: COMPREHENSION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

Reading instruction alone is not enough. Students need to comprehend what they read, and comprehension depends heavily on background knowledge. For example, a student who doesn’t know what a blitz is could read a sportswriting passage and still miss its meaning. Prentice uses Amplify CKLA, an evidence-based ELA curriculum rooted in the Science of Reading, that builds deep background knowledge through topics in history, science, literature, and culture.

In the Prentice classroom, Amplify lessons become engaging discussions.



Students who struggle with reading are still participants through audio supports, visual scaffolds, and Visualizing and Verbalizing techniques, a research-backed method that teaches students to create mental images while listening and reading, improving retention and comprehension. Even though students may not read at grade level, they don’t miss out on background knowledge as their reading continues to improve.

JANE SCHAFER ACADEMIC WRITING: STRUCTURE AS LIBERATION

Writing is among the most cognitively demanding tasks a student with learning differences faces. It requires simultaneous management of ideas, organization, grammar, mechanics, spelling, and physical production, a perfect storm for students whose working memory and executive functioning are already strained.

The Jane Schaffer Academic Writing Program transforms this using discussions, teacher modeling, multisensory chants, and graphic organizers. The visual system does the organizational work that their executive functioning struggles to do alone, freeing cognitive resources for thinking and expression. The result is students who write with progressively more independence and confidence, with a clearer voice and more organized ideas.



AMPLIFY DESMOS MATH: UNDERSTANDING OVER MEMORIZATION



Mathematics instruction for students with learning differences requires the same principles that govern Prentice’s literacy work: explicit teaching, visual and hands-on engagement, and instruction pitched at genuine understanding rather than surface-level performance. The Amplify Desmos Math curriculum delivers all three.

Built around the principle that mathematical understanding must precede procedural fluency, Desmos Math uses digital tools, visual models, manipulatives, and collaborative problem-solving to make concepts make sense. A student learning about fractions is not simply shown an algorithm. They manipulate virtual fraction bars, sketch area models, discuss their reasoning with a partner, and build toward the formal procedure only after the underlying concept is secure.

Together, these four programs: Orton-Gillingham reading, Amplify CKLA comprehension, Jane Schaffer writing, and Amplify Desmos Math constitute an academic core unlike any found in a traditional school. They share a philosophy: that all students can learn complex content, and that the teacher’s job is to find and use the pathway into their brain. At Prentice, we have found those pathways. And every day, we see what happens when students are finally taught in a way that makes sense to them.

Learn more about how Prentice supports struggling readers



The Language of Connection: Social Communication at Prentice

TEACHING THE SKILLS OF HUMAN INTERACTION THAT MANY STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES NEED EXPLICITLY TAUGHT



Every moment of every school day, students are navigating a complex and largely invisible social world of reading facial expressions, taking turns in conversation, inferring what was meant rather than only what was said, figuring out unwritten rules about what is appropriate and when. For students with language-based learning differences, this navigation is often far more difficult than their peers recognize, and far more costly than educators realize.

Social communication is not an innate ability that students either have or lack. It is a learnable set of skills, and like all skills, it is best taught explicitly, with clear frameworks, consistent practice, and expert guidance. This is the premise behind the Social Communication program at Prentice, led by our onsite Speech-Language Pathologists.

Social communication is not a personality trait. It is a learnable set of skills, and like all skills, it responds to explicit, expert instruction.

WHY THIS POPULATION NEEDS THIS SUPPORT

The connection between language-based learning differences and social communication challenges is not coincidental. Language, in its deepest sense, is not only about reading and writing. Students with dyslexia, ADHD, and related profiles often have difficulties with the pragmatic dimensions of language: the social rules that govern when and how to speak, how to read nonverbal cues, and how to shift perspective to understand another person's point of view.

When these difficulties go unaddressed, the consequences extend well beyond occasional awkwardness. Students may inadvertently offend peers and be unable to understand why. They may misinterpret others' intentions, dominate conversations, or isolate themselves from the peer connections they deeply want. For students who already carry the weight of academic struggle, social isolation is a compounding injury with serious implications for mental health and long-term wellbeing.



THE FRAMEWORK: ZONES, DETECTIVES, AND SUPERFLEX

Prentice's Social Communication program draws on three evidence-informed frameworks developed specifically for this population. The Zones of Regulation gives students a shared language for emotional and sensory states, and the tools to navigate between them. No zone is labeled good or bad; the goal is awareness and self-management. Social Thinking's Social Detective framework teaches students to gather social clues, read the situation, and make smart guesses about expected behavior. The Superflex curriculum extends this work by giving students characters to help them recognize and manage unhelpful social-thinking patterns. Together these frameworks give students a vocabulary and a lens for social interactions that many neurotypical peers acquire implicitly.



Prentice SLP team: Our Speech-Language Pathologists hold M.A. degrees with CCC-SLP certification. Being embedded on campus — rather than serving students in separate clinic appointments — allows us to support skill generalization in real time, in the actual social environment where students need these skills most.

