

## **INSTRUCTION**

### **Independent**

#### **AR 6158**

### **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
2. Individualized study in a particular area of interest or a subject not currently available in the regular school curriculum
3. Individualized alternative education is designed to teach the knowledge and skills of the core curriculum, but is not provided as an alternative curriculum
4. Continuing and special study during travel
5. Volunteer community service activities and leadership opportunities that support and strengthen student achievement
6. Individualized study for a student whose health would be put at risk by in-person instruction

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 can maintain academic progress in his/her regular classes.

No course required for high school graduation shall be offered exclusively through independent study. (Education Code § 51745)



## **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 available to other students in the school and shall have equal rights and privileges. (5 CCR §§ 11700, 11701.5)

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. Providing access to connectivity and District-owned devices adequate to participate in an independent study program and complete assigned work or to participate in an independent study course shall not be considered funds or other things of value for purposes of this policy. (Education Code §§ 46300.6, 51747.3)

## **Eligibility for Independent Study**

Provided that experienced certificated staff are available to supervise students in independent study effectively, 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 program can 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 Section 48204. (Education Code §§ 46300.2, 51747.3)

For a student with disabilities, as defined in Education Code Section 56026, participation in independent study shall be approved only if his/her individualized



education program specifically provides for such participation. (Education Code § 51745)

A temporarily disabled student shall not receive individual instruction pursuant to Education Code Section 48206.3 utilizing independent study. (Education Code § 51745)

Students age 21 or older, and students age 19 or older who have not been continuously enrolled in school since their 18th birthday, may participate in independent study only through the adult education program for the purpose of enrolling in courses required for a high school diploma by Education Code Section 51225.3 or the Board of Trustees. (Education Code §§ 46300.1, 46300.4)

No more than 10 percent of the students enrolled in a continuation high school or opportunity school or program, not including pregnant students and parenting students who are primary caregivers for one or more of their children, shall be enrolled in independent study. (Education Code § 51745)

### **Electronic Written Agreement (Informed K12)**

A written agreement shall be developed and implemented for each student participating in independent study. (Education Code §§ 46300, 51747; 5 CCR § 11703)

The written agreement for each participating student also shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following: (Education Code § 51747; 5 CCR §§ 11700, 11702)

1. The student's name, grade, contact information, program placement, and assigned school of enrollment;
2. The manner, time, frequency, and place for submitting the student's assignments, reporting the student's progress, and communicating with the student's parent or guardian regarding the student's academic progress;
3. The objectives and methods of study for the student's work and the methods used to evaluate that work;
4. The specific resources, including materials, personnel, and access to connectivity and devices adequate to participate in the educational program and assigned work that will



be made available to the student;

5. A statement of the maximum length of time allowed between an assignment and its completion, the level of satisfactory educational progress, and the number of missed assignments allowed before an evaluation is triggered of whether the student should be allowed to continue in independent study;
6. 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;
7. A statement of the number of course credits or, for an elementary student, other measures of academic accomplishment appropriate to the agreement, to be earned by the student upon completion;
8. 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 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. § 794), students in foster care or experiencing homelessness, and students requiring mental health supports;
9. A statement that independent study is an optional educational alternative in which no student may be required to participate;
10. 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;
11. The objectives and methods of study for the student's work and the methods used to evaluate that work;
12. Signatures of the student, the parent/guardian or caregiver of the student if the student is under age 18 years, the certificated employee responsible for the general supervision of independent study, and all persons who have direct responsibility for assisting the student.



The parent/guardian's signature on the agreement shall constitute permission for the student to receive instruction through independent study.

### **Independent Study Curriculum**

The District shall offer a course-based independent study program for students in grades 6 -12 subject to the following requirements: (Education Code § 51749.5)

1. Courses shall be taught under the general supervision of certificated employees who hold the appropriate subject matter credential and are employed by the district or by another district, charter school, or county office of education with which the district has a memorandum of understanding to provide the instruction.
2. Supervising teachers, in conjunction with the Virtual Academy Head Administrator, shall ensure that students are provided with instructional opportunities as follows:

- For students in grades 6 -12: synchronous instruction at least weekly.

As used in this regulation, “synchronous instruction” means classroom-style instruction or designated small group or one-on-one instruction delivered in real-time, with live two-way communication between the student and supervising teacher. As used in this regulation, “live interaction” means interaction between the student and a classified or certificated employee to maintain school connectedness and may take place in person or via telephonic communication.

3. Students enrolled in these courses shall meet the applicable age requirements established pursuant to Education Code Sections 46300.1 and 46300.4 and the applicable residency and enrollment requirements established pursuant to Education Code Sections 46300.2, 48204, and 51747.3.
4. Examinations shall be monitored by a proctor.
5. Statewide testing results shall be reported and assigned to the school at which the student is enrolled and shall be included in the aggregate results of the district. Test results also shall be disaggregated for purposes of comparisons with the test results of students enrolled in classroom-based courses.

6. A student's participation in independent study must be voluntary.
7. The daily student-teacher ratio in the courses in this program shall meet the requirements of Education Code Section 51745.6.
8. For each student, the combined equivalent daily instructional minutes for courses in this program and all other courses shall meet applicable minimum instructional day requirements, and the student shall be offered the minimum annual total equivalent instructional minutes pursuant to Education Code Sections 46200-46208.
9. Courses required for high school graduation or for admission to the University of California or California State University shall not be offered exclusively through independent study.
10. A student participating in this program shall not be assessed a fee that is prohibited by Education Code Section 49011.
11. A student shall not be prohibited from participating in independent study solely on the basis that he/she does not have the materials, equipment, or Internet access necessary to participate in the course.

