

INDEPENDENT STUDY

Note: Education Code 51745-51749.3 authorize districts to establish independent study programs to meet the educational needs of students. Independent study may be offered as a charter school, a program within a school, or an alternative school of choice pursuant to Education Code 58500-58512; see AR 0420.4 - Charter Schools and BP/AR 6181 - Alternative Schools/Programs of Choice.

When developing policy on independent study, 5 CCR 11701 requires the Governing Board to consider, in a public hearing, (1) the scope of its existing or prospective use of independent study as an instructional strategy, (2) its purposes in authorizing independent study, and (3) factors bearing specifically on the maximum realistic lengths of assignments and acceptable number of missed assignments for specific populations of students or adult students.

The Governing Board authorizes independent study as an optional alternative instructional strategy for eligible 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 and enabling students to reach curriculum objectives. As necessary to meet student needs, independent study may be offered on a full-time basis or on a part-time basis in conjunction with part- or full-time classroom study.

(cf. 0420.4 - Charter Schools)
(cf. 6011 - Academic Standards)
(cf. 6143 - Courses of Study)
(cf. 6146.1 - High School Graduation Requirements)
(cf. 6181 - Alternative Schools/Programs of Choice)
(cf. 6200 - Adult Education)

A student's participation in independent study shall be voluntary. Students participating in independent study shall have the right, at any time, to enter or return to the regular classroom mode of instruction. (Education Code 51747; 5 CCR 11700)

Parents/guardians of students who are interested in independent study shall contact the Superintendent or designee. The Superintendent or designee shall approve independent study for an individual student only upon determining that the student is prepared to meet the district's requirements for independent study and is likely to succeed in independent study as well as or better than he/she would in the regular classroom.

The minimum period of time for any independent study option shall be five consecutive school days. The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that a written independent study agreement, as prescribed by law, exists for each participating student. (Education Code 51747)

Independent Study contracts shall be for a minimum of five days. Assignments must be completed and handed in upon return to classroom. Because excessive leniency in the duration of independent study assignments may result in a student falling behind his/her peers and increase the risk of dropping out of school, independent study assignments shall be no more than three weeks for all

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)

grade levels and types of program. However, when necessary based on the specific circumstances of the student's approved program, the Director of Pupil Services may allow for a longer period of time between the date an assignment is made and when it is due, up to the termination date of the agreement.

When a participating student misses three assignments, an evaluation shall be conducted to determine whether it is in the student's best interest to remain in independent study. However, a student's written agreement may specify a lower or higher number of missed assignments that will trigger an evaluation when the Superintendent or designee determines it appropriate based on the nature of the assignments, the total number of assignments, and/or other unique circumstances.

Note: The remainder of this section is optional and may be revised to reflect district practice.
--

Supervising teachers should establish an appropriate schedule for student-teacher conferences in order to help identify students falling behind in their work or in danger of failing or dropping out of school. Except in unusual circumstances, it is expected that the supervising teacher will meet, either in person or by electronic means, with each participating student at least once a week to discuss the student's progress.

(cf. 5147 - Dropout Prevention)

Missing appointments with the supervising teacher without valid reasons also may trigger an evaluation to determine whether the student should remain in independent study.

The Superintendent or designee shall annually report to the Board the number of students participating in independent study, the average daily attendance generated for apportionment purposes, the quality of these students' work as measured by standard indicators, and the number and proportion of independent study students who graduate or successfully complete independent study. Based on the program evaluation, the Board and Superintendent shall determine areas for program improvement as needed.

(cf. 0500 - Accountability)

(cf. 5121 - Grades/Evaluation of Student Achievement)

(cf. 6162.5 - Student Assessment)

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)**Home-Based Independent Study**

The Superintendent or designee shall encourage parents/guardians desiring to teach their children at home to have their children participate in independent study. Such participation allows continued contact and cooperation between the school system and the home-based student and ensures that the student will be offered a standards-based education substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to the district's classroom instruction.

*Legal Reference:*EDUCATION CODE*17289 Exemption for facilities**41976.2 Independent study programs; adult education funding**42238 Revenue limits**44865 Qualifications for home teachers and teachers in special classes and schools**46300-46307.1 Methods of computing average daily attendance**47612.5 Independent study in charter schools**48204 Residency based on parent employment**48206.3 Home or hospital instruction; students with temporary disabilities**48220 Classes of children exempted**48340 Improvement of pupil attendance**48915 Expulsion; particular circumstances**48916.1 Educational program requirements for expelled students**48917 Suspension of expulsion order**51225.3 Requirements for high school graduation**51745-51749.3 Independent study programs**52206 Gifted and talented education; use of independent study to augment program**52522 Adult education alternative instructional delivery**52523 Adult education as supplement to high school curriculum; criteria**56026 Individuals with exceptional needs**58500-58512 Alternative schools and programs of choice*FAMILY CODE*6550 Authorization affidavits*CODE OF REGULATIONS, TITLE 5*11700-11703 Independent study**19819 State audit compliance*COURT DECISIONS*Modesto City Schools v. Education Audits Appeal Panel, (2004) 123 Cal.App.4th 1365*EDUCATION AUDIT APPEALS PANEL DECISIONS*Lucerne Valley Unified School District, Case No. 03-02 (2005)**(Legal Reference, continued next page)*

