

REVISION

Instruction

Alternative Education Programs

Independent Study

The Governing Board authorizes independent study as an optional alternative instructional strategy for eligible students whose needs may be best met through study outside of the regular classroom setting. Independent study shall offer a means of individualizing the educational plan to serve students who desire a more challenging educational experience, whose health or other personal circumstances make classroom attendance difficult, who are unable to access course(s) due to scheduling problems, and/or who need to make up credits or fill gaps in their learning. As necessary to meet student needs, independent study may be offered on a full-time basis or on a part-time basis in conjunction with part- or full-time classroom study.

The Superintendent or designee may provide a variety of independent study opportunities, including, but not limited to, through a program or class within a comprehensive school, an alternative school or program of choice, a charter school, a ~~home-based format~~, and an online course.

A student's participation in independent study shall be voluntary. ~~Students participating in independent study shall have the right, at any time, to enter or return to the regular classroom mode of instruction.~~

Independent study for each student shall be under the general supervision of a District employee who possesses a valid certification document pursuant to Education Code 44865 or an emergency credential pursuant to Ed. Code 44300. Students' independent study shall be coordinated, evaluated, and documented, as prescribed by law and reflected in the accompanying Board Rule 6158.

The minimum period of time for any independent study option shall be ~~five~~ *three* consecutive school days.

~~Written Agreements~~

~~The master agreement shall specify the length of time in which each independent study assignment must be completed.~~

Student Teacher Conferences

Supervising teachers should establish an appropriate schedule for student teacher conferences in order to help identify students falling behind in their work or in danger of failing or dropping out of school. Teachers are expected to monitor student progress and work closely with each student to determine the amount and type of contact needed for the student to be successful in the program.

Missing appointments with the supervising teacher without valid reasons may trigger an evaluation to determine whether the student should remain in independent study.

Home-Based Independent Study

The Superintendent or designee shall encourage parents/guardians desiring to teach their children at home to have their children participate in independent study. Such participation allows continued contact and cooperation between the school system and the home-based student and ensures that the student will be offered a standards-based education substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to the district's classroom instruction.

Program Evaluation

The Superintendent or designee shall annually report to the Board the number of district students participating in independent study, the average daily attendance generated for apportionment purposes, student performance as measured by standard indicators and in comparison to students in classroom-based instruction, and the number and proportion of independent study students who graduate or successfully complete independent study. Based on the program evaluation, the Board and Superintendent shall determine areas for program improvement as needed.

General Independent Study Requirements

For the 2021-22 school year, the District shall offer independent study, as specified in Ed. Code 51745, to meet the educational needs of students unless the District has obtained a waiver.

Parents/guardians of students who are interested in independent study shall contact the Superintendent or designee.

For the 2022-23 school year and thereafter, the Superintendent or designee may continue to ~~shall offer and~~ approve independent study for an individual student ~~only~~ upon determining that the student is prepared to meet the District's requirements for independent study and is likely to succeed in independent study as well as or better than ~~he/she~~ the student would in the regular classroom setting.

Because excessive leniency in the duration of independent study assignments may result in a student falling behind ~~his/her~~ peers and increase the risk of dropping out of school, independent study assignments shall be *completed* no more than one week *after assigned* for all grade levels and types of program. However, when necessary based on the specific circumstances of the student's approved program, the Superintendent or designee may allow for a longer period of time between the date an assignment is made and when it is due, up to the termination date of the agreement.

An evaluation shall be conducted to determine whether it is in a student's best interest to remain in independent study whenever the student *fails to make satisfactory educational progress and/or misses three assignments, unless the student's written agreement specifies a lower or higher number of missed assignments based on the nature of the assignments, the total number of assignments, and/or other unique circumstances.* Satisfactory educational progress shall be determined based on all of the following indicators:

- 1. The student's achievement and engagement in the independent study program, as indicated by the student's performance on applicable student-level measures of student achievement and engagement specified in Ed. Code 52060*
- 2. The completion of assignments, assessments, or other indicators that evidence that the student is working on assignments*
- 3. Learning required concepts, as determined by the supervising teacher*
- 4. Progress towards successful completion of the course of study or individual course, as determined by the supervising teacher*

