

RANCHO SANTA FE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board Policy No. 6022:

INDEPENDENT STUDY

1. Purpose

Independent study is an optional alternative instructional program that allows K-12 pupils to complete academic requirements during an absence as defined in this Policy from the school site during the regular school year. Independent study is authorized for the following purposes.

1. Special assignments extending the content of the regular curriculum or individualized study in a particular area of interest not available in the regular curriculum.
2. An individualized alternative means for assuring that a pupil acquires the knowledge and skills of the core curriculum.
3. Continuing and special study during travel.
4. Volunteer community service activities and leadership opportunities that support and strengthen pupil achievement.
5. Individualized study for a pupil whose health would be put at risk by in-person instruction, as determined by the parent/guardian of the pupil, or a pupil who is unable to attend in-person instruction due to a quarantine due to exposure to, or infection with, COVID-19, pursuant to a local or state public health guidance.

Under no circumstances shall any of the above purposes obligate the District to offer independent study. The determination of whether a pupil may participate in independent study is within the sole discretion of the District.

2. General Rules

1. Independent study shall not be provided as an alternative curriculum.
2. The District shall not provide independent study pupils and their parents/guardians with funds or items of value that are not provided for other pupils and their parents/guardians, but shall be provided with the same access to all existing services and resources in the school in which the pupil is enrolled pursuant to Education Code section 51748 as are available to all other pupils in the school.
3. No pupil shall be required to participate in independent study. Participation is voluntary. In the case of a student who is referred or assigned to any school, class or program pursuant to Education Code sections 48915 or 48917, instruction may be

provided to the student through independent study only if the student is offered the alternative of classroom instruction.

4. Pupils enrolling in independent study must be enrolled in the District consistent with the rules set forth in Board Policy 5027. Full-time independent study shall not be available to pupils whose district residency status is based on their parent/guardian's employment within District boundaries pursuant to Education Code 48204.

5. An individual with exceptional needs, as defined in Education Code 56026, may participate in independent study if the pupil's Individualized Education Program ("IEP") specifically provides for such participation. If a parent/guardian of an individual with exceptional needs requests independent study pursuant to Paragraph A.5 of this Policy, the pupil's IEP Team shall make an individualized determination as to whether the pupil can receive a free and appropriate 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 a FAPE in an independent study placement.

6. No temporarily disabled pupil may receive individual instruction pursuant to Education Code section 48206.3 by means of independent study.

7. The ratio of average daily attendance for independent study pupils 18 years of age or less to school district full-time equivalent certificated employees responsible for independent study shall not exceed the equivalent ratio of pupils to full-time certificated employees for all other education programs operated by the District.

8. The Principal or designee may determine whether it is in the best interest of a pupil to participate in any independent study program. Participation requires a signed written independent study agreement prior to the pupil's absence as detailed in Paragraph D.

9. The independent study program of each pupil shall be coordinated, evaluated, and under the general supervision of an employee of the District who possesses a valid certification document as required by law. Qualified personnel shall assess the achievement, abilities, interests, aptitudes, and needs of participating pupils to determine whether full-time independent study is the most appropriate placement for a pupil being referred and, if so, the most appropriate individualized plan and resources to be made available to pupils enrolled in full-time independent study.

10. Independent study shall be substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to classroom instruction to enable participating pupils to complete the District's adopted course of study within the customary timeframe. Pupils in independent study shall have access to the same services and resources that are available to other pupils in the

school and shall have equal rights and privileges.

3. Eligibility for Participation

Pupils or parents who are interested in independent study should contact their school Principal or designee to apply for and be evaluated for independent study. The application may be referred to a review committee which may be comprised of the referring school administrator and the parent or guardian and the teacher involved. Approval for participation in independent study shall be based on the following criteria:

