



INSTRUCTION

BOARD POLICY – INDEPENDENT STUDY

BP 6158

The County Board of Education and County Superintendent of Schools authorize independent study programs in the SBCEO county-operated programs 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 for short- or long-term placements, on a full-time or part-time basis, and/or in conjunction with part- or full-time classroom study.

The County Board shall hold a public hearing when considering the scope of its existing or prospective use of independent study as an instructional strategy, its purposes in authorizing independent study, and factors bearing specifically on the maximum realistic lengths of assignments and acceptable number of missed assignments for specific populations of students. (Education Code 51747; 5 CCR 11701)

The County Superintendent or designee may provide a variety of independent study opportunities to students within the SBCEO county-operated programs, including, but not limited to, through a program or class within an alternative school or program of choice, and an online course.

An individual with exceptional needs, as defined in Education Code Section 56026, may participate in independent study, if the pupil'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 pupil's IEP team shall make an individualized determination as to whether the pupil can receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in an independent study placement. A pupil's inability to work independently, the pupil's need for adult support, or the pupil's need for special education or related services shall not preclude the IEP team from determining that the pupil can receive FAPE in an independent study placement. (Education Code 51745(c))

A student's participation in independent study shall be voluntary and no student shall be required to participate. (Education Code 51747, 51749.5, 51749.6)

Independent study for each student shall be under the general supervision of an SBCEO 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)

An independent study student shall not be credited with more than one day of attendance per calendar day. (Education Code 46300)

General Independent Study Requirements

The County Superintendent or designee may offer and approve independent study for an individual student within an SBCEO county-operated program upon determining that the student is prepared to meet the SBCEO'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.

The minimum instructional minutes as required by the program type shall be the same for all students at each SBCEO county-operated program including students participating in independent study, except as otherwise permitted by law. (Education Code 46100)

Because excessive leniency in the duration of independent study assignments may result in a student falling behind peers and increase the risk of dropping out of school, independent study assignments shall be completed no more than one week after assigned for all grade levels and types of programs. When necessary, based on the specific circumstances of the student's approved program, the County Superintendent or designee may allow for a longer period of time between the date an assignment is made and when it is due. However, in no event shall the due date of an assignment be extended beyond the termination date specified in the student's written 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 three assignments. 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 student achievement and 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. Progress towards successful completion of the course of study or individual course, as determined by the supervising teacher

The County 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 intellectual challenge substantially equivalent to in-person instruction. For high schools, this shall include access to all courses offered by the SBCEO 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)

The County Superintendent or designee shall ensure that students participating in independent study for 16 school days or more receive the following throughout the school year: (Education Code 51747)

1. For students in grades transitional kindergarten (TK)-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

The County Superintendent or designee shall ensure that procedures for tiered reengagement strategies are used for all students participating in independent study program for 16 school days or more in a school year who are: (Education Code 51747)

1. Not generating attendance for more than ten percent of required minimum instructional time over four continuous weeks of the SBCEO county-operated program approved instructional calendar
2. Not participating in synchronous instructional offerings pursuant to Education Code 51747.5 for more than 50 percent of the scheduled times of synchronous instruction in a school month as applicable by grade span
3. In violation of their written agreement.

Tiered reengagement strategies procedures used in the SBCEO county-operated program independent study program shall include local programs intended to address chronic absenteeism, as applicable, including but not limited to the following (Education Code 51747):

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 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

The County Superintendent or designee shall, for students who participate in an independent study program for 16 or more school days or more in a school year, 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. (Education Code 51747)

When any student enrolled in classroom-based instruction is participating in independent study due to necessary medical treatment or inpatient treatment for mental health or substance abuse under the care of appropriately licensed professionals, the student shall be exempt from the live interaction and/or synchronous instruction, tiered reengagement strategies, and transition back to in-person instruction requirements specified above. In such cases, evidence from appropriately licensed professionals, of the student's need to participate in independent study, shall be submitted to the County Superintendent or designee. (Education Code 51747)

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

Upon the request of the parent/guardian of a student, and before signing a written agreement as described in "Master Agreement," below, the SBCEO Program Manager shall conduct a telephone, videoconference, or in-person student-parent-educator conference or other meeting during which the student, parent/guardian, and if requested by the parent/guardian an 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)

Master Agreement

A written agreement shall be developed and implemented for each student participating in independent study. (Education Code 46300, 51747)

For student participation for 16 school days or more, a signed written agreement shall be obtained before the student begins independent study. For student participation of 15 school days or fewer, a signed written agreement shall be obtained at any time during the school year in which the independent study program takes place. (Education Code 46300, 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 is not 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, 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 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 give rise to 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 student 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

All learning agreements shall be signed by the student, the student's parent/guardian or caregiver if the student is less than 18 years of age, the certificated employee responsible for the general supervision of independent study, and as applicable for

students with disabilities, their certificated employee designated as having responsibility for the special education programming of the student. If the independent study program is projected to last for more than 15 school days, the learning agreement shall be signed before the commencement of the program. For an independent study program that is projected to last for 15 or fewer school days, the learning agreement shall be signed at any time during the school year in which the independent study program is to take place (Education Code 51747)

For purposes of the above paragraph, caregiver means a person who has met the requirements of Family Code 6550-6552.

