

Instruction

INDEPENDENT STUDY

Purpose

The Board of Trustees authorizes independent study as an optional alternative instructional strategy for 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 or part-time basis and 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, and an online course.

A student's participation in independent study shall be voluntary. (Education Code 51747, 51749.5, 51749.6)

The District shall provide appropriate existing services and resources to enable students to complete their independent study successfully and shall ensure the same access to all existing services and resources in the school in which the student is enrolled as is available to all other students in the school.

Students requesting independent study and their parents/guardians should recognize that independent study at the elementary level realistically must emphasize a commitment on the part of the student's parents/guardians. At the elementary level, the major commitment must be made by the student, assisted or supported as necessary by parents and others who may assist directly with instruction.

Independent study for each student shall be under the supervision of the principal or designee or by a District employee who possesses a valid certification document pursuant to Education Code 44865 or an emergency credential pursuant to Education Code 44300. Students' independent study shall be coordinated, evaluated, and documented, as prescribed by law and reflected in the accompanying administrative regulation. (Education Code 51747.5) The District offers short-term and long-term independent study options. The Superintendent or designee may impose restrictions on the length and frequency of short-term independent study.

The minimum period of time for any independent study option shall be three consecutive school days. (Education Code 51747)

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General Independent Study Requirements

The Superintendent or designee may offer and approve independent study for an individual student 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 the student would in the regular classroom setting.

For TK-12 students in independent study, excessive leniency in the duration of independent study assignments may cause a student to fall behind and increase the risk of dropping out of school. Therefore the maximum length of time that may elapse between the time the assignment is made, and the date by which the student must complete the assigned work, shall be fourteen consecutive school days for short-term independent study and twenty consecutive school days for long-term independent study. However, 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 its due date; but in no event shall the due date of an assignment be extended beyond the termination date of the agreement.

When any student fails to make satisfactory educational progress and/or fails to complete four independent study assignments, an evaluation will be conducted to determine whether it is in the best interest of the student to remain in independent study, or whether the student should return to the general school program. A written record of the findings of any evaluation will be placed in the student's cumulative file. This record shall be maintained for a period of three years from the date of the evaluation and, if the student transfers to another California public school, the record shall be forwarded to that school. 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 student engagement. specified in Education 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. Progressing toward 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 that is substantially equivalent to in-person instruction. For high school, this includes 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. (Education Code 51747)

Instruction**INDEPENDENT STUDY****Live Interaction, Synchronous Instruction, Tiered Reengagement, and Transition to In-Person Instruction for Students Participating in Independent Study for 15 School Days or More**

The following requirements apply to students participating in independent study for 15 school days or more in a school year. These requirements do not apply to students who participate in an independent study program for fewer than 15 days in a school year and students enrolled in a comprehensive school for classroom-based instruction who, under the care of appropriately licensed professionals, participate in independent study due to necessary medical treatments or in-patient treatment for mental health care or substance abuse. Local educational agencies shall obtain evidence from appropriately licensed professionals of the need for students to participate in independent study. (Education Code 51747)

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

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that procedures for tiered re-engagement strategies are used for students who:

1. Are not generating attendance for more than 10 percent of the required minimum instructional time over four continuous weeks of a local educational agency's approved instructional calendar
2. Are found not participatory in synchronous instructional offerings pursuant to Section 51747.5 for more than 50 percent of the scheduled times of synchronous instruction in a school month as applicable by grade span
3. Are in violation of the written agreement

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that procedures for tiered re-engagement strategies are used in district independent study programs and shall include local programs intended to address chronic absenteeism, as applicable, with at least all of the following:

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1. Verification of current contact information for each enrolled student
2. Notification to parents or guardians of lack of participation within one school day of the recording of a nonattendance day 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, consistent with the adopted policies

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 upon the school's receipt of a written request.

Short Term Independent Study

A short-term independent study contract is for a period of no longer than fourteen school days. Additional time may be reviewed through the Admissions & Discharge Committee pursuant to a written request in extenuating circumstances, for individual students.

Long-Term Independent Study

A long-term independent study contract is for a period of up to one school year and for a period of 15 school days or more in a school year. Absent exceptional circumstances, students receiving education via a long-term independent study contract are enrolled in a District-approved program supporting this type of instruction (e.g., Independent Study, Virtual or Home School programs – Fresh Start, California Preparatory Academy, or Capistrano Virtual & Home School).

Additional Guidelines

1. For TK-12 students in independent study, the maximum length of time that may elapse between the time the assignment is made and the date by which the student must complete the assigned work is fourteen consecutive school days for short-term independent study and twenty consecutive school days for long-term independent study.
2. A representative work sample is one day's worth of assignments.
3. Courses required for high school graduation shall not be offered exclusively through independent study.

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4. An individual with exceptional needs, as defined in Education Code 56026, may participate in independent study, if the student's individualized education program specifically provides for that participation.

If a parent or guardian of an individual with exceptional needs requests independent study, the student's individualized education program team shall make an individualized determination as to whether the student can receive a free appropriate public education in an independent study placement.

A student's ability to work independently, the student's need for adult support, or the student's need for special education or related services shall not preclude the individualized education program team from determining that the student can receive a free appropriate education in an independent study placement.

Master Agreement

A written agreement shall be developed and implemented for each student participating in independent study for three or more consecutive school days. (Education Code 46300, 51747; 5 CCR 11703)

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that a written master agreement exists for each participating student as prescribed by law. (Education Code 51747, 51749.5)

For a student participating in an independent study program that is scheduled for more than 14 school days, each written agreement shall be signed, before the commencement of independent study, by the student, the student's parent, legal 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 independent study, and the certificated employee designated as having responsibility for the special education programming of the student, as applicable.

For a student participating in an independent study program that is scheduled for less than 15 school days, each written agreement shall be signed within 10 school days of the commencement of the first day of the student's enrollment in independent study, by the student, the student's parent, legal 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 independent study, and the certificated employee designated as having responsibility for the special education programming of the student, as applicable.

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

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The independent study agreement for each participating student also shall include, but is not limited to, the following: (Education Code 51747; 5 CCR 11700, 11702)

1. The frequency, time, place and manner for submitting the student's assignments, reporting the student's academic progress, and communicating with a student's parent/guardian regarding the student's 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 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

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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.

Student-Parent-Educator Conferences

Before signing a written agreement as described below in the section "Master Agreement," the parent or guardian of a student may request that the local educational agency conduct a telephone, videoconference, or in-person student-parent-educator conference or other school meeting; during which the student, parent or guardian, and, if requested by the student or parent, 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, before deciding on enrollment or disenrollment in the various options for learning. (Education Code 51747)

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: (Education Code 51748; 5 CCR 11703)

1. A copy of the Board policy, administrative regulation, 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 TK-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 (Education Code 51745.6 and 51749.5)

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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 (Education Code 51747.5)

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 live interaction or synchronous instruction is provided as part of the independent study program. A student who does not participate in scheduled live interaction or synchronous instruction shall be documented as non-participatory for that school day. (Education Code 51747.5)

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. (Education Code 51747.5)

The signed, dated agreement, any supplemental agreement, assignment records, work samples, and attendance records may be maintained on file electronically. (Education Code 51747)

Policy

adopted: February 8, 1999

revised: July 21, 2021

revised: July 13, 2022

revised: September 21, 2022