

Series 6000 – Instruction

AR 6158

TITLE: Independent Study Programs	
Approved by: <u> On File </u> <i>Francisco Reveles, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools</i>	Series: Instruction Version: 2 Effective Date: 8/1/2021 Previous Policy Date: 9/11/2002 Revised By: Jennifer Morrison Policy Number: AR 6158

Educational Opportunities

The County Office of Education (COE) shall provide appropriate services and resources to enable students to complete their independent study contracts successfully and shall ensure the same access to all existing services and resources that are available to all other students.

Educational opportunities offered through independent study may include, but are not limited to: (Education Code 51745)

1. Special assignments extending the content of regular courses of instruction

(cf. 6143 - Courses of Study)
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

(cf. 5112.3 - Student Leave of Absence)
5. Volunteer community service activities and leadership opportunities that support and strengthen student achievement

(cf. 0420.4 - Charter School Authorization)
(cf. 6142.4 - Service Learning/Community Service Classes)
(cf. 6181 - Alternative Schools/Programs of Choice)

In addition, when requested by a parent/guardian due to an emergency, vacation, or illness, independent study may be used on a short-term basis to ensure that the student is able to

maintain academic progress in his/her regular classes.

(cf. 5113 - Absences and Excuses)

No course required for high school graduation shall be offered exclusively through independent study. (Education Code 51745)

(cf. 6146.1 - High School Graduation Requirements)

Equivalency

The COE's independent study option shall be substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to classroom instruction to enable participating students to complete the COE'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. (5 CCR 11700, 11701.5)

(cf. 0410 - Nondiscrimination in District Programs and Activities)

The COE 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. (Education Code 46300.6, 51747.3)

Eligibility for Independent Study

Provided that experienced certificated staff are available to effectively supervise students in independent study, 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. 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. (Education Code 46300.2, 51747.3)

(cf. 5111.1 - District Residency)

For a student with disabilities, as defined in Education Code 56026, participation in independent study shall be approved only if his/her individualized education program specifically provides for such participation. (Education Code 51745)

(cf. 6159 - Individualized Education Program)

A temporarily disabled student shall not receive individual instruction pursuant to Education Code 48206.3 by means of independent study. (Education Code 51745)

(cf. 6183 - Home and Hospital Instruction)

Students aged 21 or older, and students aged 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. (Education Code 46300.1, 46300.4)

(cf. 6200 - Adult Education)

Master Agreement

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

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 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
4. A statement of policy detailing the maximum length of time allowed between an assignment and its completion 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 an elementary student, other measures of academic accomplishment appropriate to the agreement, to be earned by the student upon completion
7. A statement that independent study is an optional educational alternative in which no student may be required to participate
8. 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

(cf. 5144.1 - Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process)

9. Signatures of the student, the parent/guardian or caregiver of the student 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

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

Traditional Independent Study

COE programs shall offer a course-based independent study program for students in grades K-12, subject to the following requirements: (Education Code 51745)

1. Courses shall be taught under the general supervision of certificated employees who hold an appropriate credential and are employed by the COE or by another district, charter school, or county office of education with which the COE has a memorandum of understanding to provide the instruction.

(cf. 4112.2 - Certification)

2. Courses shall be annually certified by Board resolution to be of the same rigor and educational quality as equivalent classroom-based courses and shall be aligned to all relevant local and state content standards. This 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.
3. Students enrolled in these courses shall meet the applicable age requirements established pursuant to Education Code 46300.1 and 46300.4 and the applicable residency and enrollment requirements established pursuant to Education Code

46300.2, 48204, and 51747.3.

4. Teachers shall communicate with each student in person, by telephone, or by any other live visual or audio connection at least four times per calendar month to assess whether the student is making satisfactory educational progress. The level of satisfactory educational progress will be determined by the following factors:
 - Student's achievement and engagement in the IS program, as indicated by the student's performance on the school district's local control and accountability plan, pursuant to paragraphs (4) and (5) of subdivision (d) of *EC* Section 52060 (Local Control and Accountability Plan)
 - Completion of assignments, assessments, or other indicators that evidence that the student is working on assignments
 - Learning required concepts, as determined by the supervising teacher.
 - Progressing toward successful completion of the course of study or individual course, as determined by the supervising teacher

For this purpose, satisfactory educational progress includes, but is not limited to, applicable statewide accountability measures and the completion of assignments, examinations, or other indicators that the student is working on assignments, learning required concepts, and progressing toward successful completion of the course, as determined by the teacher providing instruction.

