

INDEPENDENT STUDY

Original Adopted Date: 06/05/1979 | **Last Revised Date:** 10/19/2021

Definitions

Live interaction means interaction between the student and classified or certificated staff, and may include peers, provided for the purpose of maintaining school connectedness, including, but not limited to, wellness checks, progress monitoring, provision of services, and instruction. This interaction may take place in person, or in the form of Internet or telephonic communication.

Student-parent-educator conference means a meeting involving, at a minimum, all parties who signed the student's written independent study agreement pursuant to Education Code 51747 or the written learning agreement pursuant to Education Code 51749.6.

Synchronous instruction means classroom-style instruction or designated small group or one- on-one instruction delivered in person, or in the form of Internet or telephonic communications, and involving live two-way communication between the teacher and student. Synchronous instruction shall be provided by the teacher of record for that student pursuant to Education Code 51747.5.

Educational Opportunities

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

Educational opportunities offered through independent study may include, but are not limited to:

1. Special assignments extending the content of regular courses of instruction
2. Individualized study in a particular area of interest or in a subject not currently available in the regular school curriculum
3. Individualized alternative education designed to teach the knowledge and skills of the core curriculum, but not provided as an alternative curriculum
4. Continuing and special study during travel
5. Volunteer community service activities and leadership opportunities that support and strengthen student achievement
6. Individualized study for a student whose health, as determined by the student's parent/guardian, would be put at risk by in-person instruction.

In addition, when requested by a parent/guardian due to an emergency, or illness, independent study may be used on a short-term basis to ensure that the student is able to maintain academic progress in the student's regular classes.

No course required for high school graduation shall be offered exclusively through independent study.

Equivalency

The District's independent study option shall be substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to classroom instruction to enable participating students to complete the District's adopted course of study within the customary timeframe. Students in independent study shall have access to the same services and resources that are available to other students in the school and shall have equal rights and privileges.

Students participating in independent study shall have access to Internet connectivity and devices adequate to participate in the educational program and complete assigned work.

The District shall not provide independent study students and their parents/guardians with funds or items of value that are not provided for other students and their parents/guardians. Providing access to Internet connectivity and local educational agency- owned devices adequate to participate in an independent study program and complete assigned work consistent with Education Code 51747, or to participate in an independent study course, as authorized by Education Code 51749.5, shall not be considered funds or other things of value.

Eligibility for Independent Study

Students are eligible for independent study as authorized in law, and as specified in Board policy and rules.

For the 2022-23 school year and thereafter, the Superintendent or designee may approve the participation of a student who demonstrates the motivation, commitment, organizational skills, and academic skills necessary to work independently provided that experienced certificated staff are available to effectively supervise students in independent study. The Superintendent or designee may also approve the participation of a student whose health would be put at risk by in-person instruction. A student whose academic performance is not at grade level may participate in independent study only if the program is able to provide appropriate support, such as supplemental instruction, tutoring, counseling, ongoing diagnostic assessments, and/or differentiated materials, to enable the student to be successful. For an elementary student, the Superintendent or designee may consider the parent/guardian's level of commitment to assist the student.

A student participating in independent study must be a resident of the county or an adjacent county. Full-time independent study shall not be available to students whose district residency status is based on their parent/guardian's employment within district boundaries pursuant to Education Code 48204.

A student with disabilities, as defined in Education Code 56026, shall not participate in independent study unless the student's individualized education program specifically provides for such participation.

A temporarily disabled student shall not receive individual instruction pursuant to Education Code 48206.3 by means of independent study.

Students age 21 or older, and students age 19 or older who have not been continuously enrolled in school since their 18th birthday, may participate in independent study only through the adult education program for the purpose of enrolling in courses required for a high school diploma by Education Code 51225.3 or the Governing Board.

No more than 10 percent of the students enrolled in a continuation high school or opportunity school or program, not including pregnant students and parenting students who are primary caregivers for one or more of their children, shall be enrolled in independent study.

Monitoring Student Progress

The independent study administrator and/or supervising teacher shall promptly and directly address any failure by the student to meet the terms of the student's written agreement. The following supportive strategies may be used:

1. A letter to the student and/or parent/guardian
2. A meeting between the student and the teacher and/or counselor
3. A meeting between the student and the independent study administrator, including the parent/guardian if appropriate
4. An increase in the amount of time the student works under direct supervision

When the student has failed to make satisfactory educational progress or missed the number of assignments specified in the written agreement as requiring an evaluation, the Superintendent or designee shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether or not independent study is appropriate for the student. This evaluation may result in termination of the independent study agreement and the student's return to the regular classroom program or other alternative program.

