

**INDEPENDENT STUDY**

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 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 on a full-time basis or on a part-time basis in conjunction with part- or full-time classroom study.

*(cf. 5147 - Dropout Prevention)*

*(cf. 6011 - Academic Standards)*

*(cf. 6143 - Courses of Study)*

*(cf. 6146.1 - High School Graduation Requirements)*

*(cf. 6146.11 - Alternative Credits Toward Graduation)*

*(cf. 6172 - Gifted and Talented Student Program)*

*(cf. 6200 - Adult Education)*

The Superintendent or designee may provide a variety of independent study opportunities, including, but not limited to, through a program or class within a comprehensive school, an alternative school or program of choice, a charter school, a home-based format, and an online course.

*(cf. 0420.4 - Charter School Authorization)*

*(cf. 6181 - Alternative Schools/Programs of Choice)*

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 setting.

The minimum period of time for any independent study option shall be five consecutive school days.

**Written Agreements**

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that a written master agreement and, as appropriate, a learning agreement for students participating in course-based independent study exist for each participating student as prescribed by law. (Education Code 51747, 51749.5)

**INDEPENDENT STUDY** (continued)

The master agreement shall specify the length of time in which each independent study assignment must be completed. 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 one week for all grade levels and types of program. However, when necessary based on the specific circumstances of the student's approved program, the Superintendent or designee 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.

An evaluation shall be conducted to determine whether it is in a student's best interest to remain in independent study whenever the student misses three assignments, unless the student's written agreement specifies a lower or higher number of missed assignments based on the nature of the assignments, the total number of assignments, and/or other unique circumstances.

**Student-Teacher Conferences**

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. Teachers are expected to monitor student progress and work closely with each student to determine the amount and type of contact needed for the student to be successful in the program.

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

**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.

**Program Evaluation**

The Superintendent or designee shall annually report to the Board the number of district students participating in independent study, the average daily attendance generated for apportionment purposes, student performance as measured by standard indicators and in comparison to students in classroom-based instruction, 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)*

*(cf. 6162.51 - State Academic Achievement Tests)*

*(cf. 6162.52 - High School Exit Examination)*

**INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)**

*Legal Reference:*

EDUCATION CODE

17289 Exemption for facilities  
41976.2 Independent study programs; adult education funding  
42238 Revenue limits  
42238.05 Local control funding formula; average daily attendance  
44865 Qualifications for home teachers and teachers in special classes and schools  
46200-46208 Instructional day and year  
46300-46307.1 Methods of computing average daily attendance  
47612.5 Independent study in charter schools  
48204 Residency  
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  
49011 Student fees  
51225.3 Requirements for high school graduation  
51745-51749.6 Independent study programs  
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

UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 20

6301 Highly qualified teachers

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)

*Management Resources:*

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS

*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

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**VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Visalia, 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 and leadership opportunities that support and strengthen student achievement

*(cf. 0420.4 - Charter School Authorization)*  
*(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)*

Note: The following paragraph is for use by districts maintaining high schools.

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

*(cf. 6146.1 - High School Graduation Requirements)*

**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 timeframe. 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 program 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. 5111.1 - District Residency)*

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)*

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

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high school diploma by Education Code 51225.3 or the Governing Board. (Education Code 46300.1, 46300.4)

*(cf. 6200 - Adult Education)*

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)

*(cf. 5146 - Married/Pregnant/Parenting Students)*

*(cf. 6184 - Continuation Education)*

### **Master Agreement**

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; 5 CCR 11703)

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 not be 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 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. A statement of the Board's policy detailing the maximum length of time allowed between an assignment and its completion and the number of missed assignments, by grade level and type of program, which will trigger 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

**INDEPENDENT STUDY** (continued)

6. 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
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, a statement that 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)*

9. 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 providing assistance to the student

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

The signed, dated agreement may be maintained on file electronically. (Education Code 51747)

**Course-Based Independent Study**

The district shall offer a course-based independent study program for students in grades K-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.

*(cf. 4112.2 - Certification)*

2. Courses shall be annually certified by Board resolution to be of the same rigor and educational quality as equivalent classroom-based courses and shall be aligned to all relevant local and state content standards. This certification shall, at a minimum, include the duration, number of equivalent daily instructional minutes for each school day that student is enrolled, number of equivalent total instructional minutes, and number of course credits for each course, consistent with that of equivalent classroom-based courses.