Written or computer-based evidence of satisfactory educational progress shall be retained for each course and student, including, at a minimum, student participation in live interaction and synchronous instruction on each school day, as applicable, in whole or part, for which live interaction and synchronous instruction is provided and a record of student engagement that includes, but is not limited to, a grade book or summary document that lists all assignments, examinations, and associated grades for each course.

If satisfactory educational progress is not being made, the teacher shall notify the student and, if the student is under age 18 years, their 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.

(cf. 5125 - Student Records)

5. Examinations shall be administered by a proctor.
6. 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.

(cf. 6162.51 - State Academic Achievement Tests)

7. A student shall not be required to enroll in courses included in this program.
8. The student-teacher ratio in the courses in this program shall meet the requirements of Education Code 51745.6.
9. 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.

(cf. 6111 - School Calendar)

(cf. 6112 - School Day)

10. 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.
11. A student participating in this program shall not be assessed a fee that is prohibited by Education Code 49011.

(cf. 3260 - Fees and Charges)

12. A student shall not be prohibited from participating in independent study solely on the basis that he/she does not have the materials, equipment, or Internet access necessary to participate in the course.

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, their parent/guardian, with a written learning agreement that includes all the following: (Education Code 51749.6)

1. A summary of the COE's policies and procedures related to this program
2. The duration of the enrolled course(s) and the number of course credits for each enrolled course, consistent with the Board certifications
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
6. A statement that the student is not required to enroll in courses in this program
7. Signatures of the student, the student's parent/guardian if the student is under age 18 years, and all teachers providing instruction

The student's or parent/guardian's signature shall constitute permission for the student to receive instruction through independent study. (Education Code 51749.6)

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. (Education Code 51749.6)

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 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. (Education Code 51747)

Independent study students who are late, miss scheduled conferences, or do not submit assigned work on time shall not be reported as tardy or truant.

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 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, policy, or administrative regulation

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 certificated employee who consents to the assignment. (Education Code 44865, 51747.5; 5 CCR 11700)

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. (Education Code 51745.6)

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

1. Completing designated portions of the written independent study 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" below

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

(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)

Records

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 Superintendent 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 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 that the teacher has 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

(cf. 3580 - District Records)

The Superintendent or designee also shall maintain a record of grades and other evaluations issued to 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. (Education Code 51747)

Tiered Reengagement

Students who are not making satisfactory progress in the IS program under the following conditions:

- In violation of the written agreement
- Who are not generating attendance for more than three school days or 60 percent of the instructional days in a school week

will be subject to a tiered reengagement strategy that includes, but is not limited to, the following actions:

- Verification of current contact information for each enrolled student
- Notification to parents or guardians of the 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 health and social services as necessary
- A clear standard for requiring a pupil-parent-educator conference to review a student's written agreement, and reconsider the IS program's impact on the student's achievement and well-being

Attendance Credit

For purposes of attendance accounting and apportionment, the minimum school day is the time value of the work product that must be equivalent to the minimum day to generate attendance credit. For charter schools, time value must be equivalent to a full day of work as judged by a certificated employee of the charter school. For charter schools, a daily engagement record is required. Attendance cannot exceed one day of apportionment credit per day of instruction (a combination of classroom and IS). A defined minimum day by grade span is:

- TK and kindergarten = 180 minutes
- Grades 1 – 3 = 230 minutes
- Grades 4 – 12 = 240 minutes

Students must participate in IS for a minimum of three consecutive days to generate ADA (this requirement does not apply to charter schools). Attendance credit is an effort devoted to assigned work used for attendance credit and effort is individually determined. Academic credit is the quality of achievement used for academic credit. Work, at times determined by staff, will need to be reassigned for academic credit. In such instances, the teacher of record will include an explanatory statement when the same assignment is reported for attendance credit more than once. Ideally, the supervising teacher is aware before the assignment is due that the student is not performing satisfactorily and can provide support; such instances will be recorded and reviewed during evaluation and notification/conference processes.

Synchronous instruction is not automatically included in time value for the purpose of traditional IS apportionment credit. Apportionment credit requires IS work product of sufficient time value. In order to include participation in synchronous instruction in instructional time and apportionment, student must have a work product evaluated for the time value as an outcome from their participation in synchronous instruction.

Charter School Independent Study Programs

The Yuba County Career Preparatory Charter School Advisory Board recognizes the value of school supervised independent study for students in situations where special interests or abilities, scheduling problems, or unique individual needs cannot be properly accommodated in the regular instructional program and will allow enrollment to any student meeting the definition of “homeless.”