1. An acceptable reason for requesting independent study. Such reasons may include but are not limited to the desire to participate in volunteer community service activities that support and strengthen pupil achievement, continuing and special study during travel, studying a particular area of interest or in a subject not currently available in the regular school curriculum, special assignments extending the content of regular courses of instruction, an unavoidable short-term absence, or the need for an individualized alternative program to acquire the knowledge and skills of the core curriculum.
2. Evidence that the pupil is able to and will work independently to complete the program. This evidence shall include a review of records including, but not limited to, work habits of the pupil and satisfactory performance on the CAASPP System of assessments.
3. Assurance that the pupil will be able to timely complete the assignments and meet the necessary commitments.
4. Available experienced certificated staff with adequate time to effectively supervise the pupil's program.
5. Requests for enrollment in the program are made on an individual basis. The school Principal or designee will determine the pupil's need for independent study and approve or disapprove applications. The pupil and/or guardian must submit a complete independent study agreement form. (The Principal or designee may provide an extension for good cause with advance notice.) Credit will not be given under the program unless a signed agreement is in effect prior to the start of the independent study agreement and all work under the agreement is completed.

4. Written Agreements and Assignments

The independent study agreement must be in writing and must include a required study plan that represents the total instruction of not less than the equivalent of a minimum school day appropriate for the pupil's grade level for every school day covered by the agreement as set forth below:

Kindergarten	-	180 minutes
Grades 1-3	-	230 minutes
Grades 4-8	-	240 minutes

The District shall maintain on file a current written independent study agreement for each participating pupil which shall include all of the following:

1. The manner, time, frequency, and place for submitting the pupil's assignments, reporting the pupil's academic progress, and communicating with the pupil's parent/guardian regarding a pupil's academic progress.
2. The objectives and methods of study for the pupil'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 pupil. These resources shall include confirming or providing access to all pupils to the connectivity and devices adequate to participate in the educational program and complete assigned work.
4. The maximum length of time allowed between an assignment and the completion of the pupil's assigned work, the level of satisfactory educational progress, and the number of missed assignments allowed before an evaluation of whether the pupil should be allowed to continue in independent study. Failure to complete assignments on time may result in the termination of the pupil's enrollment in the independent study program.
5. The duration of the independent study agreement, including the beginning and ending dates for the pupil's participation in independent study under the agreement. The length of independent study programs will be at the discretion of the principal or designee. However, no independent study agreement, including the beginning and end dates for the student's participation, shall be valid for more than one full school year.
6. A statement of the measures of academic accomplishment appropriate to the agreement, to be achieved by the pupil upon completion.
7. A statement detailing the academic and other supports that will be provided to address the needs of pupils who are not performing at grade level, or need support in other areas, such as English learners, individuals with exceptional needs in order to be consistent with the pupil's individualized education program or plan pursuant to Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 794), pupils in foster care or experiencing homelessness, and pupils requiring mental health supports.
8. A statement that independent study is an optional educational alternative in which

no pupil may be required to participate. In the case of a pupil who is referred or assigned to any school, class or program pursuant to Education Code 48915 or 48917 (expulsion provisions), the agreement shall also include the statement that instruction may be provided through independent study only if the pupil is offered the alternative of classroom instruction.

9. The curriculum and methods of study specified in the written agreement shall be consistent with the Governing Board's policies, administrative regulations and procedures for curriculum and instruction. The agreement also may include a schedule for achieving objectives and completing the agreement and a schedule of conferences between the pupil and supervising teacher.

10. Long Term Independent Study: For a pupil participating in an independent study program that is scheduled for more than fifteen (15) school days, each written agreement shall be signed, before the commencement of independent study, by the pupil, the parent/guardian/caregiver, the certificated employee who has been designated as having responsibility for the general supervision of independent study, and the certificated employee designated as having responsibility for the special education programming of the pupil, as applicable. The only long term independent study program offered at the District is for physical education.

11. Short Term Independent Study: For a pupil participating in an independent study program that is scheduled for fifteen (15) school days or fewer, each written agreement shall be signed, during the school year in which the independent study program takes place, by the pupil, the parent/guardian/caregiver, the certificated employee who has been designated as having responsibility for the general supervision of independent study, and the certificated employee designated as having responsibility for the special education programming of the pupil, as applicable. The written agreement may be signed at any time during the school year, but parents/guardians shall be provided the agreement at or before the beginning of the school year.

12. Each signature required for an independent study agreement shall be dated. An agreement is not in effect until it is complete as to all terms, signed, and dated.

13. The agreement shall state that the parent/guardian's signature confers his/her permission for the pupil's independent study as specified in the agreement.