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.

Student-Parent-Educator Conferences

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

Records for Audit Purposes

The County 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 County 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
3. A file of all agreements, with representative samples of each student's work products bearing the supervising teacher's signed or initialed and dated 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.

Additionally, SBCEO shall maintain documentation of hours or fraction of an hour for student work products and the time that students engaged in asynchronous instruction. (Education Code 54747.5)

5. Appropriate documentation of compliance with the teacher-student ratios required by Education Code 51745.6 and 51749.5
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 SBCEO employee who possesses a valid certification document pursuant to Education Code 44865 or an emergency credential pursuant to Education Code 44300.

The SBCEO county-operated program 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 independent study on a school day shall be documented as non-participatory for that school day. (Education Code 51747.5)

The County Superintendent or designee shall also 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)

Signed written and supplemental agreements, assignment records, work samples, and attendance records may be maintained as an electronic file in accordance with Education Code 51747 and 51749.6, as applicable.

Policy Reference Disclaimer:

These references are not intended to be part of the policy itself, nor do they indicate the basis or authority for the County Superintendent of Schools or designee to enact this policy. Instead, they are provided as additional resources for those interested in the subject matter of the policy.

Federal

20 USC 6311

Description

[State plan](#)

State

5 CCR 11700-11705

Ed. Code 147610-47615

Ed. Code 17289

Ed. Code 41020

Ed. Code 41422

Ed. Code 42238

Description

Independent study

[Charter School Operation](#)

[Exemption for facilities](#)

[Requirement for annual audit](#)

[Emergency conditions and apportionments](#)

[Revenue limits](#)

Ed. Code 42238.05	Local control funding formula: average daily attendance
Ed. Code 44865	Qualifications for independent study teachers
Ed. Code 46100	Length of school day
Ed. Code 46200-46208	Incentives for longer instructional day and year
Ed. Code 46300-46307.1	Methods of computing average daily attendance
Ed. Code 46390-46393	Emergency average daily attendance
Ed. Code 46600	Interdistrict attendance computation
Ed. Code 47612.5	Charter schools operations: general requirements
Ed. Code 48204	Residency requirements for school attendance
Ed. Code 48206.3	Home or hospital instruction: students with temporary disabilities
Ed. Code 48220	Classes of children exempted
Ed. Code 48340	Improvement of pupil attendance
Ed. Code 48915	Expulsion: particular circumstances
Ed. Code 48916.1	Educational program requirements for expelled students
Ed. Code 48917	Suspension of expulsion order
Ed. Code 49010	Educational activity: definition
Ed. Code 49011	Student fees: definition
Ed. Code 49501.5	School Meals
Ed. Code 51225.3	High school graduation requirements
Ed. Code 51744-51749.6	Independent study
Ed. Code 52060	Local control and accountability plan
Ed. Code 52523	Adult education as supplement to high school curriculum: criteria
Ed. Code 56026	Individual with exceptional needs: definition
Ed. Code 58500-58512	Alternative schools and programs of choice
Fam. Code 6550-6552	Caregivers

Management Resources

California Department of Education
Publication
California Department of Education
Publication
California Department of Education
Publication
California Department of Education
Publication
Court Decision

Education Audit Appeals Panel
Publication
Website
Website
Website
Website

Description

Legal Requirements for Independent Study

[Conducting Individualized Determinations of Need](#)

[California Digital Learning Integration and Standards Guidance, May 2021](#)
Elements of Exemplary Independent Study

Modesto City Schools v. Education Audits Appeal Panel (2004)
123 Cal.App.4th 1365
Guide for Annual Audits of K-12 Local Education Agencies and State Compliance Reporting
[CSBA District and County Office of Education Legal Services](#)
[California Consortium for Independent Study](#)
[California Department of Education, Independent Study](#)
[Education Audit Appeals Panel](#)

ADOPTED BY COUNTY BOARD:	April 7, 1983
REVISED:	October 3, 1991
	January 6, 1994
	April 7, 1994
	August 5, 2021
	May 8, 2025