A written record of the findings of any such evaluation shall be treated as a mandatory interim student record which shall be maintained for three years from the date of the evaluation.

Responsibilities of Independent Study Administrator

The responsibilities of the independent study administrator include, but are not limited to:

1. Recommending certificated staff to be assigned as independent study teachers at the required teacher-student ratios pursuant to Education Code 51745.6 and supervising staff assigned to independent study functions who are not regularly supervised by another administrator
2. Approving or denying the participation of students requesting independent study
3. Facilitating the completion of written independent study agreements
4. Ensuring a smooth transition for students into and out of the independent study mode of instruction
5. Approving all credits earned through independent study
6. Completing or coordinating the preparation of all records and reports required by law, Board Policy, or Board Rule

Assignment and Responsibilities of Independent Study Teachers

Each student's independent study shall be coordinated, evaluated, and carried out under the general supervision of a District employee who possesses a valid certification document pursuant to Education Code 44865 or emergency credential pursuant to Education Code 44300, registered as required by law, and who consents to the assignment.

The ratio of student average daily attendance for independent study students age 18 years or younger to full-time equivalent certificated employees responsible for independent study shall not exceed the equivalent

ratio for all other education programs in the District, unless a new higher or lower ratio for all other educational programs offered is negotiated in a collective bargaining agreement or the District enters into a memorandum of understanding that indicates an existing collective bargaining agreement contains an alternative ratio.

The responsibilities of the supervising teacher shall include, but are not limited to:

1. Completing designated portions of the written independent study agreement and signing the agreement
2. Supervising and approving coursework and assignments
3. Maintaining records of student assignments showing the date the assignment is given and the date the assignment is due
4. Maintaining a daily or hourly attendance register in accordance with item #4 in the section on "Records for Audit Purpose" in the accompanying Board Policy
5. Providing direct instruction and counsel as necessary for individual student success
6. Regularly meeting with the student to discuss the student's progress
7. Determining the time value of assigned work or work products completed and submitted by the student
8. Assessing student work and assigning grades or other approved measures of achievement
9. Documenting each student's participation in live interaction and/or synchronous instruction pursuant to Education Code 51747 on each school day for which independent study is provided

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that independent study teachers have access to professional development and support comparable to classroom-based teachers.

Short-Term Independent Study

Short-term independent study is appropriate for emergencies, health (i.e. COVID-19, etc.) unavoidable absences for a minimum of 5 and shall not exceed 14 school days. Independent study is strongly discouraged for use for family vacations or leisure travel that can occur during school breaks, since independent study cannot replicate the traditional classroom instructional experience. Short-term independent study contracts cannot be established during the first 10 days of the school year nor are they allowed during the last 15 school days of the school year. Requests must be submitted in writing, signed by a parent/guardian, student, and all teachers on the students' schedule before being submitted to site administration no later than 10 school days prior to the absence. All requests must be approved by site administration. The request must include the dates of absences and reason for the request. After school on the last day of attendance prior to the absence, student(s) must pick up all assigned work from the school site.

Individualized study for a pupil whose health would be put at-risk by in-person instruction, as determined by the parent of guardian or the pupil; or a pupil who is unable to attend in-person instruction due to a quarantine, due to an exposure or infection with COVID-19 pursuant to local or state public health guidance.

Independent Study Contracts

1. Download the "Application for Short-Term Independent Study." Please fill out the request completely with the signatures of student, parent/guardian and all teachers prior to submitting the completed form to site administration **at least 10 school days prior to the requested absence.**
2. One independent study contract is needed for each student (if you have multiple students for whom you are requesting independent study).
3. The parent/guardian will be notified when the agreement has been approved or disapproved.
4. The student will need to pick up the completed contract and schoolwork from their school site, after school on the last school day prior to the absence.
5. Student **must** return all assigned independent study work by 8:00 am on the 1st school day after the "**last school absence date**" designated on the contract. If the student is not able to attend school, parents are responsible to submit the work. **If the work is not received by the designated date and time, the student will not receive credit.**
6. If the student does not complete all assigned work, the student may be denied from receiving short-term independent study in the future, for up to 2 school years.

All contracted work must be submitted to the school on the contracted day of return. If all the contracted work is returned with satisfactory progress (attempted, partial, or completed), the student will maintain a clear attendance record. If the student's work is unsatisfactory (not attempted), the school will grant excused days of absence for the amount of satisfactory work returned. The additional days of absence will be considered unexcused and will count towards truancy limits.

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