Independent study entails a commitment by both the parent/guardian and the student. As the student gets older, they assume a greater portion of the responsibility. The Superintendent or designee shall determine that the prospective independent study student understands and is prepared to meet the County Office of Education and Career Preparatory Charter School’s requirements for independent study. Independent study may be offered only to students who can achieve in this program, as well as or better than they would in the regular classroom. Under the guidelines of the McKinney Vento Homeless Act, the Yuba County Career Preparatory Charter School will allow students under the age of 18 to enroll without parental consent who meet these guidelines.

The Yuba County Career Preparatory Charter School, under the supervision of the principal or designee at the school facility, will offer the independent study option. Approval of proposed agreements and contracts shall be based on the following criteria:

1. Evidence the student can work independently.
2. Indication that the student will work to complete the program.
3. Availability of teaching staff with the appropriate qualifications to supervise the student correctly.
4. Goals and objectives to be determined by initial testing and adjusted weekly on the student’s assignment sheets.

Upon enrolling in the Charter school, students will be tested in reading and math. Credit will be given for English and math, as determined from the work assigned to improve skills as shown by the student’s test scores. Every effort will be made to have the student make at least one year’s improvement in skills by starting on the skills the student is deficient in, as shown by the testing process.

The Charter School Advisory Board recognizes that independent study may be used as an option to encourage students to remain in school. The teacher should carefully set the duration of independent student assignments in order to help identify students falling behind in their work or in danger of failing or dropping out of school.

To foster each student’s success in independent study, the Advisory Board establishes the following maximum lengths of time that may elapse before an independent study assignment is due:

Students in grades K-5:	Two (2) weeks
Students in grades 6-12:	Two (2) weeks

When circumstances justify a longer time, the principal or designee may honor the request of an individual student or his/her parent/guardian to extend the maximum length of an assignment as determined by Education Code and county office policy.

Meetings will be scheduled weekly, unless specific circumstance disallows this, and a temporary alternative will be agreed upon by the parent/guardian, student, and teacher. The time and date of the weekly meeting may change to meet the needs of the student and the teacher. In special circumstances, the meeting may be delayed as stated above. Teachers may make assignments via telephone or electronically, if face-to-face meetings cannot be held due to illness, travel, or other special circumstances.

When any student fails to attend a scheduled meeting or to submit an assignment on time, one or more of the following shall result:

1. A telephone call to the parent/guardian rescheduling the appointment.
2. If the student is under 18 years of age, a tiered reengagement step will be initiated. If the student is an adult, a non-compliance letter will be issued.

If the student fails to attend another meeting or has completed under the minimum amount of academic work required for that week, the student will be subject to the next level of reengagement, if under age 18, and a second non-compliance letter if aged 18 or over. Both instances will include a scheduled appointment for a meeting with the parent/guardian, the student, and the principal or designee. At that meeting, the principal or designee shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether it is in the student's best interest to remain in the charter school. If the truancy continues, the student may be referred to the School Attendance Review Board. If the student is 18 or older, the student may be dropped from the program.

Upon entering the Yuba County Career Preparatory Charter School, students as well as their parent/guardian and the teacher, will sign a written agreement. The master agreement will consist of three pages and include the rules and regulations of the Charter school and the student contract. This contract shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

1. The duration of the agreement. A contract period will not exceed one semester and will be defined by an entry date and an exit date. Page 3 will include the course work for each semester within the same year.
2. Goals will be included with the contract. Goals will be established at the time the teacher first meets with the student and may be changed as the student progresses through the semester. These will include a statement of the number of course credits or, for the elementary grades, other measures of academic accomplishment appropriate to the agreement and targeted to be earned by the student. These may be updated on the weekly assignment sheets.
3. The manner, frequency, time, and place for submitting the student's assignments and for reporting his/her progress.

4. The method(s) by which the student's work will be evaluated.
5. The inclusion of a statement in each contract independent study agreement that contract independent study is an optional educational alternative in which no student may be required to participate. **Instruction may be provided only if the pupil is offered the alternative of classroom instruction.**

Goals for the student may be revised throughout the semester as the student's needs and interests change. These changes will be made in the work given on the weekly assignment sheets and added to the master agreement.

Student enrollment will be for at least 175 days. A school calendar will be presented to the Yuba County Career Preparatory Charter School Advisory Board for approval.

All students will have access to services, resources and opportunities offered by the Yuba County Career Preparatory Charter School. These may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Special assignments extending the content of regular courses of instruction.
2. Individualized alternative education designed to teach the knowledge and skills of the core curriculum.
3. Continuing and special study during travel.
4. Volunteer community service activities that support and strengthen student achievement and better the community.

The Superintendent or designee shall annually report to the County Board of Education the number of students in the independent study program, the ADA generated, the quality of these student's work as measured by standard indicators, and the number and proportion of students who graduate or successfully complete their program.