

SIDE LETTER OF AGREEMENT (SLA)
BETWEEN
SAN JUAN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (District)
and the
SAN JUAN TEACHERS ASSOCIATION (Association)
Re: 6-8 Independent Study Options for the 2025-27 School Years

Background:

State law (AB/SB 130), which took effect during the 2021-22 school year, made changes to the Independent Study Education Code by creating new grade-level requirements for live interaction with students, synchronous instruction, and other components. Independent Study Middle School (ISM) serves students in grades 6-8 for whom the traditional, in-person setting is not conducive to their learning for a variety of reasons including:

- Physical and/or Mental Health Issues/Needs
- Vaccination Status
- Transportation
- Conflict w/ Peers (Bullying)
- Attendance Issues
- Extracurricular Endeavors
- Behavioral Issues (recurring suspensions/expulsions)
- Youth Parents

Key terms in state law :

Live Interaction: interaction between the pupil and school district 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.

Synchronous Instruction: 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 practitioner and pupil. Synchronous instruction shall be provided by the teacher of record for that pupil pursuant to Ed Code Section 51747.5.

Statement of Intent:

The District and Association mutually agree that in order to meet the unique needs of students under the state's Independent Study requirements, SJUSD will:

- Maintain and staff the District's existing Independent Study model to serve students in grades 6-8 based on enrollment.

Agreement:

This document represents the agreed-upon working conditions between the District and Association to meet Independent Study requirements under state law, as well as the learning from the last four years of offering independent study to middle school grades:

Grades 6-8 Independent Study Model Overview: Students in the program will be paired with a supervising practitioner who will provide guidance over an online platform toward course completion and help students remain on track to meet the needs of their academic future to be college and/or career-ready.

Key Requirements:

- Weekly Practitioner Key Requirements:
 - **Weekly minimum synchronous instruction (Grades 6-8):** A minimum of 45 minutes of synchronous 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 practitioner and pupil.
 - **Practitioner Preparation Time:** One hour daily.
 - **Practitioner Hours:**
 - **6-8:** Practitioners shall be available Monday - Friday and will work a contractual work day consistent in length with secondary sites. Schedules shall be developed at the beginning of each semester by mutual agreement. Final approval of such schedule shall be authorized by administration, based on student need. Each member may leave at the end of the instructional day (or log off if working remotely) except when meeting the needs of students or parents, or when attending school related conferences or meetings.
 - Collaboration Time:
 - Utilizing the intent of Article 8.02.7 and Article 24 within the CBA, the ISP-Middle School practitioners may utilize up to one hour each week for collaboration and/or professional development (in place of “Collaborative Thursdays”). The practitioners shall be responsible to schedule this at a time that works best for them and has the least possible impact on the students and families they serve.
- Weekly orientations shall be offered to prospective students. These orientations will be held at the El Sereno site, unless the leadership team determines other locations will better meet the needs of students and families.
 - In consultation with the administration, the team may determine to cancel an orientation that proceeds an extended break on the school calendar (example: week prior to Thanksgiving, Winter, February, or Spring break) or end of year school year.
- Standardized onboarding for new students has proven to be a useful tool to onboarding students and families as they transition from other environments to an independent study model.
- Weekly tutoring will be provided in alignment with the “Additional Academic Support” section of this document.

ISP - Middle Grades Interventionist (Grades 6-8) :

The position currently identified as a “Blended Learning TOSA” shall be discontinued as it does not accurately reflect the role that the practitioner in this position is expected to fill. This individual supports ISP students Monday-Friday by facilitating opportunities for daily live interaction (required under state law), proctors testing for students, resets quizzes for students, assists with student progress monitoring, provides after-hours support for students and families, serves as Assessment Coordinator for CAASPP and I-Ready (grades 6-12), and directly supports students with tiered re-engagement strategies. Additionally, this position is expected to provide an additional 4 hours of tutoring per week, in alignment with the time described below under “Additional Academic Support.” This position will have the same calendar as the other practitioners at the site.

Location and Workday:

All practitioners may work remotely, however if they do they are responsible for ensuring they have a strong enough internet connectivity to engage with students on Zoom or other video chatting format approved by the district. If a practitioner does not have sufficient connectivity for this work, the practitioner may work on location at the Fair Oaks Alternative Learning Center currently housing both Meraki and El Serreno. If no space is available at the site, the program administrator will be required to find a suitable alternative location.

- If working remotely, the practitioner must maintain primary residence in the state of California.
- The length of day shall mirror a typical work day for a middle school practitioner, plus one-hour per day (4 days per week) to provide additional support listed below. Hours may vary to meet the needs of students and families, but will begin between 8:00 AM and 9:30 AM.
 - The “Intervention Practitioner” shall be available Monday-Friday commensurate with contractual work week minutes and may have untraditional start and end times, with the work day running from approximately 10AM to 5PM most weekdays.
 - Exceptions for this shall include the weekly orientation program and as determined by the practitioner in consultation with the program administrator.

Additional Academic Support (Grades 6-8): To meet the legal requirements for available daily interaction as stipulated in EDC §51747.5, and the unique needs of middle years students in a virtual environment, practitioners shall provide tutoring in the following manner:

- All practitioners that are members of the ISP - Middle School Program are expected to provide one hour of Academic Support Tutoring, four days per week. This includes the ISP-Interventionist.
- Practitioners will support independent study students for one hour a day, Monday-Thursday, to provide virtual content area instruction/tutoring for students needing additional support. The practitioners may work together to develop a schedule that best meets the needs of students, however it is expected that a minimum of two hours of tutoring will be offered to students between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. on these days.
 - As part of their regular hours, the interventionist will provide additional support on Fridays.
- Practitioners will track student engagement and participation in Academic Support .
- This commitment shall not conflict with pre-scheduled staff meetings, collaboration time, and professional development.
- Practitioners (including ISP-Interventionist) will be paid a stipend equivalent to 80% of the “Beyond Contract” stipend located on Exhibit D-6 of the Collective Bargaining Contract.