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that students participating in independent study are provided with content aligned to grade level standards at a level of quality and intellectual challenge substantially equivalent to in-person instruction. For high schools, this shall include access to all courses offered by the District for graduation and approved by the University of California or the California State University as creditable under the A-G admissions criteria.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that students participating in independent study for 15 school days or more receive the following throughout the school year:

- 1. For students in grades transitional kindergarten, kindergarten, and grades 1 to 3, opportunities for daily synchronous instruction*
- 2. For students in grades 4-8, opportunities for both daily live interaction and at least weekly synchronous instruction*
- 3. For students in grades 9-12, opportunities for at least weekly synchronous instruction*

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that procedures for tiered reengagement strategies are used for all students who are not generating attendance for more than three school days or 60 percent of the instructional days in a school week, or who are in violation of their written agreement. This requirement only applies to students participating in an independent study program for 15 school days or more. The procedures shall include, but are not necessarily limited to, all of the following:

- 1. Verification of current contact information for each enrolled student*
- 2. Notification to parents/guardians of lack of participation within one school day of the absence or lack of participation*
- 3. A plan for outreach from the school to determine student needs, including connection with health and social services as necessary*
- 4. A clear standard for requiring a student-parent-educator conference to review a student's written agreement and reconsider the independent study program's impact on the student's achievement and well-being*

The Superintendent or designee shall develop a plan to transition students whose families wish to return to in-person instruction from independent study expeditiously, and, in no case later, than five instructional days. This requirement only applies to students participating in an independent study program for 15 school days or more.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that a written master agreement ~~and, as appropriate, a learning agreement for students participating in course based independent study~~ exist exists for each participating student as prescribed by law.

The District shall provide written notice to the parents/guardians of all enrolled students of the option to enroll their child in in-person instruction or independent study during the 2021-22 school year. This notice shall be posted on the District's web site, and shall include, at a minimum, information about the right to request a student-parent-educator conference before enrollment, student rights regarding procedures for enrolling, disenrolling, and reenrolling in independent study, and the instructional time, including synchronous and asynchronous learning, that a student will have access to as part of independent study.

Upon the request of the parent/guardian of a student, before making a decision about enrolling or disenrolling in independent study and entering into a written agreement to do so, the District shall conduct a telephone, videoconference, or in-person student-parent-educator conference or other meeting during which the student, parent/guardian, or their advocate may ask questions about the educational options, including which curriculum offerings and nonacademic supports will be available to the student in independent study.

Master Agreement

For the 2021-22 school year only, the District shall obtain a signed written agreement for independent study no later than 30 days after the first day of instruction.

A written agreement shall be developed and implemented for each student participating in independent study for three or more consecutive school days.

The agreement shall include general student data, including the student's name, address, grade level, birth date, school of enrollment, and program placement.

The independent study agreement for each participating student also shall include, but are not limited to, all of the following:

- 1. The frequency, time, place and manner for submitting the student's assignments, reporting the student's academic progress, and reporting communicating with a student's parent/guardian regarding the student's his/her academic progress*
- 2. The objectives and methods of study for the student's work and the methods used to evaluate that work*
- 3. The specific resources that will be made available to the student, including materials and personnel, and access to Internet connectivity and devices adequate to participate in the educational program and complete assigned work*

4. *A statement of the Board's policy detailing the maximum length of time allowed between an assignment and its completion, the level of satisfactory educational progress, and the number of missed assignments. by grade level and type of program, which will trigger an evaluation of whether the student should be allowed to continue in independent study*
5. *The duration of the independent study agreement, including the beginning and ending dates for the student's participation in independent study under the agreement, with a maximum of one school year*
6. *A statement of the number of course credits or, for the elementary grades, other measures of academic accomplishment appropriate to the agreement, to be earned by the student upon completion*
7. *A statement detailing the academic and other supports that will be provided to address the needs of students who are not performing at grade level, or need support in other areas, such as English learners, students with disabilities with an individualized education program or a Section 504 plan in order to be consistent with their program or plan, students in foster care or experiencing homelessness, and students requiring mental health supports*
8. *A statement that independent study is an optional educational alternative in which no student may be required to participate*
9. *In the case of a suspended or expelled student who is referred or assigned to any school, class, or program pursuant to Education Code 48915 or 48917, a statement that instruction may be provided through independent study only if the student is offered the alternative of classroom instruction*
10. ***Before the commencement of independent study, the agreement shall be signed and dated by the student, the student's parent/guardian or caregiver if the student is under age 18 years, the certificated employee responsible for the general supervision of independent study, and all persons who have direct responsibility for providing assistance to the student.***

However, for the 2021-22 school year, the district shall obtain a signed written agreement for independent study from the student, or the student's parent/ guardian if the student is less than 18 years of age, the certificated employee who has been designated as having responsibility for the general supervision of independent study, and all persons who

have direct responsibility for providing assistance to the pupil, no later than 30 days after the first day of instruction.

