

INDEPENDENT STUDY

The Governing Board 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.

(cf. 5147 - Dropout Prevention)
(cf. 6011 - Academic Standards)
(cf. 6143 - Courses of Study)
(cf. 6146.1 - High School Graduation Requirements)
(cf. 6146.11 - Alternative Credits Toward Graduation)
(cf. 6172 - Gifted and Talented Student Program)
(cf. 6200 - Adult Education)

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 home-based format, and an online course. 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 Board recognizes that by offering a range of quality options, including classroom-based, hybrid, and non-classroom-based programs, instruction is better tailored to meet students' needs, thereby improving academic outcomes.

A student's participation in independent study shall be voluntary.

The minimum period of time for any independent study option shall be three consecutive school days. (Education Code 46300 (e)(1))

Independent study for each student shall be under the general supervision of the principal or designee or a district employee who possesses a valid certification document pursuant to Education Code 44865 or an emergency credential pursuant to Education Code 44300, registered by law. Students' independent study shall be coordinated, evaluated and documented, as prescribed by law and reflected in the accompanying administrative regulations. (Education Code 51747.5)

An individual with exceptional needs, as defined in Education Code Section 56026, may participate in independent study, if the student's individualized education program (IEP) 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 (FAPE) 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 public education in an independent study placement. (Education Code 51745(c))

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A temporarily disabled student may receive individual instruction pursuant to Education Code Section 48206.3 through independent study. Education Code 51745(d)

The Superintendent or designee shall provide appropriate existing services and instructional 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. (Education Code 51746) 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 rigor substantially equivalent to classroom instruction. For high school, this shall include access to all courses required by the District for graduation and approved by the University of California or California State University as creditable under A-G admissions criteria. (Education Code 51747) No course required for high school graduation under Section 51225.3 shall be offered exclusively through independent study. Education Code 51745 (e)

The following three 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 treatment or in-patient treatment for mental health or substance abuse. The district shall obtain evidence from appropriately licensed professionals of the need for students to participate in independent study pursuant to Education Code 51747 (i).

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that students participating in independent study for 15 school days or more receive the following throughout the year: (Education Code 51747)

1. For students in grades transitional kindergarten, kindergarten and grades 1-3, 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

For students participating in independent study for 15 school days or more, 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 10 percent of the required minimum instructional time over four continuous weeks of the district's approved instructional calendar, are found not participatory in synchronous instructional offerings pursuant to Section 51747.5 for more than 50% of the scheduled times of synchronous instruction in a school month as applicable by grade span, 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. These tiered reengagement strategies 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/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-teacher 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.

For students participating in independent study for 15 school days or more, the Superintendent or designee shall design a plan to transition students whose families request to return to in-person instruction from independent study expeditiously, and in no case later than five instructional days.

Before signing a written agreement, the district shall conduct an orientation 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. (Education Code 51747)

A student-parent-educator conference shall be held as appropriate including, but not limited to, as a reengagement strategy and/or if requested by the parent/guardian prior to enrollment or disenrollment from independent study. (Education Code 51745.5, 51747, 51749.5)

Written Agreements

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) Independent study agreements shall include, but not limited to, all of the requirements of Education Code Section 51747(g).

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 the 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. (Education Code 51747)

Beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, 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 the

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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. (Education Code 51747)

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 not be limited to, all of the following: (Education Code 51747; 5 CCR 11700, 11702)

1. The manner, time, frequency, and place for submitting the student's assignments and for reporting the student's academic progress and communicating with the 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, including materials and personnel, that will be made available to the student. Resources include confirming or providing access to 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 to determine whether it is in the student's best interest 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 an elementary student, 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 the 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,

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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

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). (Education Code 51747)

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

Because excessive leniency in the duration of independent study assignments may result in a student falling behind their peers and increase the risk of dropping out of school, for all grades and programs in independent study, the maximum length of time which may elapse between the time the assignments are made and the date by which the student must complete the assigned work is 14 consecutive school days for short-term independent study and no more than 20 consecutive school days for long-term independent study. 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 appointments with the supervising teacher without valid reasons, and/or misses three weekly assignments. A written record of the findings of any evaluation made pursuant to this policy shall be treated as a mandatory interim student record. The record shall be maintained for 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. (Education Code 51747) Prior to the evaluation, the supervising teacher shall implement tiered re-engagement strategies. Satisfactory educational progress shall be determined based on all of the following indicators: (Education Code 51747)

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 the student achievement and engagement specified in Education Code 52060(d)(4-5)
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

Home-Based Independent Study

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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.

(cf. 0500 - Accountability)

(cf. 5121 - Grades/Evaluation of Student Achievement)

(cf. 6162.5 - Student Assessment)

(cf. 6162.51 - State Academic Achievement Tests)

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

17289 Exemption for facilities

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

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

52522 Adult education alternative instructional delivery

52523 Adult education as supplement to high school curriculum; criteria

56026 Individual with exceptional needs

58500-58512 Alternative schools and programs of choice

FAMILY CODE

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6550 Authorization affidavits

CODE OF REGULATIONS, TITLE 5

11703 Independent study

19819 State audit compliance

UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 20

6301 Highly qualified teachers

COURT DECISIONS

Modesto City Schools v. Education Audits Appeal Panel, (2004) 123 Cal.App.4th 1365

EDUCATION AUDIT APPEALS PANEL DECISIONS

Lucerne Valley Unified School District, Case No. 03-02 (2005)

Management Resources:

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS

Elements of Exemplary Independent Study

WEB SITES

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

California Department of Education, Independent Study: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/is>

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

CULVER CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Culver City, California

Policy Adopted: June 16, 1998

Policy Reviewed: October 26, 2021

Policy Reviewed and Revised: November 9, 2021

Policy Reviewed and Adopted: August 23, 2022