Staffing Timeline for 2025-26 & 2026-27 ISP Middle School Program:

- The ISP Middle School Program will be staffed with 3 full-time teachers and 1 ISP-Interventionist described above.
 - Staffing will be based on a student loading ratio of 25:1
 - Minimum staffing will be based on the highest enrollment numbers between October 1 and May 15 of the school year.
 - By June 1, revisit enrollments to determine if additional staffing is needed.
 - By July 31, revisit enrollments to determine if additional staffing is needed.

- If enrollment increases after the start of the school year, and it is determined that additional staffing is still needed, members who taught in the program during the previous school year will have the right of first refusal based on seniority.

ISP Middle School Program (if surplus is required):

- No later than April 15, the District will publish seniority dates for each practitioner currently assigned to the ISP MS program.
- Members will be offered a position based on district wide seniority and availability of position.
 - If a member accepts, they will remain at ISP MS.
 - If a member declines, they will be placed on the involuntary surplus list based on district wide seniority
 - In the case that seniority selection results in a tie: Association and District will draw numbers to determine order, with lowest number (1) having first seniority.
- Once initial positions are filled, remaining members will have the option to return to the ISP MS as positions become available based on district wide seniority.

Student Load:

- Instructional load shall be 25:1 excluding the Interventionist position.
 - Compensation equates to \$25 per student/per day over the soft-cap number.
 - No practitioner shall take on additional students until all staff are at full capacity of 25:1
 - Maximum student load may not exceed 38:1 for more than 20 consecutive working days.
 - If student enrollment exceeds 30:1 for all teachers, the interventionist can be assigned up to five (5) students in alignment with the above. If no teacher wants additional students, the Interventionist may accept students at a lower ratio. However all teachers must be at 25:1 before any overage compensation can be paid.
 - If no practitioner volunteers to exceed the ratio of 25:1, the administrator may assign additional students in a balanced distribution, not to exceed 38:1.

Participation and Tiered Re-Engagement (Grades 6-8):

State law requires tracking of participation, engagement, and academic progress. In collaboration with the ISP - Middle Grades Interventionist, practitioners will play a role supporting the District's tiered re-engagement strategies including but not limited to:

- Tracking/monitoring students' participation and engagement in independent study.
 - If concerns related to student attendance arise, notify Independent Study staff.
 - In collaboration with ISP - Middle Grades Interventionist, track/monitor each student's weekly synchronous participation and asynchronous assignment completion.
 - Regularly communicate with parents and guardians regarding a student's engagement and academic progress.

Grades and Marks

Academic grades will be issued consistent with District timelines for grade reporting, and will be based on evidence from a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning.

- Practitioners communicate regularly with parents about students' academic progress.
 - Practitioners and administration play a role in assisting students and families in exploring other options if a student does not make adequate progress in the Independent Study Program.
- If concerns arise about academic progress, notify ISP staff.

Included in the Independent Study Model:

- Google Classroom serves as a single entry point (other learning platforms may be used at the discretion of the practitioner through Google Classroom).
 - APEX serves as the primary instructional and curriculum platform for Grades 6-8 Independent Study.
- Prioritizing relationship building with each student and between students to facilitate a safe and inclusive learning environment.
- Integrated instruction for English Language Learners in the class.
- 30 minutes of designated ELD time. Collaborate with colleagues to determine the best method to meet these minutes.
- Special Education services per each student's IEP. Collaborate with special education service providers to determine the best way to meet the IEP Requirements.
- 504 accommodations as determined by the student's 504 plan.
- Social, emotional and mental health services. Classroom practitioners collaborate with social, emotional, and mental health staff to provide services to students as needed.
- Principals/administrators may attend virtual synchronous sessions after notifying the practitioner in advance.

Leadership Team:

Beginning in the Fall of 2026, the ISP - Middle School Leadership Team (ISM LT) will follow the process outlined in the Collective Bargaining Agreement with the following caveats:

- All practitioners working within the ISP-Middle School Program shall be members of the ISM LT. No election will be needed provided there remains fewer than 8 practitioners.
- Responsibilities will include division of assignment each year based on the most equitable distribution as determined by the team.
 - Includes student placement throughout the year. If no consensus can be reached, administration shall determine placement.
- Determining needed professional development, training and the launch of the school year.
- Collectively address such issues as: ordering materials, identifying the subscriptions, etc.

Stipend: In exchange for their agreement to serve on the ISM LT each bargaining unit member of the staff will receive the following:

- Leadership Team stipend reflected on D9

No other stipends listed on Exhibit D7 or D9 shall be applicable to the ISM practitioners.

This Side Letter of Agreement is non-precedential and will sunset on June 30, 2027 or upon reaching Collective Bargaining Agreement language that supersedes this SLA. The parties agree to incorporate any learning from this agreement into contractual negotiations. It is the intent of both parties to incorporate the SLA as the basis for proposed contract language. This Side Letter may be revised and/or extended by mutual agreement between the District and the Association.

For the San Juan Unified School District

For the San Juan Teachers' Association

 5/14/25

Daniel Thigpen
Executive Director
Labor Relations and Government Affairs
San Juan Unified School District

Date

 5/14/25

Barry Roth
President
San Juan Teachers Association

Date

 5/14/2025

Kristan Schnepf
Assistant Superintendent, Secondary Programs
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Date