14. Written agreements may be signed using an electronic signature that complies with state and federal standards, that may be a marking that is either computer generated or produced by electronic means and is intended by the signatory to have the same effect as a written signature. The use of an electronic signature shall have the same force and effect as the use of a manual signature if the requirements for

digital signatures and their acceptable technologies, as provided in Section 16.5 of the Government Code and in Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 22000) of Division 7 of Title 2 of the California Code of Regulations, are satisfied.

5. Requirements for Independent Study Program and Evaluation of Educational Progress

1. For all pupils in independent study, the maximum length of time that may elapse between the time an assignment is made and the date by which the pupil must complete the assigned work shall be no greater than one (1) week or five (5) school days. When circumstances justify a longer period of time, the Principal or designee may extend the maximum length of an assignment.

2. When any pupil fails to complete three missed independent study assignments during any period of fifteen (15) school days or misses two (2) appointments without valid reasons, the Principal or designee shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether the pupil should be allowed to continue in independent study. The written record of the findings of any evaluation conducted pursuant to this Policy shall be maintained in the pupil's permanent record. For purposes of this provision, satisfactory educational progress shall be determined based on all the following factors:

- a. The pupil's achievement and engagement in the independent study program, as indicated by the pupil's performance on applicable pupil-level measures of pupil achievement and pupil engagement set forth in Education Code Section 52060 (d)(4) and (5).
- b. The completion of assignments, assessments, or other indicators that evidence that the pupil is working on assignments.
- c. Learning required concepts, as determined by the supervising teacher.
- d. Progressing toward successful completion of the course of study or individual course, as determined by the supervising teacher.

3. Tiered Reengagement Strategies for Long-Term Independent Study: The District shall address chronic absenteeism for the following: (1) pupils engaged in independent study who are not generating attendance for more than 10 percent of required minimum instructional time over four continuous weeks of the District's approved instructional calendar, (2) pupils found not participatory in synchronous instructional offerings for more than 50 percent of the scheduled times of synchronous instruction in a school month as applicable by grade span, or (3) pupils who are in violation of their independent study agreement. These tiered reengagement strategies shall include but not be limited to the following procedures:

- a. Verification of current contact information for each enrolled pupil.
- b. Notification to parents or guardians of lack of participation within one (1)

school day of the recording of a nonattendance day or lack of participation.

c. A plan for outreach from the school to determine pupil needs, including connection with health and social services as necessary.

d. A clear standard for requiring a pupil-parent-educator conference to review a pupil's independent study agreement, and reconsider the independent study program's impact on the pupil's achievement and well-being, consistent with this Policy.

4. Instructional Requirements For Long-Term Independent Study:

Every Long-Term Independent Study Program shall include the following:

a. For pupils in kindergarten and grades 1 to 3, inclusive, a plan to provide opportunities for daily synchronous instruction for all pupils throughout the school year.

b. For pupils in grades 4 to 8, inclusive, a plan to provide opportunities for both daily live interaction and at least weekly synchronous instruction for all pupils throughout the school year.

The District shall document each pupil's participation in live interaction and synchronous instruction 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 pupil who does not participate in scheduled live interaction or synchronous instruction shall be documented as nonparticipatory for that school day for purposes of pupil participation reporting and tiered reengagement.

5. Any request by a parent/guardian to return their child to in-person instruction shall be expeditiously processed. The pupil shall be returned to in-person instruction no later than five (5) school days after the parent/guardian's request.

6. Pupil Rights and Responsibilities

Pupils participating in independent study shall have the right, continuously, to enter or return to the regular classroom mode of instruction. Independent study pupils who are late, miss scheduled conferences or do not submit assigned work on time shall not be reported as tardy or truant. However, the independent study administrator shall promptly and directly address any failure by the pupil to meet the terms of his/her written agreement. The following supportive strategies may be used:

1. A letter to the pupil and/or parent/guardian, as appropriate.
2. A special meeting between the pupil and the teacher and/or counselor.

3. A meeting between the pupil and administrator, including the parent/guardian if appropriate.

4. An increase in the amount of time the pupil works under the direct supervision. When the pupil has missed the number of assignments specified in Board policy as precipitating an evaluation, the Superintendent or designee shall conduct an evaluation which may result in termination of the independent study agreement, with the pupil's return to a regular classroom or alternative instruction program.