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3. Students enrolled in these courses shall meet the applicable age requirements established pursuant to Education Code 46300.1 and 46300.4 and the applicable residency and enrollment requirements established pursuant to Education Code 46300.2, 48204, and 51747.3.
4. Teachers shall communicate with each student in person, by telephone, or by any other live visual or audio connection at least twice per calendar month to assess whether the student is making satisfactory educational progress. For this purpose, satisfactory educational progress includes, but is not limited to, applicable statewide accountability measures and 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.

Written or computer-based evidence of satisfactory educational progress shall be retained for each course and student, including, at a minimum, a grade book or summary document that lists all assignments, examinations, and associated grades for each course.

If satisfactory educational progress is not being made, the teacher shall notify the student and, if the student is under age 18 years, his/her parent/guardian. The teacher shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether it is in the student's best interest to remain in the course or whether he/she should be referred to an alternative program, which may include, but is not limited to, a regular school program. A written record of the evaluation findings shall be a mandatory interim student record maintained for three years from the date of the evaluation. If the student transfers to another California public school, the record shall be forwarded to that school.

*(cf. 5125 - Student Records)*

5. Examinations shall be administered by a proctor.
6. 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.

*(cf. 6162.51 - State Academic Achievement Tests)*

7. A student shall not be required to enroll in courses included in this program.



**INDEPENDENT STUDY** (continued)

8. The student-teacher ratio in the courses in this program shall meet the requirements of Education Code 51745.6.
9. 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 46200-46208.

*(cf. 6111 - School Calendar)*

*(cf. 6112 - School Day)*

10. 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.
11. A student participating in this program shall not be assessed a fee that is prohibited by Education Code 49011.

*(cf. 3260 - Fees and Charges)*

12. 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.

Before enrolling a student in a course within this program, the Superintendent or designee shall provide the student and, if the student is under age 18 years, his/her parent/guardian with a written learning agreement that includes all of the following: (Education Code 51749.6)

1. A summary of the district's policies and procedures related to this program
2. The duration of the enrolled course(s) and the number of course credits for each enrolled course, consistent with the Board certifications made pursuant to item #2 above
3. The duration of the learning agreement, which shall not exceed a school year or span multiple school years
4. The learning objectives and expectations for each course, including, but not limited to, a description of how satisfactory educational progress is measured and when a student evaluation is required to determine whether the student should remain in the course or be referred to an alternative program, which may include, but is not limited to, a regular school program

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5. The specific resources, including materials and personnel, that will be made available to the student
6. A statement that the student is not required to enroll in courses in this program
7. Signatures of the student, the student's parent/guardian if the student is under age 18 years, and all teachers providing instruction

The student's or parent/guardian's signature shall constitute permission for the student to receive instruction through independent study. (Education Code 51749.6)

The Superintendent or designee shall retain a physical or electronic copy of the signed learning agreement for at least three years and as appropriate for auditing purposes. (Education Code 51749.6)

**Monitoring Student Progress**

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 requiring 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 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.

## **INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)**

### **Responsibilities of Independent Study Administrator**

The responsibilities of the independent study administrator include, but are not limited to:

1. Recommending certificated staff to be assigned as independent study teachers and supervising staff assigned to independent study functions who are not regularly supervised by another administrator
2. Approving or denying the participation of students requesting independent study
3. Facilitating the completion of written independent study agreements
4. Ensuring a smooth transition for students into and out of the independent study mode of instruction
5. Approving all credits earned through independent study
6. Completing or coordinating the preparation of all records and reports required by law, Board policy, or administrative regulation

### **Assignment and Responsibilities of Independent Study 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

**INDEPENDENT STUDY** (continued)

4. Maintaining a daily or hourly attendance register in accordance with item #4 in the section on "Records" below
5. Providing direct instruction and counsel as necessary for individual student success
6. Regularly meeting with the student to discuss the student's progress
7. Determining the time value of assigned work or work products completed and submitted by the student
8. Assessing student work and assigning grades or other approved measures of achievement

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)*

**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

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*(cf. 3580 - District Records)*

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

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