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)

Legal Reference, continued

Management Resources:

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS

Independent Study Operations Manual, 2000 Edition

Elements of Exemplary Independent Study

Approaches to Satisfying No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 Teacher Requirements for Independent Study in Secondary Schools, January 28, 2010

WEB SITES

California Consortium for Independent Study: <http://www.ccis.org>

California Department of Education, Independent Study: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/is>

Education Audit Appeals Panel: <http://www.eaap.ca.gov>

Policy
adopted: March 4, 2008
revised: March 3, 2015

SAUGUS UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
Santa Clarita, California

INDEPENDENT STUDY

Educational Opportunities

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 that support and strengthen student achievement

(cf. 0420.4 - Charter Schools)

(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)

Equivalency

The district's independent study option shall be substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to classroom instruction to enable participating students 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 and shall have equal rights and privileges. (5 CCR 11700, 11701.5)

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

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)

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)

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 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. 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. 5111.12 - Residency Based on Parent/Guardian Employment)

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)

Written Agreements

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)

The agreement shall include general student data, including the student's name, address, grade level, birth date, school of enrollment, and program placement.

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)

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)

1. The manner, time, frequency, and place for submitting the student's assignments and for reporting his/her 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. Assignments must be completed and handed in upon return to classroom. Three missed assignments will trigger an evaluation of whether the student should be allowed to continue in independent study

Note: Education Code 51747 provides that the written agreement must include the duration of the agreement within the limits described in item #5 below. Districts that operate on a trimester system should limit the terms of an independent study agreement to one trimester.

5. The independent study agreement shall be no less than five (5) days and no more than fifteen (15) days without the consent of the Director of Pupil Services, including the beginning and ending dates for the student's participation in independent study under the agreement, with a maximum of one semester or one-half year if the school is on a year-round calendar
6. Students will receive one (1) day of attendance credit for every 240 minutes of daily work completed.
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, 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)

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)

Before the student begins the independent study, the written agreement shall be signed and dated by the student, the parent/guardian or caregiver of the student if the student is under age 18, the certificated employee responsible for the general supervision of independent study, and all persons who have direct responsibility for providing assistance to the student. (Education Code 51747; 5 CCR 11702)

Monitoring Student Progress

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 and/or supervising teacher shall promptly and directly address any failure by the student to meet the terms of his/her 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 precipitating 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 a regular school program.

Responsibilities of Independent Study Administrator

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 administrative regulation and is substantially equal in quality and quantity to the classroom instruction
2. Obtain and maintain current information and skills required for the operation of an independent study program that meets established standards for the district's educational programs

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)

3. Develop and manage the budget for independent study
4. Authorize the selection of certificated staff to be assigned as independent study teachers
5. Supervise any staff assigned to independent study functions who are not regularly supervised by another administrator
6. Approve or deny the participation of students requesting independent study
7. Facilitate the completion of written independent study agreements
8. Assure a smooth transition for students into and out of the independent study mode of instruction
9. Approve all credits earned through independent study and forward the information to the appropriate staff so that the information becomes part of the student's record
10. Complete or coordinate the preparation of all records and reports required by law, Board policy, or administrative regulation

Assignment and Responsibilities of Independent Study Teachers

The principal and independent study administrator may recommend and the Superintendent shall approve the assignment of teachers to directly supervise independent study and/or work with students on specific subject matter. The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that independent study teachers have access to professional development and support comparable to classroom-based teachers.

(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)

The ratio of student average daily attendance to full-time equivalent certificated employees responsible for independent study shall not exceed the equivalent ratio for all other education programs in the district. (Education Code 51745.6)

The responsibilities of the supervising teacher shall be to:

1. Complete designated portions of the written independent study agreement and add additional information to the written agreement when appropriate
2. Supervise and approve coursework
3. Design lesson plans and make assignments

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)

4. Maintain records of student assignments showing the date the assignment is given and the date the assignment is due
5. Provide direct instruction and counsel as necessary for individual student success
6. Regularly meet with the student to discuss the student's progress
7. Judge the time value of assigned work or work products completed and submitted by the student
8. Assess student work and determine and assign grades or other approved measures of achievement
9. Select and save representative samples of the student's completed and evaluated assignments for each subject, signed or initialed and dated in accordance with item #3 in the section on "Records" below
10. Maintain a daily or hourly attendance register in accordance with item #4 in the section on "Records" below
11. Maintain any other required records and files on a current basis

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 Board policy, administrative regulation, and other procedures related to independent study.
2. A separate listing of the students, by grade level, program, and school, who have participated in independent study. This listing shall identify units of the curriculum attempted and units of the curriculum completed by students in grades K-8 and identify course credits attempted by and awarded to students in grades 9-12 and in adult education, as specified in their written agreements.
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 he/she has personally evaluated the work or that he/she has personally reviewed the evaluations made by another certificated teacher.

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)

4. A daily or hourly attendance register, as appropriate to the program in which the students are participating, separate from classroom attendance records, and 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 above records shall be maintained for three years, excluding the current fiscal year.

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

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

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)

(cf. 5125 - Student Records)

Regulation
approved: March 4, 2008
revised: March 3, 2015

SAUGUS UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
Santa Clarita, California