WHAT GENERALIZATION LOOKS LIKE

The most significant advantage of embedding Social Communication instruction in the school day is generalization, which is the transfer of skills from the classroom to the cafeteria, the playground, the group project, and eventually the workplace. A skill learned on Tuesday becomes practiced and real by Wednesday. Prentice Speech and Language Pathologists work closely with classroom teachers and our onsite Marriage and Family Therapist to ensure the language and frameworks students learn are reinforced across the school day. This creates a coherent, consistent social learning environment, and for families who have spent years trying to connect clinic-based social skills work to their child's daily life, it is often the missing piece they didn't know they were looking for.



Feeling to Learn: Social-Emotional Education at Prentice

WHY EMOTIONAL REGULATION IS NOT SEPARATE FROM ACADEMIC SUCCESS; IT IS ITS PREREQUISITE



There is a question families often ask during admissions, usually with some hesitation, as though it might be beside the point: Will my child be okay here? Not academically, they ask about that too, but emotionally. Will my child feel safe? Will they feel like they belong? Will the other kids be kind? These questions are not beside the point. They are exactly the point. The research on learning is unambiguous: a student who does not feel safe cannot learn. A student who is dysregulated, flooded with anxiety, shame, or frustration, are less able to access the cognitive processes that reading, writing, and math require. For students with learning differences, who have often carried years of academic struggle before arriving at Prentice, the emotional stakes of school are particularly high. Prentice addresses this directly, structurally, and without apology. Social-emotional learning is not a once-a-month assembly or topic. It is a core program, taught by a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, embedded in the weekly schedule alongside every academic subject.

A student who does not feel safe cannot learn. Emotional regulation is not separate from academic achievement.

THE SEL PROGRAM: CLASSES WITH A LICENSED MFT

Every student at Prentice participates in SEL classes taught by an onsite licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. Most schools, even well-resourced ones, do not have a licensed mental health professional embedded in the school day. At Prentice, this is not a luxury. It is a recognition that our students' emotional development requires the same professional expertise as their reading development. The curriculum focuses on four interconnected domains: identifying and naming emotions, understanding the relationship between emotions and behavior, developing a personal toolkit of regulation strategies, and building resilience and a growth mindset. Students learn to recognize their regulation state and apply specific, practiced strategies to move toward calm; not because a teacher managed it for them, but because they learned to manage it themselves.

STUDENT-CREATED REGULATION TOOLBOXES

Each elementary student at Prentice builds a personal regulation toolbox, a personalized collection of strategies they discover work for their particular nervous system: deep breathing, drawing, a fidget, a brief walk, a calming memory. When a student is struggling in class, they access their toolbox independently, to choose which tool they would like to use to help regulate themselves. This builds the self-regulation and self-efficacy that will serve them for life.

What families notice: Within the first year at Prentice, most families report a dramatic reduction in morning school anxiety, emotional outbursts at home related to homework, and their child's negative self-talk about their own abilities.



THE WHOLE-CHILD PHILOSOPHY IN PRACTICE

Students who leave Prentice do not just leave with stronger academic skills. They leave with an emotional vocabulary, a set of regulation strategies, a growth mindset, and a fundamentally different relationship with themselves. They have been taught, explicitly and repeatedly, that struggle is not failure, that asking for help is strength, and that their differences are not deficits. The academic gains are measurable and meaningful. But the students who come back years later, thriving in high school, advocating for themselves in college, calling their third-grade teacher to say they're okay, they come back because of how Prentice made them feel about themselves. That is the deepest return on investment a school can offer.



Jillian Taylor

MY JOURNEY AT THE PRENTICE SCHOOL



When did you attend Prentice?

2016 - 2023 / Graduated in 2023

How did Prentice help set you up for success in high school?

The foundation for my success at Orange Lutheran High School started at The Prentice School. My teachers prepared me for the increased workload and ensured I was ready for the academic challenges ahead.

What is different about Prentice than your other schools?

What makes Prentice truly special is the unwavering support from the teachers. They don't just move through a lesson; they take the genuine time to ensure you fully understand the concepts. Because they teach in so many different and creative ways, every student has the chance to learn in a way that works best for them.

What is something you wish everyone knew about Prentice?

I wish everyone knew just how supportive and dedicated the faculty there really is. Especially Mrs. Ware who helped with my skills in staying on task with homework and with my social skills, and Ms. Zippwald helped me with all of my classwork and is very supportive and will help you with everything you need help on.

What are your current plans for after high school?

Because of the positive influence my teachers had on me, my goal after high school is to attend college and major in Chemistry. I plan to become a chemistry teacher myself, so I can provide the same kind of support and inspiration to my future students that I received at Prentice.

Alexander Scott Malinick, Ph.D.

A LOOK BACK AT PRENTICE

When did you attend Prentice?