Written agreements may be signed using an electronic signature that complies with state and federal standards, as determined by the California Department of Education (CDE).

The parent/guardian's signature on the agreement shall constitute permission for the student to receive instruction through independent study.

Course-Based Independent Study

The District's course-based independent study program for students in grades K-12 shall be subject to the following requirements:

- 1. A signed learning agreement shall be completed and on file for each participating student pursuant to Education Code 51749.6.*
- 2. Courses shall be taught under the general supervision of certificated employees who hold the appropriate subject matter credential and are employed by the district or by another district, charter school, or county office of education with which the District has a memorandum of understanding to provide the instruction.*
- 3. Courses shall be annually certified by Board resolution to be of the same rigor and educational quality and to provide intellectual challenge that is substantially equivalent to in-person, classroom-based instruction, and shall be aligned to all relevant local and state content standards. For high schools, this shall include access to all courses offered by the district for graduation and approved by the University of California or the California State University as creditable under the A-G admissions criteria. The certification shall, at a minimum, include the duration, number of equivalent daily instructional minutes for each school day that student is enrolled, number of equivalent total instructional minutes, and number of course credits for each course, consistent with that of equivalent classroom-based courses. The certification shall also include plans to provide opportunities for students in grades transitional kindergarten, kindergarten, and grades 1-3 to receive daily synchronous instruction, for students in grades 4-8, to receive both daily live interaction and at least weekly synchronous instruction, and for students in grades 9-12 to receive at least weekly synchronous instruction.*
- 4. Students enrolled in these independent study courses shall meet the applicable age requirements established pursuant to Education Code 46300.1, 46300.4, 47612, and 47612.1, and the applicable residency and enrollment requirements established pursuant to Education Code 46300.2, 47612, 48204, and 51747.3.*

5. *For each student participating in an independent study course, satisfactory educational progress shall be determined based on the student's achievement and engagement in the independent study program, as indicated by their performance on applicable student-level measures of student achievement and student engagement set forth in Education Code 52060, completion of assignments, assessments, or other indicators that evidence that the student is working on assignments, learning of required concepts, as determined by the supervising teacher, and progress toward successful completion of the course of study or individual course, as determined by the supervising teacher.*

If satisfactory educational progress in an independent study class is not being made, the teacher shall notify the student and, if the student is under age 18 years, the student's parent/guardian. The teacher shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether it is in the student's best interest to remain in the course or whether the student should be referred to an alternative program, which may include, but is not limited to, a regular school program. A written record of the evaluation findings shall be a mandatory interim student record maintained for three years from the date of the evaluation. If the student transfers to another California public school, the record shall be forwarded to that school.

Procedures for tiered reengagement strategies shall be used for all students who are not making satisfactory educational progress in one or more courses or who are in violation of the written learning agreement, as described in the section "Learning Agreement for Course-Based Independent Study" below. These procedures shall include, but are not necessarily limited to, the verification of current contact information for each enrolled student, notification to parents/guardians of lack of participation within one school day of the absence or lack of participation, a plan for outreach from the school to determine student needs, including connection with health and social services as necessary, and a clear standard for requiring a student-parent-educator conference to review a student's written agreement and reconsider the independent study program's impact on the student's achievement and well-being.

