

Educational Opportunities

The Parent/Guardian may request independent study due to an emergency, illness, or unique and special circumstances when students are unable to attend school for a short amount of time. Independent Study may be used on a short-term basis for a minimum of one instructional day and no more than 15 school days per school year to ensure that the student is able to maintain academic progress in their regular classes. Based on the rare circumstances, the superintendent or designee may allow for a long-term Independent Study of 16 or more days.

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. (Education Code 46300.6, 51747.3)

Equivalency

The district's independent study option shall be substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to classroom instruction, thus enabling students participating in independent study to complete the district's adopted course of study within the customary time frame. Students in independent study shall have access to the same services and resources that are available to other students in the school. (5 CCR 11701.5)

Eligibility

A student's participation in independent study shall be voluntary. (Education Code 51747)

A student with disabilities, as defined in Education Code 56026, shall not participate in independent study unless their Individualized Education Program specifically provides for such participation. (Education Code 51745)

No temporarily disabled student may receive individual instruction pursuant to Education Code 48206.3 by means of independent study. (Education Code 51745)

Students who have a temporary disability, which makes attendance in the regular day classes or alternative education program in which the student is enrolled impossible or inadvisable, shall receive individual instruction provided by the district in which the student resides. The individual instruction will be provided in the home, in a hospital or other residential health facility, excluding state hospitals, or under other circumstances prescribed by regulations adopted for that purpose by the State Board of Education.

Criteria for Participation

Students who are interested in independent study should contact their school principal. Approval for participation shall be based on the following criteria:

1. Evidence that the student will work independently to complete the program.

2. Availability of experienced certificated staff with adequate time to supervise the student effectively.
3. A student whose academic performance is not at grade level may participate in independent study only if the school 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.
4. For an elementary student, the Superintendent or designee may consider the parent/guardian's level of commitment to assist the student.

Written Agreements and Assignments

- **Short-term** independent study agreements for one to 15 consecutive school days per school year shall be signed within ten school days or more of the beginning of the first day of the student's enrollment in an independent study.
- **Long-term** independent study agreements for 16 or more days must be signed prior to the beginning of the Independent Study. (Education Code 46300, 51747) The duration of a long-term independent study may not exceed one trimester (elementary grades) or one semester (middle school grades) per school year, and the district must be able to identify a tutor to provide synchronous biweekly instructional support. Long-term independent study shall be approved by the superintendent or designee for unique or special life-changing circumstances in which the district is able to meet all requirements as outlined in the education code. (Education code 51747)

A written independent study agreement shall be developed and maintained on file for each participating student and shall be signed by the student's parent/legal guardian or caregiver, the certificated employee who has been designated as having responsibility for the general supervision of the independent study, and the certificated employee designated as having responsibility for the special education programming of the student, as applicable. For purposes of this paragraph, "caregiver" means a person who has met the requirements of Part 1.5 (commencing with Section 6550) of Division 11 of the Family Code. The written agreement shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following: (Education Code 51747)

1. The manner, frequency, time, and place for submitting the student's assignments and for reporting their 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. These resources shall include confirming or providing access to all students 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 its completion and the number of missed assignments which will trigger an evaluation of whether the student should be allowed

to continue in independent study.

5. Independent Study is not available within the first three and final three weeks of the current school year, and requests for Independent Study agreements during these periods will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the Superintendent or Designee. All Independent Study assignments and activities must be completed and submitted on the first day the student returns to school as agreed upon in the written agreement. (Education Code: 46300 (e) and 51747)
6. A statement of the number of course credits or, for the elementary 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 and individuals with exceptional needs, in order to be consistent with the student's individualized education program or plan pursuant to Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 794), 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 student referred or assigned to any school, class, or program pursuant to Education Code 48915 or 48917, the agreement shall also include the statement that instruction may be provided through independent study only if the student is offered the alternative of classroom instruction.

The curriculum and study methods specified in the written agreement shall be consistent with the Governing Board's policies, administrative regulations, and procedures for curriculum and instruction. (5 CCR 11702)

The agreement may also include a schedule for achieving objectives and completing the agreement, as well as a schedule of conferences between the student and the supervising teacher. Conferences may be conducted by electronic means.

The agreement shall state that the parent/guardian's signature confers their permission for the student's independent study as specified in the agreement.