### **Monitoring Student Progress**

Students enrolled in independent study shall be monitored to ensure that they maintain satisfactory educational progress and satisfactory attendance. For this purpose, satisfactory educational progress means the level of educational progress that the student previously demonstrated in the student's regular school program, based on factors including, but not limited to: student achievement and engagement according to applicable statewide accountability measures; the completion of assignments, examinations, or other indicators that the student is working on assignments; learning required concepts; and progressing toward successful completion of the course, as determined by the teacher providing instruction. For this purpose, satisfactory attendance means that the student is generating attendance for at least two or more school days per week or 40% of the instructional days in any school week.

To foster each student's success in independent study, the Board establishes the

following maximum lengths of time that may elapse between the time an assignment is made and the date by which the student must complete the assigned work:

#### General Education

- For students in grades 6-12: five

days.

#### Special Education

- For students in grades 6-12: five days, unless otherwise stated in their Individualized Educational Plan (IEP).

#### Continuation High School

- For all students in continuation high school: five days.

#### Adult Education

- For all students in adult education: five days.

When circumstances justify a longer time, the Superintendent may extend the maximum length of an assignment to a period not to exceed 10 days, pursuant to a written request with justification.

In order to promptly and directly address any failure by the student to maintain satisfactory attendance or satisfactory educational progress, or to comply with the terms of his/her written agreement, the following tiered re-engagement strategies shall be used:

At least twice per calendar month, supervising teachers shall meet with students one-on-one to assess whether the student is making satisfactory educational progress.

Level I - When a student fails to generate attendance for one school day, timely submit one or more assignments, or misses one or more appointments, the supervising teacher shall:

- Verify the student's contact information;



- Send a letter to the student and/or parent/guardian; and
- If deemed appropriate, coordinate with the Virtual Academy Head Administrator to develop a plan for outreach from the school to determine student needs, including connection with health and social services as necessary.
- Start conversations with CWA in assisting with student attendance and success.

Level II - When a student fails to generate attendance for two school days, timely submit three or more assignments, or misses two or more appointments, the supervising teacher and/or Administrator may:

- Refer the student for counseling services;
- Schedule a meeting between the student, the parent/guardian, and, if appropriate, a counselor or administrator;
- Increase in the amount of time the student works under direct supervision;
- Hold a student-parent-teacher conference with all parties who signed the student's written agreement to review the written agreement and reconsider the independent study program's impact on the student's achievement and well-being.
- Schedule CWA to do a phone call/home visit to assist with student attendance and success.

Level III - When any student fails to complete 4 consecutive independent study assignments in any 10 school day period or misses 2 appointments without valid reason or fails to maintain satisfactory educational progress, as defined above, the Virtual Academy Assistant Principal or designee shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether or not independent study is appropriate for the student.

This evaluation may result in the termination of the independent study agreement and the student's return to the regular classroom program or other alternative program.

A written record of the findings of any such evaluation 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) 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.

### **Transition Plan**

Students who have participated in independent study for a period of at least 15 school days shall be transitioned back to their regular school program at the parent or guardian's request. Parents/guardians must submit this request to the Administrator in writing. Upon receipt of this written request, the Administrator shall ensure the student's transition back to their regular school program no later than five instructional days following the date of receipt. To facilitate this expeditious transition, the Administrator or designee shall:

- Notify the student's regular school program counselor of the student's pending return;
- Facilitate a meeting between the student and/or parent/guardian, supervising teacher, and regular school program teacher to coordinate coursework;

### **Assignment and Responsibilities of Supervising Teachers**

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 ratio of student average daily attendance for independent study students age 18 years or younger to full-time equivalent certificated employees responsible for independent study shall not exceed the equivalent ratio for all other education programs in the district unless a new higher or lower ratio for all other educational programs offered is negotiated in a collective bargaining agreement or the district enters into a memorandum of understanding that indicates an existing collective bargaining agreement contains an alternative ratio. (Education Code § 51745.6)

The responsibilities of the supervising teacher shall include, but are not limited to:

1. Completing designated portions of the written independent study agreement.

2. Supervising and approving coursework and assignments.
3. Maintaining records of student assignments showing the date the assignment is given and the date the assignment is due.
4. Maintaining a daily or hourly attendance register in accordance with item #4 in the section on "Records" below.
5. Document each students' participation in live interaction and synchronous instruction on each school day for which independent study is provided.
6. Providing direct instruction and counsel as necessary for individual student success.
7. Meeting with each student at least twice per month to assess the student's progress.
8. Determining the time value of assigned work or work products completed and submitted by the student.
8. Evaluating student work and assigning grades or other approved measures of achievement and monitoring student progress.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that independent study teachers have access to professional development and support comparable to classroom-based teachers.

## **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 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 K-8 and the course credits attempted by and awarded to students in grades 9-12 and adult education

3. A file of all agreements, with representative samples of each student's work products bearing the supervising teacher's notations indicating that he/she has personally evaluated the work or that he/she has 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
5. Written or computer-based evidence of student engagement that includes but is not limited to, a grade book or summary document that, for each class, lists all assignments assessments, and associated grades

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

The signed, dated agreement, any supplemental agreement, assignment records, work samples, and attendance records may be maintained on file electronically. (Education Code § 51747)

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