2002 to 2008 (3rd grade to 8th grade)

What is different about Prentice than your other schools?

Prentice was the first environment where I learned that how I think and learn, my personal operating system shaped by aphantasia, dyslexia, and ADHD, was not something to correct, but something to understand and refine. That shift in perspective matters. It allows me to move away from self-doubt and instead focus on building systems that align with how I approach problems. More importantly, it gave me early ownership over my learning rather than reliance on a one-size-fits-all model.

Equally important was being surrounded by peers who approached problems in different ways. That experience reinforced early on that intelligence is not linear and capability is not standardized. This perspective continues to influence how I build teams, mentor trainees, and approach complex scientific problems today.

Tell us a little bit about what you do now, and how you got here.

I’m currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Pharmacological Sciences at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, working within the Peptide Innovation Hub. I mentor graduate students, MD students, and postdoctoral fellows at the intersection of science, medicine, and translation. My work focuses on developing programmable peptide-based platforms for diagnostics, therapeutics, and drug delivery.

How did Prentice help set you up for success in high school, college and/or beyond?

Prentice gave me an early foundation in self-advocacy and an understanding that learning is not one-size-fits-all. It also gave me the confidence to seek out mentors, adapt systems to my needs, and take responsibility for my own growth.

Those skills (e.g. communication, executive function, and self-awareness) continued to develop over time through mentorship, training, and experience. Prentice provided an early scaffold; what followed required sustained effort and the guidance of many others along the way.

What is something you wish everyone knew about Prentice?

Prentice is not just a school; it is an orientation. It teaches you how to approach challenges, adapt to uncertainty, and build systems that support long-term growth, lessons that extend far beyond the classroom.



What are your current plans for the future?

I plan to continue advancing scientific technologies that expand what is possible in precision medicine, focusing on translating complex biology into deployable clinical solutions. At the core, I want to build things that genuinely help patients.

I am also committed to mentoring the next generation of scientists and helping individuals who think differently recognize those differences as strengths.

What makes you continue to come back to Prentice?

Prentice was an early environment that emphasized rigor and resilience. Staying connected is a way to support the next generation and remain grounded in the principles that shaped how I approach learning and leadership.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

I am always open to connecting with students and families. If sharing my path helps someone recognize their strengths and build confidence in their own trajectory, then it is time well spent.

Rising Together Capital Campaign

This year has been extraordinary. From our record-breaking Fit-A-Thon, which raised more than \$68,000, to securing nearly \$300,000 in grants from philanthropic organizations and family foundations, our community has achieved remarkable success.

We also launched the **Rising Together Capital Campaign**, an exciting initiative to modernize and renovate our 60-year-old campus. This investment will enhance the learning environment for today's students while strengthening our campus for generations to come.

Beginning this summer and continuing in phases throughout the year, we will renovate classrooms, restrooms, the auditorium, and campus grounds, while also completing critical electrical, safety, and code-compliance upgrades.

This project is made possible by the generosity of families, alumni, and friends who believe in the power of an exceptional education. Naming opportunities offer a meaningful way to honor a loved one, celebrate a connection to Prentice, or leave a lasting legacy while helping shape the future of our school. **Your support helps our students take flight!**

To contribute to the Rising Together Capital Campaign, please use the enclosed envelope. For more information about the project or naming opportunities, please contact Chiemi Lee, Director of Development, at clee@prentice.org or 714.786.3599.



2026 Education Elevated Gala

On April 25, we welcomed nearly 200 guests to our 2026 Education Elevated Gala at the VEA Newport Beach to celebrate the Prentice mission and the extraordinary impact of our community.

During the evening, we announced the launch of our Rising Together campus modernization and renovation project. As Head of School Devon Green shared, “This project is not just about updating spaces—it’s about unlocking potential,” creating an environment that helps students with dyslexia and ADHD build confidence, independence, and a love of learning.



Our featured speaker, Dr. Mykayla Dutkus, a Prentice alumna who earned her bachelor's, master's, and doctorate in business administration, inspired guests with her story and reflected on how Prentice helped shape her path to success.

Thanks to the generosity of our community—and a matching gift during the Paddle Raise—we raised more than \$400,000, making this another Gala to remember!

To everyone who attended, donated, volunteered, or supported us from afar, thank you. Your generosity creates opportunities for Prentice students not only to succeed, but to thrive.





THE PRENTICE SCHOOL

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THE PRENTICE SCHOOL

EDUCATION ELEVATED

As this school year draws to a close and we reflect on the last nine months, we are so grateful for our Prentice Family. Your investment in our mission allows us to continue helping students see every possibility that is available to them and recognize their learning disability can be their strength.

Prentice is committed to being a safe space where students with language-based learning disabilities can thrive. Please consider making an end-of-school-year gift to support this commitment. From \$30 to \$4,000, your investment in our school and our students makes this possible. We are honored to have you as part of the Prentice Family, and we thank you for your continued support!



Donate online.