7. Transportation

1. Transportation must be furnished by the parent/guardian for pupils who have opted to participate in the independent study program.

2. Unless a written authorization and release form is received, the parent/guardian must sign out any pupil who leaves the school premises before the end of the regular school day to attend an independent study program.

3. At the discretion of the Principal or designee, the parent/guardian of a pupil in grades 6-8 may submit a written authorization and release form which permits the pupil to leave the school premises before the end of the regular school day to attend an independent study program without having a parent/guardian present to sign out the pupil. The pupil may only leave at the time indicated on the authorization form. A written authorization and release form must be completed for each school year. The Principal or designee may revoke a pupil's authorization form at any time and for any reason.

4. Any pupil who has on file a written authorization and release form to leave the school premises before the end of the regular school day without having a parent/guardian present to sign out the pupil, must themselves sign out when leaving the premises to attend the independent study program.

8. Attendance Accounting and Records

1. District records shall identify all pupils participating in independent study and shall specify the grade level, program placement and school in which each of these pupils is enrolled.

2. Records shall be maintained for audit purposes for three years and shall include the following:

a. A copy of this Board Policy, and procedures related to independent study.

- b. A separate listing of the pupils, by grade level, program and school, who have participated in independent study, identifying units of the curriculum attempted and units of the curriculum completed by pupils in grades K-8.
- c. A daily or hourly attendance register, as appropriate to the program in which the pupils are enrolled, separate from classroom attendance records, and maintained on a current basis as time values of pupil work products are personally judged by supervising teacher if they are two different persons
- d. When completed, the independent study agreement is sent to the School Office with one original sample of work attached for an elementary pupil.
- e. To receive attendance credit, the pupil must turn in assigned work by the first school day following the last day of the independent study agreement or the date designated by the Principal or designee.. Upon receiving assigned work, the certificated employee shall evaluate the pupil's work for academic credit and for attendance credit, indicating academic credit and the number of days of attendance credit earned on the independent study agreement. Assignments turned in after the due date shall be considered "missed assignments" and no attendance credit is allowed, although academic credit may be granted for the late assignments.
- f. The certificated employee shall, after the pupil turns in assignments, estimate the quantity of work completed to determine the days of attendance credit and record the days on the independent study agreement.
- g. The certificated employee shall turn in the completed independent study agreement and sample of the pupil's completed assignments to the School Office within five (5) school days of receiving the assignments.
- h. All agreements, supplemental agreements, assignment records, work samples, and attendance records assessing the time value of work or evidence that an instructional activity occurred. These records may be maintained as an electronic file.

9. Responsibilities of Supervising Teachers

Each pupil's independent study shall be coordinated, evaluated and carried out until the general supervision of a certificated employee at the school. The Principal or designee shall approve the assignment of any teachers who directly supervise independent study on a regular basis. The Principal or designee may recommend teachers or pupils for independent study. The teacher may be the pupil's regular classroom teacher, particularly for elementary pupils. Independent study teachers are responsible for:

1. Completing designated portions of the written agreement and adding additional information to the written agreement when appropriate;
2. Supervising and approving course work;
3. Designing all lesson plans;
4. Writing the assignments for pupils;
5. Assessing all pupil work;
6. Personally judging the time value of assigned work or work products completed and submitted by the pupil;
7. Selecting and saving with each agreement representative samples of the pupil's completed and evaluated assignments on not less than a monthly basis, preferably biweekly;
8. Signing and completing the agreement when the pupil has reached his/her objectives or the agreement is terminated;
9. Maintaining any required records and files on a current basis; and
10. When appropriate, independent study teachers shall determine and assign grades or other approved measures of achievement.

Legal Reference:

Education Code sections:

46300	Method for Computing Average Daily Attendance
46300.1	Independent Study ADA Accounting
48206.3	Pupils with Temporary Disabilities Independent Study
51744-51749.3	Independent Study
56026	Individuals with Exceptional Needs

California Code of Regulations, Title 5, C.C.R. sections 11700-11703 (Independent Study Programs)

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