6. *Examinations shall be administered by a proctor.*
7. *Statewide testing results shall be reported and assigned to the school at which the student is enrolled and shall be included in the aggregate results of the District. Test results also shall be disaggregated for purposes of comparisons with the test results of students enrolled in classroom-based courses.*

8. *A student shall not be required to enroll in courses included in the course-based independent study program.*
9. *The student-teacher ratio in the courses in this program shall meet the requirements of Education Code 51745.6.*
10. *For each student, the combined equivalent daily instructional minutes for courses in this program and all other courses shall meet applicable minimum instructional day requirements, and the student shall be offered the minimum annual total equivalent instructional minutes pursuant to Education Code 46200-46208.*
11. *Courses required for high school graduation or for admission to the University of California or California State University shall not be offered exclusively through independent study.*
12. *A student participating in this program shall not be assessed a fee that is prohibited by Education Code 49011.*
13. *A student shall not be prohibited from participating in independent study solely on the basis that the student does not have the materials, equipment, or Internet access to Internet connectivity necessary to participate in the course.*
14. *A student with disabilities, as defined in Education Code 56026, shall not participate in course-based independent study, unless the student's individualized education program specifically provides for that participation:*
15. *A temporarily disabled student shall not receive individual instruction pursuant to Education Code 48206.3 through course-based independent study.*
16. *The District shall maintain a plan to transition any student whose family wishes to return to in-person instruction from course-based independent study expeditiously, and, in no case, later than five instructional days.*

Learning Agreement for Course-Based Independent Study

Before enrolling a student in a course within this program, the Superintendent or designee shall provide the student and, if the student is under age 18 years, ~~his/her~~ the student's parent/guardian with a written learning agreement that includes all of the following:

1. *A summary of the District's policies and procedures related to course-based independent study pursuant to Education Code 51749.5*

2. *The duration of the enrolled course(s) and the number of course credits for each enrolled course, consistent with the Board certifications made pursuant to item #2 above*
3. *The duration of the learning agreement, which shall not exceed a school year or span multiple school years*
4. *The learning objectives and expectations for each course, including, but not limited to, a description of how satisfactory educational progress is measured and when a student evaluation is required to determine whether the student should remain in the course or be referred to an alternative program, which may include, but is not limited to, a regular school program*
5. *The specific resources including materials and personnel that will be made available to the student, including materials and personnel, and access to Internet connectivity and devices adequate to participate in the educational program and complete assigned work*
6. *A statement detailing the academic and other supports that will be provided. to address the needs of students who are not performing at grade level, or need support in other areas, such as English learners, students with disabilities with an individualized education program or a Section 504 plan in order to be consistent with their program or plan, students in foster care or experiencing homelessness, and students requiring mental health supports*
7. *A statement that enrollment is an optional educational alternative in which no student may be required to participate. In the case of a student who is suspended or expelled, or who is referred or assigned to any school, class, or program pursuant to Education Code 48915 or 48917, the agreement also shall include the statement that instruction may be provided to the student through course-based independent study only if the student is offered the alternative of classroom instruction.*
8. *The manner, time, frequency, and place for submitting a student's assignments, for reporting the student's academic progress, and for communicating with a student's parent/guardian regarding a student's academic progress.*
9. *The objectives and methods of study for the student's work, and the methods used to evaluate that work.*
10. *A statement of the adopted policies regarding the maximum length of time allowed between the assignment and the completion of a student's assigned work, the level of satisfactory educational progress, and the number of missed assignments allowed*

before an evaluation of whether the student should be allowed to continue in course-based independent study.

11. *A statement of the number of course credits or, for the elementary grades, other measures of academic accomplishment appropriate to the learning agreement, to be earned by the student upon completion.*
12. *Before the commencement of an independent study course, the learning agreement shall be signed and dated by the student, the student's parent/guardian or caregiver, if the student is less than 18 years of age, the certificated employee who has been designated as having responsibility for the general supervision of the independent study course, and all persons who have direct responsibility for providing assistance to the student. For purposes of this paragraph "caregiver" means a person who has met the requirements of Family Code 6550-6552.*

However, for the 2021-22 school year only, the District shall obtain a signed written agreement for independent study from the student, or the student's parent/guardian if the student is less than 18 years of age, the certificated employee who has been designated as having responsibility for the general supervision of the independent study course, and all persons who have direct responsibility for providing assistance to the pupil no later than 30 days after the first day of instruction.

Written agreements may be signed using an electronic signature that complies with state and federal standards, as determined by the CDE.

The student's or parent/guardian's signature shall constitute permission for the student to receive instruction through independent study.

The Superintendent or designee shall retain a physical or electronic copy of the signed learning agreement for at least three years and as appropriate for auditing purposes.

Student-Parent-Educator Conferences

A student-parent-educator conference shall be held as appropriate including, but not limited to, as a reengagement strategy and/or if requested by a parent/guardian prior to enrollment in or disenrollment from independent study.