Before signing a written agreement, the parent or guardian of a student may request that the District conduct a telephone, videoconference, or in-person student-parent-educator conference or another school meeting during which the student, parent, or guardian, and, if requested by the student or parent, an education advocate, may ask questions about the educational options, including which curriculum offerings and nonacademic supports will be available to the student in independent study, before making the decision about enrollment or disenrollment in the various options for learning.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Students participating in independent study shall have the right, continuously, to enter or return to the regular classroom mode of instruction.

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. However, the independent study administrator shall promptly and directly address any failure by the student to meet the terms of their written agreement. The following supportive strategies may be used:

1. A letter to the student and/or parent/guardian, as appropriate
2. A special meeting between the student and the teacher and/or counselor
3. A meeting between the student and the 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 independent study agreement as precipitating an evaluation, the Superintendent or designee shall conduct an evaluation, which may result in the termination of the independent study agreement, with the student's return to a regular classroom or alternative instructional program.

Administration of Independent Study

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 responsibilities of the independent study administrator shall be to:

1. Ensure that the district's independent study option is operated in accordance with law, Board Policy and Board Regulation
2. Approve or deny the participation of students requesting independent study
3. Facilitate the completion of independent study written agreements
4. Approve all credits earned through independent study supervised at a location apart from the student's regular school and forward the information to the appropriate staff so that the information becomes part of the student's record
5. Authorize the selection of staff who are assigned to supervise independent study
6. Supervise any staff assigned to independent study functions who are not regularly supervised by another administrator

7. Complete or coordinate the preparation of all necessary records and reports
8. Establish and maintain in a systematic manner all records required by law, Board policy and regulation
9. Monitor enrollment in independent study to stay within prescribed limits and to maximize income to the district without compromising the educational quality of independent study
10. Obtain and maintain current information and skills required for the operation of an independent study strategy that meets established standards for the district's educational programs
11. Prepare and submit reports as required by the Board or Superintendent
12. Assure a smooth transition into and out of the independent study mode of instruction

The independent study administrator shall approve the assignment of any teachers who directly supervise independent study on a regular basis.

Independent study tutors/teachers shall:

1. Complete designated portions of the written agreement and add additional information to the written agreement when appropriate.
2. Supervise and approve coursework, lesson plan development, and student assignments. The quantity and quality of assignments should be equivalent to each school day's work missed.
3. Assess all student work
4. Personally judge the time value of assigned work or work products completed and submitted by the student and document each hour or fraction of an hour of all independent study instruction (EC Section 51747.5(b)):
 - a. Identify curricular or course of study equivalency asynchronous work products submitted by students on short-term independent study
5. Maintain any required records and files on a current basis

Long Term Independent Study Tutors/Teachers shall also include:

6. Identify the opportunities for synchronous instruction for students on long-term independent study
7. Select and save, with each agreement, representative samples of the students' completed and evaluated assignments biweekly.
8. Sign and complete the agreement when the student has reached their objectives or the agreement is terminated

9. Coordinate and provide Tiered reengagement, synchronous instruction/live interaction, and transition to in-person instruction for students participating in long-term independent study. (EC sections 51747(d-f) and 51749.5)

When appropriate, independent study teachers shall determine and assign grades or other approved measures of achievement.

Records

District records shall identify all students participating in independent study and shall specify the grade level, program placement, and school in which each of these students is enrolled. (Education Code 51748)

Each school shall maintain records for the students at that school.

Records shall be maintained for audit purposes and shall include the following: (5 CCR 11703)

1. A copy of the Board policy, administrative regulation, and procedures related to independent study
2. A separate listing of the students, 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 students in grades TK-8
3. A file of all agreements, with representative samples of each student's work products bearing signed or initialed and dated notations by the supervising teacher indicating that ~~he/she has~~ they have personally evaluated the work or that ~~he/she has~~ they have personally reviewed the evaluations made by another certificated teacher
4. A daily or hourly attendance register, as appropriate to the program in which the students are enrolled, separate from classroom attendance records, and maintained on a current basis as time values of student work products are personally judged by a certificated teacher, and reviewed by the supervising teacher if they are two different persons.

A written record of the findings of any evaluation conducted after the student has missed the number of assignments specified in Board policy 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)

The Superintendent or designee also shall maintain a record of grades and other evaluations issued to each student for independent study assignments.

1. This assessment will be filed with the independent study plan for audit purposes.
2. An attendance register separate from other attendance records shall be maintained for students enrolled in an independent study program.