Records for Audit Purposes

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that records are maintained for audit purposes. These records shall include, but not be limited to:

1. *A copy of the Board policy, Board Rule, and other procedures related to independent study*
2. *A listing of the students, by grade level, program, and school, who have participated in independent study, along with the units of the curriculum attempted and completed by students in grades K-8 and the course credits attempted by and awarded to students in grades 9-12 and adult education*
3. *A file of all agreements, with representative samples of each student's work products bearing the supervising teacher's notations indicating that the teacher has personally evaluated the work or personally reviewed the evaluations made by another certificated teacher*
4. *As appropriate to the program in which the students are participating, a daily or hourly attendance register that is separate from classroom attendance records, maintained on a current basis as time values of student work products judged by a certificated teacher, and reviewed by the supervising teacher if they are two different persons*
5. *Appropriate documentation of compliance with the teacher-student ratios required by Education Code 51745.6 and 51749.5*
6. *Appropriate documentation of compliance with the requirements pursuant to Education Code 51747.5 to ensure the coordination, evaluation, and supervision of the independent study of each student by a District employee who possesses a valid certification document pursuant to Education Code 44865 or an emergency credential pursuant to Education Code 44300*

The District shall document each student's participation in live interaction and synchronous instruction pursuant to Education Code 51747 on each school day, as applicable, in whole or in part, for which independent study is provided. A student who does not participate in independent study on a school day shall be documented as nonparticipatory for that school day.

The Superintendent or designee also shall maintain a written or computer-based record such as a grade book or summary document of student engagement, for each class, of all grades, assignments, and assessments for each student for independent study assignments.

The signed, dated agreement, any supplemental agreement, assignment records, work samples, and attendance records may be maintained on file electronically.

Program Evaluation

The Superintendent or designee shall annually report to the Board the number of District students participating in independent study, the average daily attendance generated for apportionment purposes, student performance as measured by standard indicators and in comparison to students in classroom-based instruction, and the number and proportion of independent study students who graduate or successfully complete independent study. Based on the program evaluation, the Board and Superintendent shall determine areas for program improvement as needed.

Legal References: EDUCATION CODE

~~46113 Minimum school day for grades four through eight~~

~~46141 Minimum school day~~

EDUCATION CODE

172 89 Exemption for facilities

41020 Audit guidelines

41976.2 Independent study programs; adult education funding

42238 Revenue limits

42238. 05 Local control funding formula; average daily attendance

44865 Qualifications for home teachers and teachers in special classes and schools

46200-46208 Instructional day and year

46300-46307.1 Methods of computing average daily attendance

46600 Interdistrict attendance computation

46390-46393 Emergency average daily attendance

47612-47612.1 Charter school operation

47612.5 Independent study in charter schools

48204 Residency

48206.3 Home or hospital instruction; students with temporary disabilities

48220 Classes of children exempted

48340 Improvement of pupil attendance

48915 Expulsion; particular circumstances

48916.1 Educational program requirements for expelled students

48917 Suspension of expulsion order

49011 Student fees

51225. 3 Requirements for high school graduation

51745-51749.6 Independent study programs

52060 Local control and accountability plan

52522 Adult education alternative instructional delivery

52523 *Adult education as supplement to high school curriculum; criteria*

56026 *Individuals with exceptional needs*

58500-58512 *Alternative schools and programs of choice*

FAMILY CODE

6550-6552 *Authorization affidavits*

CODE OF REGULATIONS, TITLE 5

11700-11703 *Independent study*

/9819 81.ele eud.il eem-plicmee

UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 20

6301 *Highly qualified teachers*

6311 *State plans*

COURT DECISIONS *Modesto City Schools v. Education Audits Appeal Panel,*

(2004) 123 Cal.App.4th 1365

Management Resources

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS

Elements of Exemplary Independent Study

California Digital Learning Integration and Standards Guidance, April 2021

EDUCATION AUDIT APPEALS PANEL PUBLICATIONS

Guide for Annual Audits of K-12 Local Education Agencies and State Compliance

Reporting

WEB SITES

California Consortium for Independent Study: <http://www.ccis.org>

California Department of Education, Independent Study:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eol/is>

Education Audit Appeals Panel: <http://www.eaap.ca.gov>

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